

PSI World News 09-04

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Pay Equity Action Week

Plans are well under way for the PSI Pay Equity Action Week on 4-8 October, and it is exciting to hear about all the initiatives, such as public forums, sponsored walks, petitions, book launches and video shows. The PSI website has a special section on the Pay Equity Action Week in <http://www.world-psi.org/Content/NavigationMenu/English/Campaigns/Pay_Equity_campaign/Pay_Equity_Action_Week_4-8_October.htm> English, <http://www.world-psi.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Spanish/Campañas/Semana_de_acción_en_favor_de_la_equidad_de_remuneración/Semana_de_acción_en_favor_de_la_equidad_de_remuneración.htm> Spanish and <http://www.world-psi.org/Content/NavigationMenu/French/Campagnes/Campagne_pour_l'équité_salariale/Semaine_daction_pour_léquité_salariale.htm> French. It contains resource materials and information about national plans. <<http://www.world-psi.org>> PSI/ <<http://www.epsu.org>> EPSU and <<http://www.ei-ie.org>> EI are holding a conference on pay equity on 7-8 October at the ILO in Geneva which more than 100 people will attend. Please send in reports and photos of your union activities. We will issue a special supplement to PSI Women on the Pay Equity Action Week and plan to compile a photographic record.

Insecurity rules

The vast majority of today's workforce lives in a world marked by economic insecurity, according to an important new study from the ILO. "Economic Security for a Better World" contains a measure of Economic Security for the 90 countries surveyed in terms of labour market, skills, work and income security as well as employment protection and their access to representation. Among the elements of the study are the impact of globalization and employment policies (including outsourcing) on individuals as well as states; an analysis of the needs and aspirations of individuals in the world of work; a look at job satisfaction levels; the impact of poverty and development on human security; and the extent of economic and social risk to which people are being increasingly exposed in their societies. Click <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2004/38.htm>> here for more.

Solidarity Appeal

Fifty one union members have been arbitrarily dismissed in Colombia. PSI is requesting affiliates to contribute to the SINTRAEMCALI union's solidarity fund for these workers, who were summarily dismissed on 14 July by the Managing Director of EMCALI municipal company. For more background and details on how you can help, follow the link from the <<http://www.world-psi.org>> PSI homepage.

World Bank Watch

The World Bank has just released its annual paper: Doing Business in 2005: Removing Obstacles to Growth. This year it devotes an entire chapter to "Hiring and Firing of Workers". While defending ILO core labour standards, it implicitly argues that all other forms of labour regulation do more harm than good, and establishes a ranking of countries giving top marks to those countries who regulate the least. It suggests countries begin with reforms more acceptable to the electorate: increasing the length and scope of term contracts; introducing apprenticeship wages (if lowering the minimum wage is not feasible); allowing flexible working hours; and removing administrative approvals for dismissals. Middle income countries (but not poor countries) should compensate for removing restrictions on dismissal etc by introducing unemployment insurance. The implication is that developing countries should remove worker protection now. Click <<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20250634~menuPK:34463~pagePK:640030>>

[15~piPK:64003012~theSitePK:4607,00.html](http://http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,2340,en_2649_201185_31935102_1_1_1_1,00.html) > here if you want to get more of a sense of what's in store for your country!

Union impacts

The [OECD Employment Outlook 2004](http://http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,2340,en_2649_201185_31935102_1_1_1_1,00.html) draws on comprehensive new evidence to show that unions are a force for greater fairness but do not undermine economic performance. Gaps between higher paid and lower paid workers are lowest where union density is high. High union density also narrows pay gaps between women and men, and between younger and older workers. Countries with high union density have higher rates of employment, especially for women, although there is a tendency for older workers to retire earlier in high union density countries. The study provides a wealth of useful detail on trends in union density and bargaining coverage in OECD countries. Union density has, from 1980 to 2000, fallen from 33% to 21% in the OECD countries (weighted by population), with particularly big declines in the UK (51% to 31%), the US (22% to 13%), Australia and New Zealand. Real wages in the business sector have increased by just 1% per year over this time. It is notable (though not noted) that earnings differences remain low and stable in the continental European countries, where collective bargaining coverage is highest. Click here [for more.](http://http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,2340,en_2649_201185_31935102_1_1_1_1,00.html)

"Polder model" under threat?

Europe's social dialogue institutions are being assailed on all sides. The Dutch polder model is no exception. For the current six -month period the Netherlands is President of the European Union. The Dutch Government acts as if it were making a tremendous effort to further a social Europe, but back home it is planning to dismantle the social security system. There is not much left of Holland's famous consultation model. Three Dutch union confederations (FNV, CNV and MHP) have joined forces to campaign against the destruction of social security in the Netherlands. From September 13th till October 2nd all formal negotiations with delegates of the government and employers have been cancelled at all levels, including the European level. During this period a national campaign will take place with demonstrations, actions and strikes. For background information email communications@world-psi.org

Public service gender statistics

It is difficult to obtain figures for the gender gender balance in public service trade unions. PSI has recently done some analysis on this subject. Of the 50 biggest affiliates for whom we have data, representing almost 5,000,000 workers, we have found that almost 2/3 of the membership (63.1%) is female. This confirms PSI's earlier estimate that around 65% of its membership is female.

Millennium Development Goals

A massive campaign called "Global Call to Action Against Poverty" is being organised for 2005. Around 80 organisations representing all aspects of civil society met in Johannesburg on 20-21 September to map out actions in support of the [UN Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) and to fight poverty. The MDGs include: eradicating extreme poverty, disease and hunger; promoting equality; and providing education for all children. PSI and the ICFTU both took part in the meeting. PSI sees a strong link between the MDGs and our campaign for quality public services. Even if we win agreement to more aid and fairer trade rules, real changes will not happen unless there are quality public services in place. We will keep unions informed as the campaign develops and hope you will play an active role in this important struggle. For more information contact wendy.caird@world-psi.org.

Exposing shadow government

The Colorado State Department of Transportation spent \$327 million in undocumented overhead costs for highway consultants in 2003. Forty US states now outsource the work of their food- stamp call-centres to foreign countries. In Miami-Dade County bus usage dropped by 31% during an experiment in which half of the area's bus routes were contracted out to a private company. Exposing Shadow Government, an intriguing new report from the American Federation of Teachers, looks at how "invisible" private corporations and shadow agencies are damaging

the accountability and quality of public services in the USA. Take a look here
http://www.aft.org/news/shadow_govt.htm .

Turkish stoppages

Late last year the Trade Union of Public Employees in Health and Social Services (SES), a PSI affiliate, together with the Association of Turkish Doctors, staged two work stoppages in support of demands to increase the health budget and to provide universal and free health care. The union also called for a living wage for health workers and increased job security. These stoppages received widespread public support, however the government has now responded by instigating criminal proceedings against 85 people, including the presidents of the union centres and officials from the Chamber of Doctors, Dentists, and Pharmacists. Among those charged are leaders of the PSI affiliate SES. The trial is scheduled for 13 October. PSI has written to the government to protest against health workers being treated as criminals. For more information contact rights@world-psi.org

FEATURE STORY:

The Participatory Budget process in Porto Alegre, Brazil is a form of direct democracy, allowing citizens to participate in the neighbourhood they live in or within a particular thematic area and to choose which of their priorities the municipality should implement. It originated in 1989 when a new local government was elected, and started using public meetings to ensure broad support for their tax reform and expenditure programme. The process has had significant effects in increasing municipal revenue. Unlike most municipalities in Brazil today, which are dependent on national government resource allotments, municipal revenue in Porto Alegre constitutes more than 50% of the total. This has come mostly from easier identification of where the taxes would specifically come from.

Participatory Budgeting is a deliberative and transparent process: decisions made are documented, published and strictly implemented. The internal rules are established by participating citizens, making the process self-regulating. These features of the process have fostered the emergence of a non-state public sphere. The system has been described as meeting three key public objectives: people's need for a sustainable service, the acquisition of a concern for the sustainable use of the natural resources, and the permanent engagement of citizens in the management of public funds.

As in many poor countries, state institutions in Brazil, including banks and state corporations, have historically attended mostly to private and particularistic interests, and not to the general public welfare. Now the number of people that participate in the budgeting process is growing year after year. Priorities have become more reflective of the needs of the communities, unlike the priorities established by previous governments. It is one reason why 99.5% of Porto Alegre's population now enjoy treated water, and 84% - the highest in Brazil - are connected to sewerage.

Source:

Public Services Work! Information, insights and ideas for our future
by D Hall and PSI 2003

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