



PSI

World News

December 2004

New to the News?

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The "Free-Rider" Problem

Even though collective agreements generally cover all the workers in a particular category (directly or indirectly), membership is seldom 100%. As a result workers who are not union members often get a 'free ride'. They benefit from the union's bargaining power without actually paying for it. PSI has taken a look at this issue, and at a range of solutions. Those with web access will find the story here: <http://www.world-psi.org/freeriding>. The story also features in the next edition of FOCUS, which is currently being distributed in all six PSI languages.

Bridging the GAPS

Momentum is building for a General Agreement on Public Services (GAPS). This month the PSI Executive Board endorsed the concept and discussed the first draft, and PSI is working with Public World, Consumers International and One World Action to further develop the initiative. Watch this space!

Building International Unity

The ICFTU Congress has approved the development of a new and enlarged international union federation, to include the World Confederation of Labour and various other national bodies which have not been part of the global movement before. It is envisaged that this new body will be formed in 2006. The ICFTU also called on unions to get involved in next year's Global Call to Action Against Poverty (see details below). A new President was also elected. Sharan Burrow (ACTU Australia) becomes the first woman to hold the position. For more on this significant congress see <http://www.icftu.org/>.

Global Call for Action Against Poverty

The ICFTU has joined the PSI in calling on workers and their unions to become involved at local level in the Global Call for Action Against Poverty. A new GCAP website has just gone live, and is due to be completed in early 2005. For more background, an action guide, a frequently asked questions document and information on how your organisation can sign up see: http://www.whiteband.org/actnow/wborgs/document_view We'll keep you informed in PSI World News as this unparalleled campaign builds momentum.

Nurses to perform surgery?

Nurses in the UK will be trained to perform surgery in a bid to reduce waiting lists, according to a consultation paper to be published in the next month. They will either operate alone or assist consultant surgeons. After two years of training, nurses, physiotherapists and operating department assistants would be called upon to perform operations such as hernia repair, vasectomies and arthroscopies. For more on this breaking story see the UNISON website: http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=1795

World Bank Watch

What projects does the World Bank have in the pipeline for your country? If you want to know keep an eye on this handy list from the World Bank website. This page is updated every three months. <http://www.worldbank.org/watsan/WSSpipeline.htm>

50% of World's Workers Below the Poverty Line

Half of the world's workers - some 1.4 billion people - are trapped in grinding poverty, unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US\$2 a day poverty line. The ILO World Employment Report 2004-2005 states that focusing economic policies on creating decent and productive employment opportunities is vital for reducing global poverty, as called for in the Millennium Development Goals. The report breaks new ground with its analysis of the linkages between employment, productivity and poverty reduction. For more details in English, French or Spanish see: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2004/54.htm>

World AIDS Day 2004

Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS was the theme of 2004 World AIDS day. According to UNAIDS estimates, there were 37.2 million adults and 2.2 million children living with HIV at the end of 2004. During the year 4.9 million new people became infected with the virus. Around half of all people who become infected do so before they are 25, and are killed by AIDS before they are 35. 95% of those with HIV/AIDS live in the developing world. The latest evidence shows that women and girls are increasingly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and the last two years have witnessed the sharpest increase of infection among women and girls, who are physically more susceptible than men. Accordingly the World Health Organization (WHO) marked World AIDS day by publishing the inspiring stories of three women united in the fight against violence and its tragic links to HIV/AIDS. See www.who.int/ Also marking the day was the ILO's "Women, girls, HIV/AIDS and the world of work", available at www.ilo.org/aids.

Insights into Globalisation

Zambia's privatisation and liberalisation programme, coupled with public sector reforms, has left a trail of destitution, company closures and thousands of retrenchments, amidst increasing poverty and unemployment, writes Martin Kapende in the tenth story in "Globalization Insights", a series launched jointly by Friedrich Ebert Foundation and IPS EUROPE. The previous nine stories (from Pakistan, Syria, India, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, Yemen, Brazil and Argentina) give insight into the perceptions and experiences of people as globalisation unfolds in their environs. See <http://www.fes.de/globalization>

A Shift in Power?

The Public Service International Research Unit has produced a new survey which provides startling evidence of problems caused by energy privatisation in the Asia-Pacific region. Companies which were supposed to provide the solution to Asia's power needs are now withdrawing their money and expertise. The World Bank and development banks have acknowledged their policies are failing. Between half and three-quarters of their money has been consumed by the bureaucracy of restructuring, instead of the needs of developing countries. To access the report (in English only at present) see <http://www.world-psi.org/utilities>.

Trade Union Guide to Globalisation

The role of trade unions in the globalisation process is the centrepiece of a new ICFTU publication, "A Trade Union Guide to Globalisation". Designed as a guide for trade unionists working at national or international level, the publication shows how globalisation affects the day-to-day work of all trade unions. It examines how trade unionists can advocate issues related to workers' rights at the international level, for example in their contacts with international organisations such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The book also considers the relationship between trade unions and multinational enterprises, and includes a new chapter on the social responsibilities of business. For more information see: <http://www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation/> (available in English, French and Spanish).

Help Support Colombian Unions

PSI marked International Human Rights Day on 10th December by requesting that affiliates help support trade unions in Colombia. Details of the campaign, along with a model letter to President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, are available at <http://www.world-psi.org/> (English and Spanish).

A First for Ireland and the ILO

This month Ireland became the first EU country to adopt the ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001). The ILO's primary goal is to promote opportunities for decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. ILO-OSH 2001 provides guidance for action at both the national and workplace level.

To download the text of the guidelines click here:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/cops/english/download/e000013.pdf>

For more on the ILO SafeWork programme see <http://www.ilo.org/safework>.

Labour Standards in China

An OECD seminar which was to be held in China has been cancelled and all visas invalidated, apparently in a reaction against trade unionists being invited to speak on labour standards. The seminar would have discussed how the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises could be applied in practice. The Chinese authorities apparently have cited "inappropriate and inconvenient" timing as the reason for the decision. For more in French and English see: <http://www.tuac.org/News/default.htm#12>

Seasons Greetings

PSI would like to wish you all the best for the Christmas and New Year season. Our offices will be closed from 4.00 pm on 24th December until 9.00 on 3rd January.

Members Section

The PSI Executive Board met this month to discuss, amongst other things, how we can change the values and structures of the union movement to serve workers in their workplaces in a globalising world. That debate framed the approach that the PSI took at the ICFTU World Congress in Japan. For more see: <http://www.world-psi.org/members>. Minutes from the Public Sector Working Group meeting are now available at www.world-psi.org under **Meetings and Networks**. If you would prefer to receive the minutes by email or paper copy, please contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org (phone and fax details below).

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