

Season's Greetings!

PSI offers Season's Greetings to all affiliates, their friends and families, and best wishes for 2006.

The PSI offices will be closed from 24th December to 2nd January. The **PSI programme of events** for 2006 is now available at www.world-psi.org/events.

Solidarity support

PSI affiliates' response to our requests for solidarity for the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the Pakistan earthquake have been outstanding. We have recently put 100,000 € towards rebuilding housing in Sri Lanka and another 100,000 € towards the ICFTU Global Unions fund for workers' centres. See www.world-psi.org/tsunami.

To date, we have received 90,000 € for the Pakistan earthquake appeal. Nora Wintour, PSI Equality Officer, will be visiting Pakistan shortly and will present a cheque to Khursid Ahmed, President of the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation and General Secretary of PSI affiliate, the WAPDA union. He is developing a proposal with others PSI affiliates in the area. For the latest update see www.world-psi.org/earthquake.

WTO Ministerial Conference

The WTO 6th Ministerial Conference is being held in Hong Kong, 13-18 December. PSI is taking part in the activities surrounding the meeting. Our focus is particularly on the impact of GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services) which has the potential to hasten privatisation and liberalisation of public services around the world. It also allows challenges to important laws and regulations that protect communities, on the basis that these inhibit free trade. PSI identifies the existing GATS provisions as a major obstacle to promoting quality public services.

Workers' Voice @ WTO is a new website that will give daily updates for the duration of the Hong Kong meeting so that you too can follow the negotiations. It will also report on the protests and events organised by trade unions and civil organisations to coincide with the meeting. See <http://workersvoiceatwto.org>.

The coming demographic shift

Many countries are beginning to experience a great demographic shift that will have profound effects, as huge numbers of working age people all near their retirement age over a quite brief time. A new PSI publication presents a series of steps to deal with this looming social phenomenon. It also covers the implications of the increasing participation of women in the paid workforce, the impacts of HIV-AIDS in many countries, and increasing migration. The document is available in English, French, Spanish and Japanese. See www.world-psi.org.

Stop AIDS. Keep the promise.

The Global Unions Programme on HIV and AIDS, in association with the World AIDS Campaign, is calling on the Global Unions and all their affiliates to demonstrate their commitment, and make their promise to fight HIV and AIDS under the banner "Stop Aids. Keep the Promise". Trade unions are uniquely placed to respond to the pandemic, as the workplace can be a vital entry point for information, prevention, treatment and the protection of rights. Everyone can contribute: make your promise to support the campaign and promote it among your friends and colleagues. By creating new partnerships we can make sure the voice of working people is heard, and that we hold our leaders accountable for the promises they made on our behalf. AIDS will only be controlled by intensified efforts not just aimed at prevention and care, but that also tackle the root causes of the epidemic – poverty, discrimination, marginalization and inequality, especially related to women. See www.worldaidscampaign.info.

Migration and women health workers project update

Three partnership meetings were held in 2005 by the national coordinators from participating unions in the PSI Migration and Women Health Workers Project. The meetings were held in Kenya, the Philippines and Barbados in September, October and November. They brought together participants from Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, USA, UK, Canada, the Netherlands; the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Japan; Barbados, Chile, Ecuador and Spain. A major objective of the meetings was to

develop a pre-decision kit for migrant health care workers. Through this kit, migrant health workers will be provided with information on how to join unions in the receiving countries, know about their legal and employment rights, find out details on living conditions, and other information describing the real costs and benefits of migration. For more information visit www.world-psi.org/migration.

The Derailers' Guide to the WTO

The Derailer's Guide to the WTO is produced by Focus on the Global South and is now available on the PSI website. It is a valuable guide to both what the WTO is and how it works as well as giving a thorough overview of all of the main issues in the current Doha Round of negotiations. Some of the issues and approaches may not be relevant to all PSI affiliates but this certainly helps to put each of the issues into context so that, even if you are interested only in services, you can see where these fit into the jigsaw and the agenda. See www.world-psi.org/derailers.

Stephen Lewis statement on HIV/AIDS

Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, made a statement on the occasion of World AIDS day on 1 December in which he stresses the importance of obtaining financing for the Global Fund, and condemns the double standard for preventing mother-to-child transmission. The statement is available on the PSI website www.world-psi.org/StephenLewis.

Czech unionists rally in support of Labour Code

On 26th November, 30,000 Czech trade unionists held a rally in Prague to support the government's draft new Labour Code. The draft guarantees decent working conditions and cancels some obstacles to collective bargaining. It was passed by the Chamber of Deputies, but is facing opposition by employers and business. However, the president of the Czech Economic Chamber said that the senior ruling Social Democrats (CSSD) and the opposition Communists (KSCM) have already reached agreement to push the Labour Code through anyway. Employers may still try to push through a Labour Code worked out by the right wing parties which would be based upon a fear of job loss. The unions will continue to campaign against any changes to the Code.

No to reform, yes to quality public services

The Nigerian government's reform of the civil service includes a plan to cut 3,000 jobs. PSI affiliates held a protest rally in Abuja in November in which they appealed to the government to put the retrenchment plan on hold and, instead, to give public sector workers the opportunity to make quality public services their goal, which would in turn make the civil service more efficient. The chairperson of PSI's National Coordinating Committee in Nigeria, Chief Nkem Nath Nwauzer, said, "We believe that quality public services in Nigeria will mitigate the subjugation of civil servants to constant threats of job insecurity through retrenchments that are unwarranted and unjustifiable by any governments in power in Nigeria. Besides, quality public services, which is the initiative of PSI, will provide jobs for youths to be gainfully employed". He urged the government to educate union members and to carry out campaigns on the provision of quality public services. See <http://allafrica.com/stories/200511210586.html>

General Agreement on Public Services

PSI will be working with partner organisations in 2006 to promote a General Agreement on Public Services (GAPS). This Agreement provides a means for winning government commitments to the provision of quality public services, and offers an alternative to the WTO approach contained in the GATS. PSI, together with Consumers International, One World Action and Public World, has developed a website about GAPS: www.gapscampaign.org.

UNISON's action plan for cleaner hospitals

UK union UNISON is running a quality campaign on hospital cleaning to save thousands of lives every year. In 1986 there were 67,000 full-time cleaning posts in the NHS. Now there are only 36,000 full-time equivalents. Dirty hospitals increase the risk of hospital acquired infections and are unacceptable to patients and staff. Yet the number of cleaners working in the NHS has almost halved in the last 18 years. UNISON believes that more and better-trained cleaning staff are key to improving standards of hospital cleanliness. Hospitals need to have sufficient, properly trained and equipped cleaning staff, who are valued and rewarded as an important part of the healthcare team. UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis said, "Spiralling hospital acquired infections cost the NHS more than £1 billion and at least 5,000 lives a year. We want to shift the focus onto the failures of the

