



PSI

World News

February 2005

Get active in 2005

PSI is urging unions to become active in the [Global Call to Action Against Poverty](#), and to ensure that the demand for quality public services is prominent in the campaign. There is a growing realisation that 2005 will be the decisive year in overcoming poverty. Addressing the historic **Make Poverty History** rally in London earlier this month, Nelson Mandela declared: "The Global Campaign for Action Against Poverty can take its place as a public movement alongside the movement to abolish slavery and the international solidarity against apartheid.... Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation".

► *Is your union involved?* To join the campaign go to <http://www.whiteband.org/> or email wendy.caird@world-psi.org

Poverty Facts

- 1] 1.2 billion people live on US\$1 per day or less;
- 2] 54 countries are poorer now than they were in 1990;
- 3] The richest 1% of the world's population receives as much income as the poorest 57%;
- 4] 1 billion people are unemployed, underemployed or working poor (1/3 of the global workforce; 60% are women);
- 5] 245 million children aged 5 to 17 work (1/6 of the world's children);
- 6] 860 million adults are illiterate;
- 7] 114 million primary aged children are not in school (1/5 children in the world);
- 8] Nearly 11 million children under 5 die each year most from easily preventable causes;
- 9] 800 million people are malnourished.

Tsunami Update

Public sector unions have responded magnificently to the PSI's call for assistance following the earthquakes and tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. Together we have raised \$US110,000, with a further \$75,000 pledged. Many unions have also expressed solidarity through national or NGO-administered funds. PSI staff have visited the worst hit areas of Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka and Indonesia to assess the damage, and have spoken to local affiliates to decide how this money can best be spent. We will keep you informed.

G7 considering debt cancellation

Following weeks of intensive lobbying by civil society groups and unions, the G7 meeting this month called on the IMF to develop proposals to fund as much as 100% debt relief. While the meeting was not able to agree on a funding mechanism, they asked the IMF to bring proposals to the April meeting between the IMF and World Bank (to be held in Washington DC). All eyes will now be focused on Washington.

International Women's Day - March 8th

PSI is carrying out a postcard campaign to mark International Women's Day on March 8th. The postcard is available in English, French and Spanish from <http://www.world-psi.org/>. PSI is arguing that public services are essential for women's equality: that women need access to health care, reproductive health services, child and community care, education and essential services, such as water and electricity. PSI will also be present at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in February/March, during the 10-year review of the [Beijing Platform of Action](#). We will seek to ensure that there is no going back on the commitments made in 1995 and that the important role of public services in achieving women's equality is included in the policy documents of the Commission.

Core labour standards in Japan

The [ICFTU](#) has released a new report on core labour standards in Japan. The report reveals problems with labour laws applying to public sector workers, which restrict organising, bargaining and the right to strike. The right to collective bargaining is strictly limited for clerical and administrative workers (whose wages are set by law) and meetings and consultations with public sector unions have no concrete effect on the determination of wages and working conditions. Public sector workers do not have the right to strike and can be dismissed or imprisoned for up to three years for inciting a strike. The report also notes discrimination against women, who earn around 65% of male wages and are concentrated in temporary and part-time work. To read the full report:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221158&Language=EN> /

The future of trade unionism

How are unions responding to the challenges of the 21st century workplace? What strategies are proving successful, and what practices are dying away? A recent colloquium on union renewal brought together international researchers and thinkers in this area, and the resulting papers have just gone online. More importantly, CRIMT is seeking to make this a living resource by inviting further papers from unions. The documents are available in English and French respectively at:

<http://www.crimt.org/unionrenewal.html> and http://www.crimt.org/Ren_fr_test01.html

Using ILO supervisory mechanisms

PSI and [EI](#) have produced a new booklet to help public sector trade unions use the ILO supervisory mechanisms to defend rights at work. It includes information on how to submit a complaint to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, information about how PSI and EI can help, and a brief summary of the main points of the ILO Conventions 87 and 98. It was compiled by Asia-Pacific staff from the two organisations, but will be relevant to other regions as well. It is anticipated that the publication will be translated into at least six commonly spoken languages in the region. The 20 page English version is available from the PSI website (www.world-psi.org/publications) and is also being translated into Japanese, Korean, Bahasa, Singhalese, Tamil, Nepalese, Hindi, Bangla, Mongolian and Thai. Copies can be requested from rights@world-psi.org.

US struggle intensifies

The Bush administration has launched a plan to eliminate worker rights and civil service standards from the federal government, focusing on the 700,000 civilian employees of the Department of Defence and the 180,000 at Homeland Security. The DHS has issued a new set of regulations that significantly narrow employees' rights to collective bargaining and all but eliminate the due process rights that enable employees to speak with confidence when they see wrongdoing or mismanagement. They give DHS full authority to set pay rates, promotions, hiring and firing and other basic workplace decisions. In defiance of the United States Congress, the Defence Department has refused to consult with unions. These new regulations will be challenged in a lawsuit by four unions, including the [American Federation of Government Employees](#) (AFGE).

EDF signs Code of Corporate Social Responsibility

PSI has signed a global agreement on Corporate Social Responsibility with [Électricité de France \(EDF\)](#), the world's largest energy generator. It is an innovative and far-reaching document, negotiated with unions from many of EDF's subsidiaries around the world, including France, the UK, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and with input from civil society organisations. Environmental and social responsibilities figure prominently in the agreement, along with labour issues. However the real test is still to come, as EDF sets about implementing the code. For a copy of the agreement email david.boys@world-psi.org

ENRON - playing the free market

Proponents of free market economics will be shocked to learn how ENRON managed to manipulate an entire marketplace - demand, supply and price - to create advantage for the company. According to a New York Times investigation into new tapes and memos recently filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, ENRON created artificial energy shortages, ran up prices, and shut down plants in order to improve returns. They tested this model in the Canadian province of Alberta, the only province to fully privatise electricity, which now with the highest electricity

tariffs in the country. One of the tapes contains the following exchange:

"We want you guys to get a little creative and come up with a reason to go down..."

"O.K., so we're just coming down for some maintenance, like a forced outage type of thing? And that's cool?"

"Hopefully," comes the reply, and both men laugh.

The next day (17/1/01) the plant was taken out of service and the state of California called a power emergency as rolling blackouts hit up to a half-million consumers.

Useful new ILO databases

The ILO has launched three new on-line databases covering minimum wages, maternity protection and working time. Searches can be performed by country, region, subject and text. The user can also browse the entire database and/or find recent changes with the advanced search function. The databases exist in English only at present. See:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/database/index.htm>

World Bank Watch

The World Bank's Private Sector Development Unit has posted an updated list of 34 papers dealing with various facets of its privatisation strategy. The publications carry titles such as "Building Support for Privatization", "How to Navigate the Politics of Privatization", "Building an Institutional Framework for Privatization", and "Downsizing in the Public Sector". The Bank's brief overview claims that special attention is given to handling labour adjustment during privatisation. The papers can be downloaded in English from: <http://rru.worldbank.org/PapersLinks/Privatization-Strategy/> Other languages are available from: <http://www.worldbank.org/>

Iraqi union leader murdered

Hadi Salih, International Secretary of the [Iraqi Federation of Workers' Trade Unions](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/index.cfm?mins=376) (IFTU), was tortured and killed at his Baghdad home on 4th January. Trade union sources believe the atrocity was carried out by remnants of Saddam Hussein's secret police, the Mukharabat. Salih had spent five years in prison under Saddam Hussein, after being sentenced to death in 1969 for independent labour activities. After his sentence was commuted he went to Sweden, where he continued to work for labour rights in Iraq. In 2003 he returned to Iraq where he joined the struggle to rebuild Iraq's labour movement. If you would like to help in this struggle, click here:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/index.cfm?mins=376>

Thai struggle continues

PSI applauds the courageous members of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) labour union, who have vowed to continue their struggle against privatisation in spite of

the landslide re-election of the Thai Rak Thai Party. State enterprise privatisation lost momentum last year in the face of fierce opposition, and the government decided to postpone privatisation plans indefinitely. This month's vote has been interpreted as a mandate to resurrect these plans. The union is urging the government to hold a national referendum to end the controversy once and for all.

Messages of support can be sent to the union at: psithai@asianet.co.th

PSI in Palestine

A 7-person PSI delegation has just returned from a mission to Palestine and Israel, where they sought to build relationships between trade unions in the area. The delegation visited workplaces and met with health and public service affiliates, political figures, and discussed difficulties in labour law with the Israeli labour minister.

Hunger strike for health services

Six members of Poland's Health Protection Secretariat of NSZZ, including Executive Board members, have started a hunger strike in Warsaw. "Negotiations lasting for months, consultations and protests turned out to be futile... We want the government to withdraw their support for the healthcare restructuring bill," said Maria Ochman, member of the healthcare Solidarity union. Trade unions believe that restructuring would lead to mass bankruptcies of hospitals and hence to the privatisation of the healthcare system. PSI has written to the Polish President Kwasniewski to protest at the continued deterioration of health services in the country, and the government's refusal to enter into social dialogue.

Heinz Kluncker honoured

Heinz Kluncker, who was PSI President from 1973-1985, is being honoured on the occasion of his 80th birthday (20/2/05). German union [ver.di](http://verdi.de) has opened a photographic exhibition celebrating his life and work in the German and the international labour movement.

PSI job vacancy

PSI is calling for applications for an assistant project coordinator for gender equality campaigning and organising in the health sector in South East and South Asia. The project has approved funding for 3 years, with a probable 2nd 3-year phase subject to approval of the sponsor organisations. The closing date for applications is 1st March 2005. For more information see <http://www.world-psi.org/jobs>. If you would like to be kept notified of PSI vacancies in the future, please email communications@world-psi.org with the words JOB VACANCIES in the subject line of your email.

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