

Wanted: Four million health workers!

The World Health Organisation's **World Health Report 2006** reveals a shortage of more than four million doctors, midwives, nurses and support workers worldwide, and contains ambitious proposals to tackle the problem over the next ten years, starting immediately. At least 1.3 billion people worldwide lack access to the most basic healthcare. The burden is greatest in countries overwhelmed by poverty and disease. For instance sub-Saharan Africa has 11% of the world's population and 24% of the global burden of disease, but only 3% of the world's health workers. The report has led to calls for Western countries to stop "poaching" healthcare staff from these countries. It is available for download in six languages from <http://www.who.int/whr/2006/en/>.

New Deputy General Secretary for PSI

PSI has appointed Nora Wintour as the new Deputy General Secretary. Nora will replace Alan Leather in his role when he retires in September this year. Nora is currently PSI's [Equality](#) and [Rights](#) Officer, and is also secretary of the PSI Women's Committee.

The rise and rise of NGOs

The NGO sector is now the eighth largest economy in the world — worth over \$1 trillion a year globally. It employs nearly 19 million paid workers, not to mention countless volunteers. NGOs spend about \$US15 billion on development each year, about the same as the World Bank. But while the NGO movement has been growing rapidly since the 1980s, the union movement has been in decline. Why, and what does this mean for unions and public services? PSI discusses this issue in the current edition of FOCUS. The article is also available in various languages at: <http://www.world-psi.org/ngos>.

Health justice for Zambia

PSI welcomes the news that Zambia has scrapped health fees - one of the first benefits to flow from debt relief granted to African countries last year, following worldwide mobilisations under the banner of the [Global Call to Action against Poverty](#). User fees were introduced after IMF and World Bank pressure in the early 1990s. Since then many poor people have died because they could not afford health care. 65 per cent of Zambia's citizens live on less than a dollar a day. "This is one of the first concrete examples of how the G8 deal last year has made a real difference to peoples' lives,"

said Barbara Stocking, Director of [Oxfam](#).

Privatisation studies

The [Global Policy Network](#) has completed a pilot study of privatisation in key sectors of five countries. Bulgaria chose to look at its health services; Turkey chose petroleum and petro-chemicals; Bolivia, El Salvador and South Africa chose electricity. Soon after the studies were completed, the Turkish Supreme Court voided the privatisation of a petro-chemical plant (the biggest in Turkey), saying that privatisation was "not in the public interest." See <http://www.gpn.org/research/privatization/>.

Youth and unions win in France

After ten weeks of tumultuous protest and demonstration across the country, the French government has finally scrapped the controversial youth employment law (CPE - Contrat Première Embauche) which would have allowed for easier firing of young workers. An opinion poll recently showed that almost 70 percent of the population supported the protesters. Only a third of French people think the free market system is the best way forward for the world in the future.

The murders continue on Colombia

A report on trade union rights violations in Colombia, from the Human Rights Database of the [Escuela Nacional Sindical](#) (ENS), shows that last year 70 union members were murdered, 260 received death threats, 56 were arbitrarily detained, seven were attacked with explosive devices or firearms, 32 were harassed or persecuted for union activity, eight were forcibly displaced, and three disappeared. While this represents a significant decrease on the previous year, it should be remembered that violations often go unreported for fear of reprisal. Simultaneously there has been a large increase in the harassment and persecution of unionised workers over the last year.

"Flexicurity" for Europe?

The EU is investigating whether the Danish model of "flexicurity" - balancing flexibility for employers to hire and fire with social security and training for employees - is suitable for the rest of Europe. "We have the Swedish security and the British flexibility", explains Verner Sand Kirk, from Denmark's employment ministry. Interpretations of the term have varied widely across Europe,

with the French government even using it in relation to the reviled CPE legislation (see above). Union reactions to the model in Denmark have also been mixed. Mr Sand Kirk has been spending a lot of time with colleagues from the rest of Europe and even China, who are seeking to import and/or develop variants of flexicurity. See:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4849694.stm>.

Fined for crossing the picket line

The Ontario Superior Court of Justice has sided with the [Public Service Alliance of Canada](#) in imposing fines on members who crossed picket lines during a strike against the federal government in 2004. So far the court has ordered four members to pay fines ranging from \$117 to more than \$1,000. Fines are calculated on the basis of wages collected while other workers were off the job in support of union negotiations.

Strike prevails in Nepal

The King of Nepal has promised to restore democracy following a national strike and intensive campaigning across the country. A coalition of political parties and trade union bodies led the protests after King Gyanendra assumed absolute power in February last year. The government responded with increasing violence, and about 260 trade unionists and civil society representatives were arrested. Last month alone about 20 protestors were killed. But their struggle has prevailed.

US ignoring core labour standards

The [ICFTU](#) has released a new report on the poor record of the United States regarding labour standards. The US has still ratified only two of the eight ILO Core Labour Conventions. Among those it has not ratified are the ILO Convention on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining and the Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise. The right to strike and the right to collective bargaining are severely restricted, particularly in the case of public sector workers. The US has also not ratified the Convention on Equal Remuneration, nor the Convention on Discrimination.

See: <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223549>.

100,000 health jobs to vanish in the UK?

health reforms Tony Blair wants, according to a new report from (pro-market) think tank Reform. The Department of Health has disputed the findings. Meanwhile nurses' leaders have announced a campaign of protest to unite the profession against cuts in jobs and patient services. See <http://society.guardian.co.uk/publicfinances/story/0,,1752218,00.html>.

Massive industrial action across the UK

Up to a million workers walked off the job in the UK this month in what the unions claim is the biggest mass show of industrial muscle since the 1926 general strike. Industrial action paralysed schools, libraries, leisure centres and transport networks across the country. Dave Prentis, leader of [Unison](#), said the government had reached a deal last year with millions of civil servants, teachers and health workers allowing them to retire at 60. "All we are asking for is the same kind of protection for council workers," he said.

Harsh new regime down under

The Australian government is dodging the truth about the real impact of its new industrial relations laws, according to ACTU and ICFTU President Sharan Burrow. "Anyone who works for a company with 100 or less employees can be sacked for no reason," she says. She cites a recent example in which eight workers - some of whom had worked for the company for more than twelve years - were handed a letter simply stating: 'your services are no longer required' and 'consequently you are terminated forthwith'. Not only is no reason required... but no warning need be given, and the worker has no come-back. "That is the cold hard reality of the Howard Government's new industrial relations laws," said Ms Burrow. See http://actu.asn.au/work_rights/tools_resources/

Good citizenship!

US NGO Public Citizen has set up an online GATS Directory to help demystify GATS negotiations, and to highlight some of the challenges posed to public interest in sectors such as health care and transport. Users can search the directory by sector (eg health, higher education, insurance, road and rail transportation); by key issue area (eg energy, land use, off-shoring or domestic regulations); or by keyword. The resource is available at: http://www.citizen.org/trade/forms/gats_search.cfm.

Seventeen years of failure on poverty

The World Bank's [Independent Evaluation Group](#) (IEG) has released a study of the Bank's work on trade liberalisation from 1987 to 2004. It concludes that while the Bank has been successful in increasing openness to trade, its trade programmes have not delivered the poverty alleviation or economic growth expected. It recommends the Bank gives greater attention to addressing poverty and distributional outcomes, while cushioning against shocks associated with trade policies. IEG director general Vinod Thomas said: "The evaluation confirms that liberalising trade alone is not enough to generate growth and fight poverty." The report and associated press release (in En, Fr, Es), is available from <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/trade/>.

Canada failing to protect union rights

A new book, **Labour Left Out** by Roy Adams, emeritus professor of industrial relations at McMaster University, reports on the failure of Canadian governments to protect and promote collective bargaining rights. The ILO has cited Canada as one of the world's worst violators of basic labour rights. James Clancy, president of the [National Union of Public and General Employees](#), has described the book as a valuable contribution to the promotion of labour rights as a human rights. See: <http://www.nupge.ca/news%5F2006/n15ma06a.htm>.

Service negotiations on again

WTO services negotiations are under way again. Who is demanding what, and from whom?

And what does this mean for your country? Below is a link to a list of countries who are acting as "demandeurs", and their target countries. Under GATS classifications many of these services cover services that are provided in both the private and public sectors. For example hospitals have computer services, energy services, legal services, audio-visual services, transport services. PSI, along with many other unions and NGOs, are:

- * Putting pressure on demandeurs to withdraw their demands from developing countries;
- * Urging developing countries to deny requests.

It is urgent that these pressures are exerted now, since countries must respond before the end of July, and many are being asked to respond before the end of April. If you get any feedback from your government please contact Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org

- * Demandeur and the target countries: <http://www.world-psi.org/demandeurs#list>

If you would prefer to receive this list by fax or email, contact communications@world-psi.org or phone 0033 (0)4 5040 6464.

Public services photo library

Do you have any good photos of public service workers at work? If so, PSI would like to receive them. We are developing an on-line image library for PSI affiliates and regional offices.

The photos must be of good quality (high resolution) and copyright-free. Please send your photos to:

PSI Communications Unit, 45, avenue Voltaire, BP 9

01211 Ferney Voltaire Cedex, France.

If you wish the photos to be returned please provide clear postal instructions. Photos can also be emailed to communications@world-psi.org.

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