

7,000 prison service staff to share £50m in back pay

More than 7,000 mainly female civilian staff working in the prison service in England and Wales are to share £50m after settlement of an equal pay case. Administrative staff will receive back pay of between £500 and £50,000. The dispute between the prison service and PSI affiliate the **Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)** has taken more than six years to settle. The union claimed that there were pay gaps of up to £4,000. Union president Janice Godrich said: "This landmark settlement will see justice on pay for thousands of hard-working staff who keep our prisons working."

Training manual against workplace violence

This new manual is the result of continuing PSI/ILO work on the joint project to counter workplace violence in the health sector. The **Framework Guidelines** were agreed three years ago and distributed to all PSI affiliates in the health sector. The **training manual** has been developed over the last year, including pilot testing in South Africa, and is now ready for use in a health sector training environment. As with all such materials it can be adapted for use in different national settings. The accompanying CD-rom provides the manual in electronic format and an additional Powerpoint presentation. The electronic version of the manual is available on the PSI website www.world-psi.org. A copy is being sent to all PSI affiliates in the health sector.

PSI website on health

We have developed new pages on the PSI website devoted to health issues. They also cover HIV/Aids, safety at work, health reform and nursing. There is a link to the page on migration and women health workers. See www.world-psi.org/health. French and Spanish versions will be available soon. Please send your feedback to communications@world-psi.org.

Equality at work: The global picture

PSI is marking **International Women's Day on 8th March** with the publication of a wall map entitled *Equality at Work: the Global Picture*. The map shows which countries around the world have ratified ILO Convention 100 (Equal Remuneration) and ILO Convention 111 (Discrimination - Employment and Occupation). It also shows the gender wage gap in different parts of the world and is accompanied by a discussion sheet. The production of the map is a collaborative effort from a number of trade unions and NGOs, coordinated by the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR). It forms part of a series of wall maps on the fundamental labour standards. The map will be available in English, French and Spanish. We look forward to hearing from you concerning your activities to mark International Women's Day on 8th March. Write to us at equality@world-psi.org.

Outrageous violation of human rights in Canada

The Liberal government of Jean Charest has rammed through one of the most anti-worker pieces of legislation in recent Canadian history. Bill 142, "An Act Respecting the Working Conditions in the Public Sector", imposes a seven-year contract on 500,000 hospital workers, teachers, civil servants, school support staff and other provincial public sector workers. The Bill imposes wages and working conditions on Québec's 500,000 public sector workers until March 2010. It includes a 33-month wage freeze retroactive to June 30, 2003, and annual wage increases of 2 percent in the last four years of the legislated contract. The imposed contract will expire in March 2010. Public sector workers will see a real decline in their wages of close to 6% between 2003 and 2010. Bill 142 also toughens and extends to the whole of Quebec's public sector anti-strike sanctions. From now until March 31, 2010, any public sector worker involved in a work stoppage will lose two day's pay for every day off the job and fines of up to \$500. Union officials face fines ranging from \$7,000 to \$35,000 per day and unions face fines ranging from \$25,000 to \$125,000. See <http://www.nupge.ca/presidentscommentary/n27ja06c.htm>

PSI and NGOs challenge water privatisation

An alliance of unions and NGOs, including PSI, has agreed on a plan of action to put "optimal pressure" on European Union (EU) negotiators as they make preparations for the **World Water Forum** (WWF) to be held in Mexico City, 16-22 March. They are calling on negotiators to acknowledge that water should be recognised as a human right, that a wide range of water privatisation initiatives have not delivered in developing countries, and that while some public water companies perform poorly, public sector reform can lead to major improvements. "Public-public partnerships, which match up well-performing public utilities with those that are performing less well, should share expertise so as to drive up standards, on a not-for-profit basis," the groups said in a statement. Such a move deserves "ambitious political and financial support from European governments." PSI and its affiliates will be actively participating in the WWF. If your union intends to be in Mexico City, or for further information, contact David.Boys@world-psi.org.

Ver.di strikes for fair public service wages

PSI German affiliate **Ver.di** began on 6 February the country's first open-ended public sector strike in 14 years to push for lower working time. The strikes began in Baden-Württemberg, where 10,000 public-sector employees stayed at home, and are expected to spread throughout the country over the coming weeks. Ver.di research has shown that working hours have been continually extended without any pay increases. So successful has this policy of wage restraint been, it is now actually having a negative impact on consumer spending. Despite the evidence, regional employers are still resisting union calls. Ver.di President Frank Bsirske convincingly argued that the regional demands for longer working hours would mean job cuts throughout the country. The sectors that will be involved in this campaign include waste disposal, road and street maintenance, hospitals, kindergartens, water-cleaning plants and various administrations. PSI has written a letter of support to Ver.di, acknowledging that if they succeed, it will be a victory for trade unions all over Europe.

Disability and work

The ILO has recently published **Trade unions and workers with disabilities: promoting decent work, combating discrimination**. This ILO labour education publication is aimed at trade union organisations, labour research institutions and public authorities as well as individuals engaged in research on labour and social policies. This issue provides a series of articles on disability and work, including the ILO's role, the human cost of discrimination and the double discrimination of women. There are also reports on a number of initiatives to fight discrimination and ensure equality of treatment and opportunities for disabled workers in Canada, France, Norway and Ukraine. See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/publ/137/index.htm>.

Positively public

Unison has opened a new phase of its **Positively Public** campaign. Unison wants to engage more closely with the views and aspirations of the public and service users. The union recognizes that in addition to challenging the government where they disagree with the policies, they need to do more to develop and promote positive policy alternatives. They recently commissioned a survey of the general public and Unison members, exploring both groups' perceptions of public services, and their views on what changes are needed. They found that service users wanted to see an improvement in existing services, rather than see new ones created, and felt that such improvements should come via greater co-operation between public-service providers, rather than involving the private sector. *"It's not rocket science to realize that the people best placed to suggest ways to improve public services are those people who deliver and use them,"* said Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis at the campaign launch in Westminster. Over the coming months, Unison will be hosting a series of events bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss some of the emerging issues for public services. For more information go to www.unison.org.uk/positivelypublic.

French youth demonstrates against labour contract

About 120,000 young workers and students took to the streets across France on 7 February to protest against proposed new labour rules which would allow companies to lay off young people (aged below 26) within the first two years of employment with no justification and little notice. PSI Connect chairperson Chair Linn Hemmingsen asked what kind of signal the government is trying to send with this proposal. *"Is this an attempt to increase employment? Then it is simply wrong-headed. A similar experiment in Sweden failed dismally. Young people are under severe financial pressures as it is, with lower pay, young children to provide for, and huge loans to cope with. Try getting a mortgage on top of that, with no job security!"* For more see: www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=357673

New ILO report: Global Employment Trends

This new ILO report shows that, despite 4.3 per cent global GDP growth in 2005, only 14.5 million of the world's more than 500 million extreme working poor were able to rise above the US\$1 per day, per person poverty line. Of the more than 2.8 billion workers in the world, 1.4 billion still did not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the poverty line - just as many as 10 years ago. The total number of jobless stood at 191.8 million people at the end of 2005, an increase of 2.2 million since 2004 and 34.4 million since 1995. Almost half of the world's unemployed are young people aged 15 to 24, and they are more than three times as likely as adults to be out of work. See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/download/getb06en.pdf>

Growth isn't working

This is a new publication by the **New Economics Foundation (nef)**. It describes the unbalanced distribution of benefits and costs from economic growth. Until now, whatever the issue, be it poverty, unemployment or an ailing environment, the answer has been "growth". But nef reveals the opposite. The share of economic benefits from growth reaching the poorest is drying up, and at the same time, the poorest are paying a disproportionately large share of environmental costs. In 1990, 23% of the world's population was below the \$1-a-day poverty line, but between 1990 and 2001, only 60 cents of every \$100 of extra income generated by global growth contributed to poverty reduction. In other words, it took an extra \$166 of production and consumption to generate each \$1 of poverty reduction. See www.neweconomics.org.

Union merger in Finland

Six Finnish trade unions have merged to form the **Trade Union of the Public and Welfare Sectors**

JHL. The new union represents almost a quarter of a million members. The union was formed to face the changes in the public sector in Finland that affect the environment and working life and require trade unions to reorganise on a broad front. It recognises that a strong trade union is necessary to confront changes in service provision and to secure and develop the Finnish welfare society. "*JHL will also have a stronger focus on safeguarding interests on the international forums.*" says Merja Launis, Head of JHL's International Unit, "*It will be challenging for us to follow the developments in all the sectors that JHL now covers, and, even more, to make visible the link between the global issues and the everyday working life of our members.*" See www.jhl.fi.

European health and safety policy

The European Trade Union Institute, Health and Safety Department (ETUI-HESA) has published

Finding your way in the European Union Health and Safety Policy - A trade union guide.

This handbook gives an overview of the EU institutions and procedures involved in regulating health and safety at work, and the role of trade unions in relation to it. Readers can explore the structure and organisation of the EU, the ways in which trade unions can have an influence, or specific national examples. It focuses on the EU rules on health and safety at work and the directives that are drawn up on the basis of the EU Treaty. It also includes technical standards, recommendations and guidance documents. The handbook costs 10€ and is available from the ETUI website. A French version will be published in March. See <http://hesa.etui-rehs.org/uk/publications/pub36.htm>.

Call for G8 HIV/Aids permanent working party

The Global Union Programme on HIV/AIDS is building support for its demand that the G8 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, U.S. and the U.K.) establish a permanent working party on HIV/AIDS at their next Summit in Russia, July 2006. Last July, G8 leaders called for a mechanism to ensure progress on development issues from one Summit to the next, including universal access to HIV treatment through strengthening health care capacity and reducing the price of drugs and testing. The role of a permanent working group would be to monitor and evaluate progress on commitments made by the G8. The Global Unions Programme wants G8 countries to honour commitments to deal with the damage they admit HIV/AIDS have caused to health and education sectors, and to provide for a considerable increase in resources for health care workers and health services as a whole. Country profiles for HIV/AIDS have been produced with the assistance of UNAIDS to facilitate monitoring of the anticipated G8 committee by Global Unions.

They are available here: www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpT_4a.EN.pdf. Please note that this is a very large file that takes several minutes to download.

NGOs are the most trusted

A global survey has confirmed NGOs as the most trusted institutions, way ahead of businesses,

governments and the media. The **2006 Annual Trust Barometer**, run by global Public Relations firm

Edelman, has confirmed NGOs as the single most trusted institutions in nearly every country surveyed in Europe, America and Asia, except for China. In Europe, governments are the least trusted in Germany (27%) and France (32%), closely followed by the UK and Spain (33%). Italians trust their governments more at 39%. Businesses are trusted by 33% of respondents in Germany and only 28% in France. In comparison, they are trusted by 45% of respondents in Spain, 51% in Italy and 53% in the UK. In France, trust in business has plummeted from 47% in 2004 to 28% in 2006. The results of the survey were presented on 25 January to a panel of business, public affairs, political and media representatives in the European Parliament. See www.edelman.com/news>ShowOne.asp?ID=102.

EU bypasses World Bank to create Africa fund

The European Union has created a trust fund for providing low-interest loans for infrastructure projects in

Africa, independently of the World Bank. The EU has taken this initiative because Europe does not have the influence it deserves within the Bank, currently headed by US neo-conservative Paul Wolfowitz. The European bloc covers 25 nations and provides some 56 percent of the world's development assistance. A spokesman for EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said the EU's executive agreed to launch the fund jointly with the European Investment Bank on 9 February. It should be operational by June. The fund will mainly provide subsidised low-interest loans to finance water, energy, transport and telecoms infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on cross-border projects.

The IMF: the wrong business model or the wrong business

Outstanding loans to the IMF have fallen from \$90 billion to \$66 billion in 18 months and are forecast to fall to \$35 billion by the end of 2006. The reduction has been sharply increased by Argentina and Brazil, who have both decided to repay their loans early. This poses a problem for the Fund which relies on interest from its lending to fund its operational costs. **Jubilee Research, UK**, has published a paper that argues that it is not just a question of whether the IMF is using the wrong business model, but whether the Fund is the wrong institution trying to do the wrong job in the wrong way. The issue now is whether it is enough for it to swallow its own medicine, and undertake its own structural adjustment programme – to cut its own spending in line with its declining income. See the full paper on www.world-psi.org.

External evaluators sought

PSI is seeking to contract two external consultants for a period of three weeks to evaluate the **PSI pay equity campaign 2002-2005**. The evaluation would consist of a desk review and field visits. PSI is looking for one person with specialised knowledge of advocacy or negotiations on equal pay/pay equity for the union movement; and one person with specialised knowledge of gender mainstreaming and women in development issues. Good written and spoken English is required and Spanish would be an advantage. For more information, please contact equality@world-psi.org. Deadline for applicants is **5 March 2006**.

Valuing international work

Jan Davidsen, president of the **Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees**, explains what it means to him to be part of PSI. "We get great value for money," he says. "International work grows more important every year. Through PSI we get admission to the whole United Nations system, and to WTO and GATS negotiations. If we are going to become more proactive in dealing with multinational companies, we have to work with unions from other countries." Read the article on www.world-psi.org.

Quote of the day

"No one can believe we have done this." **Eduardo Rojas, Bolivia's Deputy Minister of Public Works**, when Bolivia cancelled a water contract with the multinational Bechtel. Bechtel has abandoned the lawsuit it launched against Bolivia four years ago.

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