

Pipe dreams

On the occasion of World Water Day on 22 March, PSI has published report in collaboration with the World Development Movement and PSIRU. **Pipe dreams: the failure of the private sector to invest in water services in developing countries** presents the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) for water, and considers whether they will be fulfilled. It reviews actual investment in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia and includes case studies and pertinent financial information. With a foreword by Hans Engelberts, PSI General Secretary, and Benedict Southworth, Director of the World Development Movement. See www.world-psi.org.

IFC adopts core labour standard rule

A long PSI struggle has finally borne fruit, with the World Bank's lending arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), agreeing that adherence to core labour standards should become a condition of all loans. Governments and private companies must comply with this if they wish to get IFC finance. As part of its campaign, PSI organised for affiliates to lobby governments and Executive Directors of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund. The new Policy and Performance Standards on Social & Environmental Sustainability have been posted on the IFC website:

[http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/policyreview.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/Policy+and+Performance+Standards+FINAL+03-06-06/\\$FILE/Policy+&+Performance+Standards+PUBLIC+FINAL-03-06-06.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/policyreview.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/Policy+and+Performance+Standards+FINAL+03-06-06/$FILE/Policy+&+Performance+Standards+PUBLIC+FINAL-03-06-06.pdf)

Hospital workers in Korea fight repression

Workers at the Sejong hospital in South Korea are on strike after management refused collective bargaining and started a campaign of severe repression against the hospital workers' union, the KHMWU. The hospital management has dismissed full-time union activists, disconnected the electricity supply to the union office and hired bodyguards who have aggressed union members, including breaking the leg of one activist. Hong Kyung-ok, President of KHMWU and a member of PSI World Women's Committee, has started a sit-out demonstration. The union needs your support! For further information including a sample letter, see www.world-psi.org/urgentaction.

European Services Directive

The provisional text of the European Parliament's Services directive was adopted on 16 February. The European Public Services Federation (EPSU) concluded that the results of the vote on the Services Directive represented "significant progress", particularly on health and social services. The focus is now on unambiguously excluding all public services from the scope. European public service unions are being urged to contact their national governments to call for a clear exclusion of public services from the directive. There are two key concerns:

- Demanding that all Public Services (Services of General Economic Interest in 'EU speak') are excluded from the directive.
- Ensuring that those sectors already excluded by the European Parliament are not reintroduced by the Council of Ministers (e.g. social services, all healthcare, transport).

To read the provisional text, follow this link:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?TYPE=DOC=TA&REF=P6-TA-2006-0061&MODE=SIP&L=EN&LSTDOC=N>.

EPSU has identified the key risks that still remain in the directive. See www.epsu.org/a/1819.

US Defense workers win decision against anti-bargaining rules

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the United Department of Defense Workers Coalition, which represent more than 700,000 workers at the US Department of Defense, have won a major court victory against President Bush's newly established National Security Personnel System (NSPS). On 27 February, US District Court Judge Emmett Sullivan ruled the new system "fails to ensure even minimal collective bargaining rights." A union spokesman said the ruling confirms that the NSPS "is an effort to radically undermine the rights of more than 700,000 civilian workers...[The system] is a template for what this White House would like to establish for both private and public sector workers." The Defense Department has not yet announced whether it will appeal Sullivan's ruling.

Anti-privatisation and anti-Thaksin

Energy and water unions in Thailand have been working against the privatisation of the electricity supply since 2003. In February this year, they created the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). They have extended the anti-privatisation campaign by putting pressure on the corrupt Prime Minister, Thaksin, to resign. The unions have already forced him to call a new election, less than one year after winning a landslide majority. The PAD has organised more than 100,000 public rallies that have gathered together thousands of demonstrators, and has called for a general strike if the Prime Minister fails to resign. PSI is continuing to monitor the situation. See more about trade union rights in Thailand below.

New UN Human Rights Council

The UN General Assembly voted on 15 March for the setting up of a new Human Rights Council to replace the Human Rights Commission. The Council will be the main United Nations forum for dialogue and cooperation on human rights. Its focus will be to help member states meet their human rights obligations

through dialogue, capacity building and technical assistance. The Council will also make recommendations to the General Assembly for further development of international law in the field of human rights. It is envisaged that the election of the first members of the Human Rights Council will take place on 9 May and that the first meeting of the Council will be convened on 19 June. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=114&Body=human%20rights%20council&Body1=>.

NHS privatisation: death or disability?

Two recent incidents highlight the disastrous effects of privatisation on the UK's National Health Service. In February, the Department of Health transferred the service which delivers oxygen supplies to patients' homes to four private companies. A woman is reported to have died because her oxygen delivery from one private provider came too late to help her overcome breathing difficulties at her home. Then in March, we learned that NHS hospitals are having to repair the damage done during botched operations on people who have been sent to private centres for hip and knee replacements to cut waiting lists. The easier cases were sent to Independent sector treatment centres (ISTCs), but the number of patients with problems resulting from poor surgery - incorrectly inserted prostheses, technical errors and infected joint replacements has increased dramatically. Privatisation is obviously not good for your health. See www.keepournhspublic.com.

Saying no to privatisation

More than 75 trade union leaders and activists from six countries met in Ottawa 14-16 March under the PSI umbrella to foster alliances and develop a coordinated agenda to prevent the privatisation of public services. Unionists from Belize, Canada, Norway, South Africa, the United States, and the United Kingdom attended the conference, which provided a forum to share and evaluate recent union campaigns against privatisation and to develop a coordinated trade union agenda in the fight for quality public services. PSI was represented by Wendy Caird, Director of the Quality Public Services campaign. See http://www.nupge.ca/news_2006/n14ma06c.htm.

Zambia rejects IFI pressure to privatise telecoms

Zambia has been engaged in a battle with the IMF and World Bank for several years to stave off privatisation of the few state-owned enterprises that escaped the privatisation wave of the 1990s. The IFIs calls for the state's landline monopoly to be run by the private sector as part of an effort to increase

economic efficiency. But Zambia's finance minister has stated that the government will reject IFI pressure to privatise the telecom service (Zamtel), and instead operate the publicly owned enterprise on a commercial basis with a possible minority shareholder. Last year Zamtel said it had invested \$38 million to expand its network from 30,000 subscribers to 130,000 by year-end. See

<http://www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3127152>

Bumper year for the privateers

Despite growing popular resistance, 2005 was a record year for the privateers. Across Europe, privatisation volume exceeded \$100 billion for the first time after the turn of the century. European divestitures closed with a balance of 75 major privatisations worth €67.7 billion, just short of the all-time record reported in year 2000. This was largely because of France, which raised almost half the total with the IPO Electricité de France, as well as the largest secondary accelerated sale (France Telecom), and three out of the four largest private sales via the complete divestiture of the highway sector. European governments' ultimate ownership is worth €295 billion, with France's share of this exceeding €93 billion. (Italy follows with €31.6 billion. The most valuable stakes in New Europe are those of Poland - worth €11.81 billion - and the Czech Republic - worth €10.37 billion. For more information see the **Privatization Barometer** newsletter www.privatizationbarometer.net/newsletter

Beyond the market: the future of public services

The Transnational Institute has published its Public Services Yearbook 2005/6 in English and Spanish.

Beyond the Market, the future of public services has been written in collaboration with the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) and is split into four sections: concepts and issues; sectoral trends; national reports; and social and corporate actors. It includes chapters by, among others, John Lister, Prayas Energy Group (India), and Dave Hall from the PSIRU. The preface to the book is written by Susan George. She sums up the book's message: "This yearbook is not just a compilation of articles - however important and excellent they may be. It is also a call to arms. Many of its chapters prove that privatisation is not inevitable; that we can and must react to protect, preserve and reclaim our public service inheritance. It is clear that without extensive, universally distributed public services, there is no way the world can realise the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals." See www.tni.org.

Trade union rights in Thailand

The US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has published a very thorough report on human and

trade union rights in Thailand. It reports on a series of violations, including

- arbitrary and unlawful killings by both security force personnel and insurgents as well as deaths in police custody
- torture and excessive use of force by police
- arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention without charge
- impunity for human rights abusers
- widespread corruption
- inadequate protection of worker rights
- forced labor and child labor
- mistreatment of foreign migrant workers.

Read the full report on <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61628.htm>

Resource alert

Unions in health and local government who are dealing with government "initiatives" to involve the private sector in service delivery are advised to take a look at Unison's excellent online resources: <http://www.unison.org.uk/pfi/index.asp>. These pages include comprehensive reports and documents on the UK's disastrous **Private Finance Initiative (PFI)** and **Public Private Partnerships**. The **PSI Resource Bank** (www.world-psi.org/bank) contains more information (click the Privatisation button).

Representing women at global level

PSI was represented at the 50th Session of the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, held 27 February to 10 March in New York by Gloria Mills, UNISON UK, Chair of the PSI European regional women's committee and President of the British TUC; Junéia Batista, FETAM Brazil, Chair of the PSI Inter-Americas regional women's committee; and Nora Wintour, PSI Equality and Rights Officer. PSI, ICFTU, EI and ITF, together with WICEJ (Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice), hosted a panel discussion on migrant women workers and lobbied for language on the role of quality public services in the promotion of gender equality to be included in the conclusions. For further information on the meeting and a link to the CSW website, go to www.world-psi.org/gender.

Your rights at work

After its successful tour in 2005, the bright orange **Your Rights At Work** bus will take to the roads of New South Wales, Australia, in May. The bus takes Rights at Work issues directly to the public, visiting regional and local communities throughout the state. Last year, 29 grassroots groups were set up across the state by local activists campaigning against the government's workplace laws. This year's tour features an expanded itinerary, running from the end of May to late July and taking in more regional centres. See

<http://www.rightsatwork.com.au/>.

2006 Silver Rose Awards

Every year, Solidar organises the **Silver Rose Awards** that celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations throughout the world who have made an outstanding contribution to social justice. The awards are presented in two categories – one for an organisation or individual working within the 25 European Union Member States and one for an organisation or individual working in any country outside the European Union. If you want to nominate an individual or an organisation, you can download the application form from www.solidar.org.

International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers

28 April is the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers. The day provides an opportunity to highlight the effects of unsustainable work, workplaces and forms of production on workers' lives and well-being. The slogan for this year's 28 April is Union Workplaces – Safer Workplaces and the selected themes are: Asbestos and the Global Union 'Ban Asbestos' Campaign; HIV/AIDS - workplace aspects and implementation of programme responses; and ILO Conventions and Instruments that relate to Occupational, Health and Safety, including those related to employment transition. Trade unions can use this occasion to raise the awareness of broad sectors of the public concerning the health and safety issues that concern us all. The ICFTU has published some guidelines for unions: www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH_3d.EN.pdf.

Women and men in Europe

European women live six years longer than European men and they are better educated, too. Eurostat, the statistics branch of the European Commission, has published two comparative studies on the life of women and men in Europe. The studies offer statistical information showing that more women than men completed at least upper secondary education in 2005, 80% of women compared to 75% of men. Women were more likely to be unemployed than men, but they work longer hours than men. Women spend more time on domestic activities, but free-time activities are

distributed in a similar manner for men and women. See <http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/>

PSI 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 in order to provide this resource to PSI affiliates and regional offices. The photos must be of good quality (high resolution) and copyright-free. Please send your photos to communications@world-psi.org.

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