



PSI

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Threats against PSLINK General Secretary Annie Geron



Annie Geron, PSLINK General Secretary and PSI Vice-President for the Asia-Pacific Region, has been issued with a transfer order to a remote area of the country after filing a complaint of corruption against her employer. Other members of staff, many of them union members, and Annie's husband, all who work at the Technical Education Skills and Department Authority (TESDA) in Manila have been threatened with the same action. PSI has written a letter of complaint to President Arroyo, and requests affiliates to send protest letters. For more details, and to send a protest letter directly from your computer via email, go to www.world-psi.org/urgentaction.



European social dialogue for the hospital sector

In September, the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM) met in the first formal meeting of a European Sectoral Dialogue committee for the hospital sector. This means that workers and employers can have a direct formal input on EU policies affecting the hospital sector. Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, EPSU General Secretary, said, "EPSU and HOSPEEM have identified three key areas in the hospital sector where a European approach provides added value: recruitment and retention, the age profile of workers in the sector and the new skill needs required of hospital personnel. These are all areas that will benefit from being tackled collectively". See <http://www.epsu.org/a/2364>.

PSI Migration Pre-Decision and Information Kit



PSI is distributing the Pre-Decision and Information Kit: a new resource pack on "Migration and Women Health Workers." The kit is a package of information that aims to assist health care workers make the right choice when faced with the decision of migrating for employment. It contains practical information on cost of living situation, legal and employment rights and union contacts in the destination countries. It also provides general information on the issues on migration in the health sector and the role of public sector trade unions. For more information, visit www.world-psi.org/migration or contact

Canada: Private jail returns to the public sector



The staff at the only private adult jail in Canada will be public employees again in November, ending a failed five-year privatisation experiment launched by the Conservative government of former Ontario Premier Mike Harris. The Liberal government made the decision to bring the operation of the 1,184-bed facility back into the public sector on the basis of a study comparing costs and performance with a publicly run jail in Lindsay. The latter facility rated better in key areas such as security, health care and reducing re-offending rates. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/NUPGE) represents employees at both facilities. The union and its allies in the community have been campaigning for years to have the jail returned to the Ontario Public Service. See www.nupge.ca/news_2006/n27se06a.htm.

Norway cancels illegitimate debt for five countries



The Norwegian government has proposed to cancel US\$80 million in debt owed to the country by five developing countries in acknowledgement that the debt was extended irresponsibly and without due regard for the developmental needs of the recipient countries. Norway's Development Minister announced that the government will propose that Parliament approve the renunciation of claims against Ecuador, Egypt, Jamaica, Peru and Sierra Leone in its national budget for 2007. If approved, this unilateral and unconditional debt cancellation will mark the first time that a creditor country has accepted responsibility for its negligence and contribution to the debt accumulation of developing countries. NGOs have welcomed this move by the Norwegian government which they view as significant in light of the fact that creditors have traditionally been reluctant to accept responsibility for negligent, politically-motivated or corrupt lending in the past. See www.eurodad.org/articles/default.aspx?id=737. On 15 October, demonstrators confronted World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz in Oslo, where he attended a meeting on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. They demanded the Bank do more to eliminate debt in poor countries.



NAFTA fails workers

Twelve years after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the US, Canada and Mexico, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) has released a report detailing the trade deal's effects on the economies, working people and the labor markets of all

three nations. NAFTA has not lived up to its promise of better jobs and faster growth. Instead, inequality is growing and real wages are stagnating in all three countries, while the US-NAFTA trade deficit has skyrocketed. In his introduction to the report, Jeff Faux, EPI Distinguished Fellow and author of *The Global Class War*, says "NAFTA rules protect the interests of large corporate investors while undercutting workers' rights, environmental protections, and democratic accountability... The time for a continent-wide debate over the future of this agreement, which was negotiated by and for the rich and powerful in all three countries, is now overdue." Read the report on <http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/bp173>.

What happened to English bus services?



Twenty years of bus deregulation in the UK have resulted in declining public transport use, poorer services, and increased fares. Since bus services were deregulated in 1986, bus usage has declined by half in Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) areas and fares have increased by 86 percent in real terms. A report by NERA (www.nera.com) examines the future prospects for bus services in English PTE areas as well as the

various factors that have led to an overall decline. It also considers the impact of not implementing a new approach and concludes that, without a significant policy change, over the next ten years service levels in PTE areas will fall by around 20 percent, fares will rise by about 20 percent in real terms, and patronage will fall by 20 percent. See www.nera.com/publication.asp?p_ID=2928.

Global Unions regional staff capacity building



The ILO ACTRAV yearly workshop was held 9-13 October at the Turin Centre in Italy. This year, the subject was trade union education in the context of globalisation. Jenny Luck (PSI Education and Project Officer) co-facilitated the workshop with Alan Dave (ITF Education Officer). French and English-speaking African regional staff of ten Global Union Federations participated. The workshop analysed and debated the methodologies that are appropriate for

dealing with oppression in an African context, specifically exploring the use of tools such as participatory research and campaigning. The ILO provided inputs on International Standards and their education materials exploring the use of distance learning. Kamissa Dembélé, Project Coordinator for French Speaking Africa and San Baba Mohamed, Assistant Project Coordinator for East and West Africa, attended the workshop and ensured that public sector issues were discussed. One of the major outcomes of the workshop was the sharing of ideas and experiences and an initiative was to establish an Africa regional GUF network.



OHS survey in Serbia exposes weaknesses

Young activists from the Trade Union of Health and Social Care Workers in Serbia have carried out a survey among Serbian young health sector workers on occupational health and safety (OHS). The survey indicates that OHS services at the work place are poorly organised, and more than 70% of respondents did not know what their rights were. The majority of workers were not informed on OHS measures concerning the use of equipment, and nearly 80% did not know the procedure for establishing a work-related injury and claiming an indemnity. The results of the survey demonstrate the shortcomings of Serbian occupational safety and health administration in the health sector. See the full report here: www.gszsz-nezavisnost.org/english/docs/survey_report.pdf.



The cost of water privatisation

The German energy giant RWE wants to get out of the water business where capital requirements are huge and profits are not high enough. RWE also wants to be ready to expand in Europe's energy market. After a year of trying to sell, RWE found a buyer for Thames Water, which supplies drinking water to 8 million people and sewerage services to 13 million customers. Kemble Water, the consortium led by Macquarie

European Infrastructure Funds, bid £4.8bn and agreed to assume £3.2bn of debt to give an implied enterprise value of £8bn. Macquarie is an Australian merchant bank which has expanded very aggressively in the last decade.

In order to be more attractive to prospective buyers, Thames management announced 25% staff cuts. The British unions are negotiating with management. A controversial subsidiary of Thames, Jakarta Water, was supposedly sold to Singaporean investors, but the sale is being contested in Jakarta. RWE is also trying to sell American Water Works. PSI and its unions in Germany, the UK, the USA and Indonesia are coordinating to defend the rights and interests of workers in this very complex corporate divestiture. For more information see

www.ofwat.gov.uk/aptrix/ofwat/publish.nsf/Content/tms_leakage_failure2005-06 and www.world-psi.org/PipeDreams.

El Salvador: Human rights violations



PSI is concerned about the resurgence of “death squads” in El Salvador following a series of serious human rights violations earlier this year.

Two FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Alliance) activists were brutally murdered and the parents of a well-known FMLN activist were assassinated. Death threats have been made to PSI affiliate ANDA and the Attorney for the Defence of Human Rights Office has published a report which proves the existence of “extermination groups” within the

National Police Force. PSI sent a letter of protest to President Saca on 18 October expressing its concern and requesting that these death threats and assassinations be thoroughly investigated and stopped and that the police not be used as a military force as this is in clear violation of the peace agreement.

Germany: More than 220,000 demonstrate against government policy



A nation-wide trade union day of action was held in five major cities on 21st October. It featured large protests organised by trade unions against the neo-liberal policies of the so-called “big coalition” of Conservatives and Social Democrats. The planned reform to the financing of health care; the proposed raising of retirement age to 67; the decrease of unemployment benefits and further undermining of protections against dismissal; and changes to tax policy, were the focus of the protest movement.

In Berlin ver.di president Frank Bsirske requested a minimum wage of at least 7,50€ per hour. He

opposed the planned increase of the VAT parallel to a decrease in enterprise taxes. "These reforms are nothing but a giant redistribution operation" said Bsirske. The consequences for the population would be disastrous: raising the pension age to 67 would lead to increased poverty for the elderly; and the health reform plans would mean an abandonment of the national social insurance system. "Better is possible!" is the union slogan under which the protest actions of the union movement will continue. More on the [Ver.di website](#) .



Another World is Possible: The 3rd Southern Africa Social Forum

The 3rd Southern African Social Forum (SASF), together with a Youth Camp, was held in Lilongwe, Malawi, 13-15 October. The SASF brings together activists from different sectors, in the ten countries in the subregion.

The SASF was also part of the preparation for the World Social Forum that will be held in Africa for the first time in 2007, in Kenya. This year the SASF drew about 3000 activists of all ages. Amongst the activists were women and children, youth, NGOs, the informal sector, community based organisations, trade unions, the churches and social movements. The main theme was 'Unite against poverty and oppression', to build solidarity and to mobilise all working people. A PSI delegation participated in the SASF, especially on the session against privatisation of basic services and the struggle for quality public services. This gave rise to an SASF resolution that action against all forms of privatisation be taken in the subregion in March 2007.

US public wants health-care system revamped



A new survey shows that the majority of the US public supports revamping the US health care system so everyone receives a core group of guaranteed benefits. The Citizens' Health Care Working Group, a federally appointed commission, recommends that by 2012 all Americans have access to affordable health care, with guaranteed

benefits and protection against very high out-of-pocket expenses. According to the report, "Americans clearly want a system that guarantees health care for everyone... It should be public policy written in law that all Americans have affordable access to health care."

During its 18-month survey, the health care panel held 84 meetings across the country with more than 6,000 people attending. More than 14,000 responses came in to its online poll.

The Citizens' Health Care Working Group's findings have been presented to President Bush, who has 45 days to comment and issue his own report and present both to Congress. See www.citizenshealthcare.gov/.

Young trade unionists meet in Panama



Around 25 young workers from Central America and Andean countries met in the city of Panama, 18-20 September. The meeting offered a platform for thoughts and motivation for

the young people from trade unions in the two countries, and also the elaboration of strategies aimed at achieving an increased participation of young people in their unions. The meeting welcomed the participation of several trade union personalities and members of the Panamanian government.



ILO Decent Work Research Prize, 2007

The ILO's International Institute for Labour Studies has created an annual research prize for outstanding contributions to the advancement of knowledge on the ILO's central goal of decent work for all, and calls for the nomination of candidates. The prize can be awarded for:

- (1) Major specific contributions to the understanding of socio-economic relationships and policy instruments for the advancement of decent work as defined by the ILO (see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/download/ecosoc/decentwork.pdf>), or
- (2) A lifetime contribution to knowledge on the central concerns of the ILO and its constituents which reflects and advances understanding of the different dimensions of decent work (creating jobs; guaranteeing rights at work; extending social protection; promoting dialogue and conflict resolution; with gender equality as a cross-cutting objective).

In either case, both the excellence of the work and its practical relevance for policy purposes will be taken into account. For full details, see

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/nom.pdf>

Global Labour University – also in South Africa



The Global Labour University one year Master's Course on 'Labour Policies and Globalization' which has operated in Germany since 2004/5. will, from January 2008, be joined by a one year Masters' programme on 'Labour and Development' at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. The programme provides the opportunity to study partly in South Africa and partly in Germany. The Master's programmes support trade unions to substantially improve their intellectual profile by building a channel for the development of qualified trade union leaders, as well as supporting the recruitment of younger experts. The deadline for the next Masters' course is March 1, 2007 for the course starting September 1, 2007 in Germany and October 1, 2007 for the course starting January 15, 2008 in South Africa. The working language for the courses is English. For more information see <http://www.global-labour-university.org> or contact Mr. Christof Dieterle at the University of Kassel (ma-lpg@uni-kassel.de) or Ms. Mandy Moussouris at the University of the Witwatersrand (mandy.moussouris@wits.ac.za)



International Convention of Local Communities

The International Convention of Local Communities will meet in Geneva, 28-29 October. The Convention will be an opportunity to consider how public services are affected by current trends in trade liberalisation (the effect of liberalisation of trade in services on public services, financial issues, democratic rights, etc.). Speakers will include elected representatives from local communities, unions, social movements and NGOs from a number of countries. For further information (in eight languages!), go to www.agcs-gats.org.

Official Guinness World Record



The world record for the most people to 'Stand Up Against Poverty' in 24 hours was set on 15-16 October 2006 for the United Nation's Millennium Campaign and involved a massive total of 23,542,614 participants in 11,646 events around the globe. Six years ago, 189 world leaders sat down and agreed to end poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. On October 15-16, over 23 million people across the world stood up to remind them of this promise.



New web pages

We have opened two new pages on the PSI website. The page on racism and xenophobia offers background policy documents, useful links to anti-racism organisations and trade union websites with specific anti-racism campaigns as well as the latest news and publications on the issue. See www.world-psi.org/racism.

The new page on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered workers is also available in English (www.world-psi.org/lgbt) and French (www.world-psi.org/frlgbt). It contains publications, background information and news items. If you wish to make a contribution to these pages such as news items or useful links, please contact equality@world-psi.org.



Members only section

Documents for the meeting of the PSI Executive Board, 8-10 November, are now available for Executive Board members only on the PSI website www.world-psi.org/EB133.

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