

>>> "Sonia Sanchez" <Sonia.Sanchez@world-psi.org> 21.07.2009 12:03 >>>

Public Services International www.world-psi.org
<<http://www.world-psi.org>> July 2009

PSI World News

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OECD and TUAC: pension security central to global recovery

Retirement security and the right to decent, adequate and predictable pensions must be placed at the heart of economic recovery plans, according to leadership representatives of trade unions from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. This was the conclusion from a meeting on pensions organized by the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD held in Paris earlier this month. National Union of Public and General Employees' (NUPGE) National Secretary-Treasurer, Larry Brown (pictured left), attended the meeting representing both NUPGE and PSI. "It was reassuring to hear the OECD state so frankly that an effective pension system is not only socially necessary, but also one of the required responses to the economic crisis," he said.

OECD representatives who TUAC invited to the meeting also made it clear that the weakening of pension systems is not a sensible response to the economic crisis. OECD pointed out that cutting national pension systems during this period of economic instability would act as an economic destabilizer. This would be especially dangerous in a time when the baby boom generation is beginning to retire in large numbers. OECD officials said that the organisation is concerned about the creation of widespread poverty if pension systems are not maintained.

Read more here: <http://www.nupge.ca/node/2417>

Airport screeners a step closer to bargaining rights

American unions that organise airport luggage screeners are celebrating forthcoming new legislation to give them collective bargaining rights. The screeners, or transport security officers (TSOs) already have the

right to join unions, and many are members of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), a PSI affiliate, or the National Treasury Employees Union. But until now, those unions have not had the right to bargain on their members' behalf.

A bill has been passed through the Homeland Security Committee with success, and it will now go to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Finally, it will pass by Congress, though no date has yet been set.

President Obama wrote to the AFGE in October 2008, saying "advocation for TSOs to receive collective bargaining rights and workplace protections will be a priority for my administration. It is unacceptable for TSOs to work under unfair rules and without workplace protections - this makes it more difficult for them to perform their jobs."

In addition to providing collective bargaining rights, the bill would remove the pay-for-performance system and place employees under the General Schedule system that is widely used throughout the federal government.

Aubrey Williams, a member of AFGE Local 555 at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, predicted the legislation will lead to a transformed Transport Security Administration (TSA). "Collective bargaining," he said, will "level the playing field" in promotions, seniority and evaluations, while ending the current pay-for-performance system and providing union members the ability "to grieve injustices. Those are things we are looking for to make TSA a better place to work."

Read the AFGE press release here:

<http://www.afge.org/Index.cfm?Page=PressReleases&PressReleaseID=1018>

Health reform in the US

President Obama has explained his health reform plan during a meeting in Virginia on 1st July.

Obama explained that the present health system in the US has become untenable. In the past nine years, premiums have risen three times faster than wages, he said. Even though he recognised that the costs of reform will be high, the costs of inaction would be even greater. If nothing is done now, ten years from now one out of every five dollars earned will be spent on health care. Even those who have insurance are already paying extra in premiums for uncompensated care.

Obama proposed a mixed solution that will allow people who already benefit from employer-paid private health insurance to continue to do so. He will also offer a public option, to provide an affordable basic benefit package allowing health care for all.

The cost of the solution will be high, but Obama pointed to "smarter spending" and better prevention of health problems in order to save money and finance the reform. Offering regular check-ups will avoid paying more for emergency treatment that the taxpayer has to pay for anyway. To those who have already criticised the proposed reform, Obama asks "What is your alternative?". He urges unions and the public to get informed so that the scare tactics of the opposants don't work.

Watch the video of the meeting here:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/31695297#31687617>

examiner.com has published a series of articles called the "Health care reform series" available here:

<http://www.examiner.com/x-6665-Liberal-Examiner>

SEIU has started a special campaign against the scare tactics by oposants of the reform. See <http://haarm.org> <<http://haarm.org/>>

Australian union calls on local councils to provide greater free access to water facilities

The Australian Services Union (ASU), a PSI affiliate, has called for local councils throughout the country to provide greater public access to free water facilities to encourage less dependence on bottled water. The provision of water through retail sales outlets not only adversely affects the environment through the pollution caused by the manufacture and transportation of the plastic bottles, it can also represent a loss for the community where the water is produced.

ASU Assistant National Secretary Greg McLean said, "It makes little or no sense for us to pay for the transportation of bottled water around the world, increasing our carbon footprint and damaging the environment through the production of plastic water bottles, just because the bottle has a brand name on it. Instead, we could be consuming quality locally-produced public water for free. The use of plastic water bottles in Australia is of great concern not just because of the resulting environmental damage but simply because we are not taking advantage of Australia's great standard of public water."

Australia's public water is supplied by local and state governments as a direct public service or through state owned corporations. In order to beat the plastic bottle, local government councils can assist by making public water facilities available in shopping centres, public facilities, parks, public access areas and should provide the water freely to the community so they can refill and reuse their "plastic water bottles" as an alternative to purchasing bottled drinking water.

Read more here:

http://www.asu.asn.au/media/localgovt/20090714_waterbottles.html

Electric Utilities Sector Supplement now available

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), a not-for-profit organisation, has developed solid guidelines which companies should use in drafting their annual reports. Company annual reports are being increasingly scrutinised by a wide range of actors to help ensure that companies are acting responsibly. They can also be used by unions to strengthen the

union position on a range of issues - outsourcing, health and safety, training, etc. PSI worked with GRI for more than two years to develop GRI's Electric Utilities Sector Supplement. We urge you to recommend this supplement to management and to examine especially the social indicators to ensure that workers' views are considered in the reporting.

Click here

<<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateRedirect.cfm?template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=23036>> for further information and here <<http://www.globalreporting.org/ReportingFramework/SectorSupplements/ElectricUtilities>> to download the report.

Leaving your country to work abroad?

Because of the nature of the work that health professionals do, their services or expertise are in demand globally and they encounter fewer hurdles in changing to a new environment. Globalisation is offering increased opportunities for skilled people to migrate but there are also many challenges to look out for. PSI affiliates in South Africa and Oceania have recently published two new pamphlets to guide health workers and enable them to make an informed decision when considering relocating to work in another country.

Click here

<<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateRedirect.cfm?template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=23062>> for the pamphlet on migrating from and to South Africa to work in the health sector, prepared by South African PSI affiliates.

Click here

<<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateRedirect.cfm?template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=23035>> for the information passport for workers intending to seek employment outside Fiji, prepared by PSI affiliates in Oceania.

For more information, go to www.world-psi.org/migration.

PSI influential in trade and labour rights in the ASEAN region

The Australian Parliament has just released a major report on its relations with ASEAN based on a major enquiry into Australia's relationships with ASEAN, covering many issues including regional security, the regional economy, cultural links, trade, investment, the environment and global warming, security and human rights issues.

The enquiry was conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, comprising members of the both houses of the Australian Parliament. PSI affiliates in Australia, as well as the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), made formal written submissions and gave evidence in person to this enquiry. Those affiliates were the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), the Australian Services Union (ASU) and the Communications Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU).

David Carey and Paul Slape represented PSI Australian affiliates at the enquiry

PSI affiliates were represented at the enquiry by David Carey from the CPSU-SPSF and Paul Slape from the ASU who compiled the submission and evidence, and appeared in person as witnesses before the Committee.

PSI affiliates' submission centred on the necessity to have Australian financial and trade relations with ASEAN countries connected to Australia's commitment to human rights and labour rights, that PSI should not separate its commitment to human rights from trading and financial relations and, in fact, should insist upon those rights being observed being contingent on trading agreements and financial assistance.

For more details, click here

<<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateRedirect.cfm?template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=23081>> . Please find attached a report <<http://www.world-psi.org/TemplateRedirect.cfm?Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=25942>> by David Carey that gives further details on the enquiry. You can also contact him on dcarey@spsf.asn.au.

IMF austerity chills crisis countries

The latest issue of Bretton Woods Update (UK) includes an article on the public sector austerity conditions in some recent IMF emergency loans and their impact, focussing on the examples of Romania and Iceland in particular. Although the IMF has urged industrialized countries to adopt deficit-financed fiscal stimulus policies to counteract the impact of the global recession, the article states that only three developing countries -- India, Mozambique and Tanzania -- have been advised by the

IMF to adopt counter-cyclical stimulus policies.

Read the article here: <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/art-564828>.

World Outgames, Copenhagen, July-August 2009

PSI will be participating at the World Outgames and the 2nd International Conference on LGBT human rights, to be held in Copenhagen from 25 July to 2 August 2009. The games are a sporting event covering 38 different sports disciplines, but in addition, there will be a wide variety of cultural events including performances, exhibitions and parties. The human rights conference on 25-28 July will address issues and concerns of the LGBT community.

For more details see the World Outgames website: www.copenhagen2009.org
<<http://www.copenhagen2009.org/>>

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