

PSI World News

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French day of action

Up to three million people took to the streets all over France on 19th March for a day of action organised by all the major trade unions, and overwhelmingly supported by the majority of French citizens. During this period of financial crisis, many people are angry that big companies like the oil company Total are making staff redundant, while at the same time announcing record profits. The unions are demanding an increase in the minimum wage, the suspension of public sector job cuts, measures to protect employment and a halt to the 50% cap on income tax introduced in 2006 and maintained by the Sarkozy government.

Global Labour University students visit PSI

Six students from the Global Labour University Masters programme in Kassel, Germany, visited PSI on 19th March, where they met with PSI general secretary Peter Waldorff and Christine Roos and Jenny Luck from the Union Development and International Solidarity department. One of the students, Bernard Adjei from the Public Service Workers' Union of the TUC, Ghana, has spent six weeks with PSI for the internship that each student has to spend with a trade union organisation. Bernard has been working closely with Jenny Luck and he participated in the recent project planning workshop in South Africa. Next week he will visit the UK affiliate Prospect and he will participate in the Put People First rally in London on 28th March.

On the photo, left to right, are:

Bernard Adjei; Luciana Hachmann, Observatorio Social, Brazil; Elaine Hui, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions; Jenny Luck, PSI; Dina Nuriyat, SMBI, Indonesia; Christine Roos, PSI; Rebecca Pabón, Respect Network, Puerto Rico; Tina Kristensen, LO/NNF, Denmark; Peter Waldorff, PSI general secretary.

Elaine is spending her internship at the global union federation UNI, and the remaining participants are at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva.

For more information about the Global Labour University, see <http://www.global-labour-university.org> <<http://www.global-labour-university.org>> .

Global financial collapse highlights need for public water solutions

As the global economic and financial crisis deepens, workers attending the fifth World Water Forum are promoting proven public solutions that will meet the world's water and sanitation needs. Privatization has failed to deliver water and sanitation services. Now, the private sector can't even raise the capital needed. It is further evidence that the market model is fundamentally mismatched with the priorities that must guide water and wastewater services.

Treating water as a market commodity that is bought and sold to generate huge profits for a very few, exposes these vital services to the same forces that brought about the economic and financial collapse. Ending the global water crisis begins with strong public services. Public sector workers have a central role to play in building a future where everyone on the planet has access to water and sanitation services.

PSI has created a special blog on water, on which information will be posted throughout and after the World Water Forum. Find details of the PSI press conference, publications, opinions and ideas on <http://waterblog.world-psi.org/>.

Put People First!

G20 leaders will meet at the London Summit on 2 April to address the global financial crisis.

On 28th March, thousands of people will march through London as part of a global campaign to challenge the G20 ahead of the summit. Peter Waldorff, PSI general secretary, will attend the rally and a round-table discussion hosted by UNISON.

The platform of unions, development agencies, faith and environmental groups will tell world leaders that only just, fair and sustainable policies can lead the world out of recession. Under the banner Put People First - March for Jobs, Justice and Climate, the groups will demand decent jobs and public services for all, an end to global poverty and inequality, and a green economy.

The organisations backing Put People First say: "Recession must not be an excuse for putting off action for global justice or to stop climate chaos. The only sustainable way to rebuild the global economy is to create a fair distribution of wealth that provides decent jobs and public services for all, ends global inequality and builds a low carbon future."

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "People are angry at the job losses caused by this recession made in the world's banks and at the slow response of world leaders to the challenges of poverty and climate change.

"But while these are going to be desperately tough times, the collapse of free market fundamentalism and the big changes already brought about by President Obama provide the hope that world leaders can change course and start to build a fair and sustainable world."

PSI's UK affiliates are backing the march. See <http://www.putpeoplefirst.org.uk/>

Achieving decent work and sustainability

Affiliates from Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland planned a new 3-year project at a March workshop in Johannesburg. The project is sponsored by FNV, SASK & LOTCO and will commence in 2010. The project supports the struggle in each country for decent work and sustainable livelihoods for workers and their families as a part of the quality public services campaign. Under this overarching banner each country planned an approach that met their specific needs. The move to privatise public services in Namibia has meant loss of jobs and union members. In 2008 they successfully lobbied the government to outlaw labour hirers but need to ensure that the new law is implemented and take the campaign against privatisation to public sector workers. Swaziland will continue their struggle for trade union rights and democracy. They will raise awareness of the issue with public sector workers, request PSI and the ILO to assist with strategies and continue their campaigns from 2008. South Africa unions will build on their successful demonstrations last year that persuaded the government to include unions in the policy debates on a single public sector approach. All projects integrate gender equality to ensure that the issues are included in the campaign materials and demands and actively include women and young people's participation in activities.

Welsh hospital staff going back to the NHS

Some 250 hotel services staff currently employed by sub-contractors at Neath Port Talbot Hospital in Wales will be brought back into the National Health Service (NHS) following a long campaign by unions. The staff, who provide cleaning, catering, portering and security services, were privatised as part of the private finance initiative deal to build the £66m hospital, which opened in 2002. The move fulfils one of the Labour-Plaid Cymru Assembly Government's key One Wales pledges to end competitive tendering for NHS cleaning contracts and eliminate the use of the private sector in the NHS.

The contract for providing these services was up for renewal, and the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS decided to move these staff back to the NHS.

"I believe that this will improve patient care and improve the career opportunities for staff," said Health Minister Edwina Hart.

Dave Galligan, Unison's head of health in Wales, said: "This has been a long struggle to bring these staff back into the NHS and hasn't happened overnight. This move shows that the Assembly Government does not buy into PFI full stop and the health minister has been brave enough to say let's do something about this."

Global Labour University - 1 April deadline for Germany and India

The Global Labour University, previously described in PSI World News and FOCUS, offers Masters Programmes for trade unionists in four venues: the University of Kassel and the Berlin School of Economics in Germany; Wits in South Africa; the University of Campinas in Brazil ; and at the Tata Institute for Social sciences in Mumbai, India. The deadline for the next courses in Germany and India is 1st April 2009. Students have the possibility to attend courses at more than one of these campuses, so that their masters in Globalisation and labour will be truly a globalised degree. The courses are taught in English, and applicants should preferably not be more than 40-years-old. Information on the GLU is available on <http://www.global-labour-university.org/>.

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