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PSI and EPSU support US energy union in conflict with COVANTA



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(20 May 2009) The US waste incineration company Covanta Energy is seeking to take over the waste division of Dutch company Essent. Essent wants to sell its waste division, Essent Milieu, as part of its take-over by RWE, the German energy company.

Covanta has a history of environmental, health and safety, and labour relations violations in the US.

PSI affiliate in the US, the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), has published an open letter to Dutch provincial parliamentarians urging opposition to the sale to this

company. PSI and EPSU have indicated their support for this action.

UWUA has released a long list of Covanta's violations of environmental standards, details of which appear in the attached briefing. In addition, Covanta has not respected trade union rights, blocking collective agreements and discriminating against unionised workers.

For more details, [click here](#).

Health Services Task Force 2009



Image

The PSI Health Services Task Force met in Geneva, 28-29 May. Delegates representing each of PSI's 24 sub-regions and a few other union leaders joined to examine current health issues that affect their members. The impact of the Influenza A pandemic was a subject of much discussion, and Isis Pluut and Susie Larson from the World Health Organisation

gave a presentation on the probable effects of the pandemic. Donato Kiniger-Passigli, ILO, then discussed how to protect health workers from infection and their rights as employees. Rowena Blackman Stroud from the AFT presented tools used by unionists in the United States to promote policies to protect health workers.

Health issues during the economic crisis was the second theme of the meeting. Ögmundur Jónasson, PSI Executive Board member and Minister of Health for Iceland, presented "Quality health care during an economic crisis". The meeting also listened to Anna Marriot of Oxfam, who presented the Oxfam publication "Blind optimism: the failures of private health care".

Participants resolved to work together on specific initiatives aimed at changing current policies that undermine public health systems.

On the second day, participants reviewed PSI's strategic plan for the health sector. They

reported on regional progress in implementation of the strategic plan, and how to further improve communications and collaboration. Other discussions covered workplace violence, safer injection methods and health worker migration. The meeting documents and presentations are now available on the PSI Health blog (<http://healthblog.world-psi.org>).

PSI meets Spanish and Portuguese affiliates



PSI General Secretary, Peter Waldorff, met with Spanish and Portuguese affiliates in Madrid on 13 May 2009 to discuss new ways to defend public service workers at a global level. Waldorff also wanted to learn how the current global crisis is affecting the industry and trade unions, and the activities of PSI affiliates in Portugal and Spain. They discussed further cooperation between PSI and its Spanish and Portuguese affiliates, including the development of projects in Latin America and North Africa, and participation in meetings concerning international disputes such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. FSP-UGT and FSC CC OO have been invited to join the next mission PSI has scheduled in this area, during the annual meeting of the Mediterranean Group in Tel-Aviv. It was Peter Waldorff's first visit to Spain since his election as PSI General Secretary in 2007. Julio Lacuerda, FSP-UGT General Secretary, expressed the need to strengthen and unify the activities of trade unions in a global context, while remaining active at the level of the European Union.

For further information and links, see the report on [PSI blog on the financial crisis](#).

St. Lucia public servants demand overdue pay increase



(27 May 2009) Hundreds of civil servants in St Lucia are expected to remain off the job for at least two days in protest against the government's decision not to give them all of a promised 7.5 per cent pay increase. Bearing-placards and chanting and signing 'We shall overcome', the public servants took to the streets yesterday to press their demand. The Trade Union Federation in St Lucia has rejected the government offer of a 3.5% salary increase. This year, public servants were expecting the 7.5% increase agreed in the last round of negotiations. The government blames the financial crisis for its inability to respect its promise. At a meeting with a government technical team the TUF's president Julian Monrose, said it will not consider any offer below 4.5%. Public servants say they will strike until the full 7.5% salary increase is paid by government.

Euro-demonstrations: Public Sector workers demonstrate to fight the crisis



Image

On 14 May, thousands of union representatives from Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Andorra participated in the first of four Euro-demonstrations held in Madrid, Brussels (15 May), Berlin and Prague (16 May), organised by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Under the slogan, "Fight the crisis: put the people first", the four demonstrations involved a total of 350,000 workers.

Peter Waldorff, PSI General Secretary, was present at the march in Madrid. Julio Lacuerda, General Secretary of PSI affiliate FSP-UGT, noted that public services are now more

than ever necessary to address the current crisis. Candido Mendez, General Secretary of UGT, described the first Euro-demonstration of the campaign as a workers' "demonstration of democratic force". He had expressed concern over the European Union's lack of reaction when faced with the crisis, and underlined the need to recover Europe's most noble values, social and labour rights and a commitment to economic recovery.

For further information and links, see the report on the [PSI blog on the financial crisis](#)

New UN super-agency for women



Image

At the next UN General Assembly in September 2009, there will be a vote for a new "super-agency for women". More than 300 NGOs, under the acronym GEAR (Gender Equality Architecture Reform) have been pushing for governments and the UN secretary-general to set up the new super-agency.

GEAR's primary mission is to ensure that all women's voices are heard throughout the United Nations Reform process so that women's issues and concerns are given the importance that they deserve on the global agenda. PSI, EI and the ITUC are supporting the campaign to ensure that the voices of working women are not ignored.

The UN sets global standards for human rights, but has no single agency with the resources necessary to improve the lives of women in all areas, including at work. Until now, women's concerns were spread across four poorly coordinated UN entities, Unifem, DAW, Osagi and Instraw. It is planned that the new agency will have the staff, resources and authority to really make a difference.

For more details, see <http://gear.collectivex.com/>, an interactive website to discuss and obtain resources on the campaign.

Caribbean trade unionists on solidarity mission



A group of PSI affiliates from the Caribbean undertook a solidarity mission to Haiti from 30 April to 5 May, 2009. The visit was co-ordinated by Professor Camille Chalmers, Executive Director of the Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA). The solidarity visit was approved by PSI's IAMREC and was organised by the Caribbean Sub-regional office.

Andrew Garnett, President of the Guyana Local Government Officers' Union, explained that the visit enabled the PSI delegates to learn about the situation of Haitian unions and to establish solidarity links with different sectors of Haitian civil society.

The PSI delegation discuss issues with Prof. Camille Chalmers (centre)

Dominica's Public Service Union General Secretary, Thomas Letang, said he was impressed by initiative and entrepreneurial spirit of Haitians. Recognising the good organisation in the informal sector, Letang stressed the important contribution that women made to the economy. Read more [here](#).

Creation of CONTUA



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From 2 to 5 June 2009, PSI affiliates and friendly organisation will meet in Panama City for the founding of the new Confederation of Workers of the Universities of America. Involving at least 16 countries, CONTUA will have as one of its main objectives the protection of the public university, with decent working conditions for administrative staff, to ensure quality higher education.

"CONTUA has been created as thanks to the participation of many countries mainly in Latin America, but we have a vocation in the future to organise university workers throughout the world," says Marcelo Di Stefano, one of the leaders in the formation of CONTUA.

For more information, contact psi.americas@verizon.net.

Gas workers in Ukraine protest against unsafe working conditions



Back in [August 2008](#), 8000 gas workers from the Gas Facilities Workers of Ukraine held mass protest actions following a number of accidents in the industry. The government assured industry workers that by the end of 2008, the trade union demands would be entirely fulfilled. However, these promises were not delivered and the situation in the gas supply facilities has actually worsened. Constant underfunding, understaffed production departments and reduction of systems maintenance has brought about a lowering of performance, increased accidents and deaths. In 2008, 90 lives were lost in the gas industry, and 51 more people have died since the beginning of 2009.

Because of this unacceptable situation, the Gas industry workers' trade union held a protest action on 14 May. Read more [here](#).

Assessment of Stiglitz Commission recommendations



The ITUC has published its assessment ([click here to download](#)) of the final report of the Commission of Experts on reforms of the international monetary and financial system (the "Stiglitz Commission") that was established by the President of the UN General Assembly at the beginning of the year to "identify the broad principles underlying needed institutional reforms required to ensure sustained global economic progress and stability". The Stiglitz Commission report contains many recommendations in line with long standing demands from the trade union movement, and affiliates are invited to discuss the content of the report with their governments. The full report can be found at:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/63/838&Lang=E

The Stiglitz Commission report will be used for the UN Conference on "The World Economic and Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Development", taking place in New York on June 24-26. A trade union statement for that Conference is currently under preparation.

US unions key to rebuilding economy



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US Vice President Joe Biden has declared that he and President Obama would not consider their economic recovery efforts a success unless they created "good, sustainable jobs" and that the key to that success is rebuilding the American labour movement.

Biden reiterated the administration's support for the Employee Free Choice Act during his speech at a legislative conference of PSI affiliate the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. He said the best way to rebuild the

working and middle class is to help labour unions grow and that "it's time to level the playing field" for unions by passing a bill that would make it easier for workers to organise.

The Employee Free Choice Act would allow workers to form a union when a majority at a work place sign cards indicating that they wish to be represented by the union.

See more about the Global Unions campaign for the [Employee Free Choice Act here](#).

Read this article in full here: <http://www.pww.org/article/articleview/15614/>

Watch Vice President Biden's speech at the AFSCME Legislative Conference on 12th May: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02ZMhDwNXO4>

See AFSCME's web page: www.afscme.org.



Jamaica: Government apology to public sector workers over wage freeze

Earlier this month, public sector unions in Jamaica denounced what they said was the unilateral approach by the government during a recent wage freeze. However, after more than two weeks, the government has apologised to public sector workers for announcing a freeze on their salaries before discussing it with the unions.

The finance minister, Audley Shaw apologised during a meeting of the monitoring committee of the Public Sector Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The government has also agreed to further discussions with the unions on the matter of the wage freeze and other issues.

The ministry says the dialogue will cover the fiscal constraints, the interests of public sector workers and the immediate, short and long term development of the country.

See http://go-jamaica.com/news/read_article.php?id=8962

Migrant Workers Convention: Guide on Ratification



The International Steering Committee for the campaign for ratification of the Migrants Rights Convention has produced a Guide on Ratification for the International Convention of the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families. Seeking to better protect migrants' human rights and dignity, the new publication encourages governments worldwide to ratify and implement the Convention at the national level.

The Guide provides a summary of the Convention and discusses the process of ratification. Of particular importance to policy makers, parliamentarians and advocates, it outlines the pros and cons of ratification and refutes various misconceptions about the Convention. Download the guide here: <http://www.migrantsrights.org/documents/SCRatificationGuide4-2009Final.pdf>.

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