



### Imprint

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### The Notion and its History **Advances and Setbacks**

"Trade unions are free, voluntary and democratic unions of employees of more than one company, with the primary aim of bringing about permanent improvements to the economic and social circumstances of their members and also of employed people in general. They are established on a permanent basis and supported by the solidarity of employed people which arises from the similarity of their interests.

The trade unions have: three main functions: the original one was to protect workers from the hazards and dangers of their work and private lives; with their recognition as partners in industrial relations, they acquired the function of creating and preserving order in the employment market and in relations with employers and the state; and finally, their function in shaping living and working conditions for employed people and the legal environment as a whole grew up as their own view of their identity broadened and their scope for action as an acknowledged opposition force increased.

from a position of "critical

integration" in the system."

(Evangelisches Soziallexikon,

pp 525 ff)

1849 Around 10 % of the German population are wage-earners. Germany's first labour organisation in the political sense was the .. Arbeiterverbrüderung" (Workers' Brotherhood), founded in Berlin. This was a year of revolution; in which a national association of lithographers Trade unions' actions stem and the association of cigar

> strength to bring forth a variety of associations and clubs. 1869 The last legal obstacle in the way of trade union organisation was removed by the industrial regulations introduced by the North German Alliance. However, the freedom of

workers were also formed.

The collapse of the revolution

nipped these initial successes.

in organising workers in the

movement had the political.

bud, it was not until the

1860's that the labour

association now granted in law did not do anything to change the routine obstruction and repression of trade union work by the employers and government agencies.

1878 The long arm of Bismarck's law enshrined in the "Prevention of the seditious aspirations of social democracy" Act reacned the 50 000 trade union members organised in occupational associations.

1881 The imperial message of the year "that the healing of social wounds cannot be sought only by way of the repression of social democratic excesses, but equally by way of positive advancement of workers' welfare" gave a mandate to the Reichstag (imperial parliament) to bring in bills on accident insurance, health insurance and old-age and invalidity pension schemes.



## Am 1. Mai.

"Rindermann, was wollen eigentlich, ah, diese Arbeiter?"
"Berzeihen, Durchlaucht, sie wollen den Achtstundentag."
"Ganz unglaublich, Kindermann, wie dumm dieses Bolt ist.
Sagen Sie ihm doch, ah, daß Achtstundentag unmöglich!
Einsach unmöglich! Sag wird immer, ah, vierundzwanzig.
Stunden baben!"

1890 When the "Socialism Act" fell, there were about 300 000 workers in organised trade unions. This was the year in which workers' rellies were held on May 1st for the first time, and a General Commission of Trade Unions in Germany was formed with Karl Legien as its chairman. It convened the first ever Trades Union Congress in Halberstadt in 1892. The majority

On the First of May
"Kindermann, what do they
want, these workers?"
"Pardon, Your Highness, they
want the eight-hour-day"
"Totally incredible, Kindermann,
how stupid those folks are.
Tell them, that an eight-hourday is impossible. Simply
impossible!
The day will always have
twentyfour hours!"

of the 200 delegates voted in favour of centralised occupation-based associations rather than purely local organisations and recommended that the unions should accept female members on an equal footing with men. The election of the "General Commission" by Congress can be considered to mark the birth of the umbrella organisation for the trade unions.

**1894** The first supraregional organisations of Christian trade unionists were established

1896 When the lithographers' association concluded a collective contract stipulating terms of work, collective agreements were criticised by many other unions as: "sentimental harmony" and "betrayal of the class struggle". Conversely, the bosses and the government copposed

the principle of recognition for the unions as equal bargaining partners.

**1906** The SPD recognised the independence and autonomy of the trade unions in the so-called Mannheim Convention.

1914 The outbreak of war definitively changed the position of the trade unions. Because they were needed to keep the war effort going, they were given official government recognition under the "Burgfrieden" (home truce).

1918 After the collapse of the German Empire, a parliamentary system of government was introduced in October 1918. The conditions prevailing during the November Revolution enabled the unions to push through some important demands. They were now accepted as collective bargaining partners, and the 8-hour day and shop floor workers' committees were agreed. 1919 The General Com-

mission is restructured into the General Confederation of German Trade Unions (ADGB). Its organisational structure and tasks were quite similar to those of the DGB of today, even though it was the confederation of the "Free Trade Unions" which bore the stamp of social democratic politics and were not "unified" trade unions (Einheitsgewerkschaft), Workers' education programmes were expanded, union publishing and printing units were set up, and union-owned enterpuses were established. especially in the banking. building, housing and insur-

ance sectors.

**1920** The ADGB called a general strike in protest against the Kapp Coup, a right-wing attempt to sweep away the republic.

1922 By now, the ADGB

had 7.5 million members, but

half of these were lost due to inflation and unemployment by 1929.

1929 The trade union initiative to develop economic democracy perished with the slump. Cutbacks in social

top of the political agenda.

1930 The last social
democrat-led parliamentary
government collapsed in
1930 uto financial problems arising from unemployment insurance

reforms went right to the

1932 44 % of trade union members were unemployed, another 22 % on short time.

Republic collapsed, the unions fluctuated between general strikes and conformitv. The ADGB leadership declared neutrality towards Hitler, On May 2nd, SA forces suppressed the trade union movement. Many trade union leaders joined the resistance against Nazi dictatorship. Even before the end of the war, the reestablishment of trade unions had begun. Most of them were unified unions (Einheitsgewerkschaften), organised on the principle of industrybased associations - one factory, one union.

1933 When the Weimar

of the Federal Republic of Germany, the DGB held its constituting conference in Munich in 1949. Hans Böckler was elected as its chairman

1951 The Federal Parliament (Bundestag) enacts the statute providing for equal representation of the employees in the supervisory boards for the coal and steel industries, IG Metall and IG Bergbau members (metalworkers and miners) had previously come out in favour of strikes to push through the co-determination legislation.

1952 The passage of the Works Constitution Act through parliament caused internal strife within the unions because it ignored many of the unions' demands.

1954 The DGB national congress rejects any contribution whatsoever towards armed forces by the Federal Republic of Germany.

1962 The main topic is the dispute over legislation for emergency conditions; the lines of those for and

against go right across the DGB. The majority in Congress votes against the Emergency Laws.

1963 The DGB sets out a political programme; in the light of growing economic productivity and improved living conditions for employees. there had been a growing demand for review and revision of the political principles on which the founding congress in Munich had been based.

1966 The beginning of the economic crisis forced the unions to concentrate their attention on job security and maintaining incomes.

1967 The representatives of the Grand Coalition government, industry, science and the DGB met to agree on concerted action.

1974 The DGB adopts its first environmental programme.

1977 The DGB puts forward its proposals for the restoration of full employment.

1981 and 1982 DGB protests against the socialliberal government's policies because they were failing to deal with the employment situation and were socially unfair. After the change of government, there were major demonstrations against the Kohl government's policies.

1982 "Der Spiegel" reveals the "Neue Heimat" financial scandal

1983 Several hundred thousand people respond to the DGB's call to stop work for a minute's silence for peace in protest against the arms race with the deployment of medium-range mis-

1984 Strikes by the IG Metall and IG Druck und Papier (metal workers,

siles in Europe.

printers and paper workers) spearhead the campaign for a 35-hour working week.

1986 Demonstrations at over 200 DGB rallies bring around a million people out to protest against the government's plans to reform § 116 of the Promotion of Employment Act (Arbeitsförderungsgesetz).

1990 The DGB helps to build up free trade unions in East Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall

1992 The DGB adopts a process of reform for its organisational structure, its political programme work and its work and communication methods.

1993 The DGB runs a campaign of resistance to fight off attacks from the employers and government on collective bargaining autonomy.



# Strong by Change - DGB

The trade unions are undergoing a renewal process because the same is happening in our country. 1989 has proved to be the most incisive cut in German post-war history. We are even less able today to predict what is going to happen in the future than we were in 1945. The end of divisions at global, European and German level laid down a completely new challenge to the people before the previous ones had been fully resolved. The failed national econo-

mies and ecological devastation in Eastern Europe have placed unforeseen pressures on Western Europe. Uncertainty arising from new technologies, unemployment, the destruction of the environment, the internationalisation of politics - all these existed before 1989. Now Western Europe's problems have to be tackled together with those of Eastern Europe. This is a major opportunity to set the signals so that long-term benefits can be achieved involving both halves of Europe, thereby consigning division to history.

## Self-interest and the

Nowhere is the collision between risks and opportunities in East and West as direct as in reunified Germany. The present mood among Germans is to see the dangers of this situation rather than the opportunities it holds. Many people have responded primarily with entrenchment.

Thinking in terms of the common good is losing

ground. All the major institutions in society are suffering from a decline in membership, and nothing new is emerging on a scale that might go beyond individual interests.

The trade unions emerged in the last century from innumerable fragmented organisations with little power and limited fields of action. That was the reason for the resolution passed by the first trade union congress in 1892 in Halberstadt to establish centralised occupation-based associations. The first step towards unified trade unions (Einheitsgewerkschaften) was thus taken. With this foundation to build on, the workers organised in trade unions were in a position to fight for and win significant social reforms. The eight-hour day

were part of those achievements, as were the rudiments of today's social security system. The trade unions set up the first unemployment. sickness and old-age benefit schemes on their own initiative before government took over these tasks. Collective bargaining autonomy ensured that government did not interfere in the running of the economy. The right to strike gave the trade unions sufficient strength in collective negotiations to achieve gradual improvements in the situation of working people.

and the universal franchise





First round of the "concerted action" on February 14th, 1967.

### Strength in Unity

Even today, one hundred years after Halberstadt, the trade unions are still trying to prevent fragmentation among working people. The DGB makes sure that individ-

ual trade unions are not left out on their own. Public debates, talks with government and the employers' associations, scientists and artists are an important part of the DGB's work. Neverthe-

less, the trade unions are not just any old voice in the chorus of public discussion. They conduct their negotiations from a position of power. The voice of the DGB is given a hearing because of its authority and its reforming energy. It is taken seriously because of the strength of the trade unions.

The source of trade union power is the immense number of members. In turn, this number of people who become members of the trade unions depends how much chance they have to become personally involved and stand up for their own interests. If commitment to trade unionism has flagged in recent years, the unions themselves must take part of the blame. Political culture within the unions had often grown cumbersome and unwieldy. and there was a lack of openness in the democratic process. In spite of this, individualism also has its limits. No society can work if everyone acts in their own private interest, whether at work or



in the political sphere, and behaves like a one-man band. Our task for the future is to find a new balance in the relationship between the private individual and the community, to provide a new experience of solidarity.

#### DGB Reform

The DGB is doing its part in this process of redirection. It wants more democratic involvement for its membership and less red tape. A review and restructuring of the organisation, political programming, working methods

within the DGB will be in place by the time the reform congress takes place in Dresden in 1996. What we have ahead of us is a period of internal identity-finding and debate on the design of trade union policies in the context of the

and forms of communication

incisive changes taking place in conditions outside the DGB. This self-portrait brochure is not aimed at anticipating what the results of that process will be. In itself, it is part of the debate inside and outside the DGB. Strong by Change.

### The Reform Debate

## The way towards a new policy programme

The German Trade Union Congress (DGB) has prescribed a comprehensive modernisation process for itself. There are many reasons that

have led to this, but they can

be summed up in the statement that the conditions for trade union policy have changed so fundamentally that we can no longer escape the question as to whether the "old" answers are still the right ones. The DGB has to adapt its substance and its programmes to the imminent 21st century and reappraise the present model of trade union organisation to check whether it might also be in need of structures more appropriate to the times. The world has undergone major change since 1989. The

collapse of state-run socialist systems of society has brought with it new opportunities for political understanding between nations and opened up new dimensions of international division of labour in the economic field. The downside of this upheaval is economic collapse and a reemergence of nationalism.

In addition to these supranational developments, German society is changing as well. It is becoming more differentiated and pluralistic. Self-determination and complete control of their time have become high priorities on people's personal scale of values. Society offers far more opportunities for the personal development of the individual without having released him from old dependencies. Unresolved conflicts



such as unemployment or the lack of equailty between men and women still call for new concepts from the trade unions and politics.

The world nowadays is much harder to grasp. The new challenges conceal many risks, because very little will remain as it is. However, these ruptures with the past offer new opportunities for the trade unions.

The future DGB programme must provide answers to the elemental questions of our time and open up new perspectives for subsequent generations. The questions with which we are primarily concerned are: How can we ensure that the internationalisation and globalisation of the economy is taking full account of social needs?

How can the interests of those in work and those who have invo'untarily been excluded from it be reconciled?

There will never be an equitable distribution of the wealth we have all shared in earning, unless the ecological and social conditions for economic growth are reformed. How can ecology and economy be reconciled?

What form could a welfare state take to make it more than just a social insurance system. What have we achieved in the past that



must be defended and carried ahead into the future? What state benefits have outlived their usefulness? What will the trade union

of the future be like? How can we make our political action more transparent and more attractive to non-members? Have we allowed internal democracy within unions the scope it should have in an organisation of emancipated people?

The modernisation of the DGB and its member unions is not going on behind locked doors. We are an organisation that could never achieve and maintain its present power and political weight if it were not for the commitment of the countless working

people who put in so much voluntary effort, so it is of the utmost importance to us that they should all be involved in the reform process.

Ever since it was launched in 1992, the reform of the DGB has always been planned as a process of searching for future concepts.

An extraordinary national DGB conference in November 1996, convened especially for that purpose, will be the conclusion of the programme debate. This congress will adopt the new policy programme and also the new structures for trade union work.

Many trade unionists, scientists and personalities from politics, the churches, even from business management have given their comments since 1992. Their input is very important to us in the programme debate.

During the course of this interchange of views, we have learned that the renewal of our own structures is inseparable from new demands on society in our programmes, and that the two are interdependent.

The ongoing discussion has also shown that the trade unions have reached a crossroads in their history. Should they confine themselves to concern for the material and social expectations of their members? Or should they uphold their claim to be a force for development and change in the world of work and society as a whole?

The trade unions must continue their fight on behalf

of working people, but they must also struggle for social justice. Concentration on this world of work does not rule out a share of the responsibility for shaping general economic conditions too. Over the past 50 years, the trade unions in Germany have built up their competence through their work. They have become an important part of this society and have been an active partner in shaping democracy and a market economy with a social conscience.

Trade unions will continue to be an essential element for the further progress of democracy.

### Dieter Schulte,

Chairman of the German Confederation of Trade Unions

# The Work and Structure of the DGB

#### National and International

As the trade union umbrella organisation, the DGB represents the German trade union movement in dealing with the government authorities at Federal State and national level, the political parties, the employers' organisations and other groups within society. It works within the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

The DGP coordinates joint demands, themes and campaigns for its 16 member unions. It supports them in industrial disputes, advocates their interests vis-à-vis politicians and the general public. The DGB itself is not directly involved in collective bargain-

ing and cannot conclude pay agreements. However, it is important for its competence as a specialist body for larger issues in matters of a general political nature.

political nature.
The responsibility for running the DGB's work rests with a five-member Executive Committee elected by the Federal Congress every four years. This Congress sets the framework for trade union polic\*:

The DGB has its head-

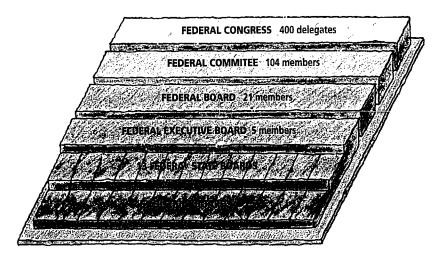
quarters in Düsseldorf with numerous branches and institutions in other Federal States towns and districts. Local offices broaden the union presence countrywide.

### DGB Policy and Influence of Members Action by the trade unions

means primarily negotiating with employers and politicians The DGB, however, sets its own initiatives in motion. such as the recent national compulsory insurance scheme for chronic nursing care. It devises regional and job-creation programmes. acts as a moderator in traffic initiatives, assists in Third World projects and supports cultural centres, youth cafés and child care initiatives. Recently, it has increased its involvement in campaigns against racism and xenophobia and initiated demonstrations of its own.

The DGB's members are unified trade unions and have no allegiance to political parties or religious denominations. They are politically independent but not neutral. They fight for democracy and human rights and are opposed to political extremism.

The trade unions have their foundations in the world of work. Unemployed people, trainees and students can also join a union if they wish. In formal terms, the DGB has only 16 members as a federation, i.e. its member unions. But they represent nearly 10 million men and women organised within those unions. As individual unions have agreed on cooperation between themselves, even to the extent of a merger in some cases, the number of member unions is set to decline in the next few years. The development of union membership depends



crucially on the development of employment.

The formation of political will within trade unions is a democratic process operating from the bottom up (see chart). The union members elect delegates to the DGB executive committees at district or regional level as well as the national executive.

### **Protection of rights** and social self-administration

The DGB lends its support to the individual unions at shop floor and company level in their function to protect and shape conditions for working people. It gives information and advice to its members in the workers' representative bodies at company level and in supervisory

boards. It offers all union members free legal advice. especially in cases before labour tribunals and social courts.

SERVICE TO THE CASE OF THE PARTY OF THE PART

The DGB has equal entitlement to representation in the executive bodies for the selfregulation of social insurance funds - compulsory health, accident and pension insurance funds - as well as in the Federal Office of Employ-

ment. DGB representatives are members of the workmen's compensation schemes (Berufsgenossenschaften) and vocational education institutions. It also provides magistrates and has a seat and a vote in the advisory councils of the public broadcasting organisations and in the private broadcasting companies' media institutes at Federal State level.

	Male workers	(emale workers	Total Workers	White cotar male	White collar female		Male tivil				Total .	Total	n S
Building, Stone and Earth	543 428	41 999	585 427	46 238	21 299	67 537		, 3	# T. 3	589 666	63 298	652 SC4	
Wining and Energy***	292 491	9918	102 409	69 745		87.339		199	257		27 512	390 000	
Chemicals, Paper and Ceramics	467 673	124 248	591 921	98 961			being the margin a		1 4 41	) TV4	" Protect of the land	742 367	
Serman Railwaymen's Union**	181 021			38 139		1.12	124 069	13.263	137.351		79 934	423 163	
ducation and Science			走接時		118 555				119439			316 196	
Horticulture, Agriculture, Forestry	54 468	19 262	73 730	7.100	6.759	13 859		120		64 140		90 281	
Commerce, Banking and Insurance	37 650			140 565			1,728,00	12-171	77777	176 219		545 270	
Wood and Plastics	139 763		155 540		4 566					147 735			
eaiher	11617	10 972	22 589	1 566		the second of	are gra	Der ing		13 181	well Chairman		
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food, Beverages and Catering	169 387			32 671		72 680	54" redict 2005				134 181		
Public Services, Transport and Traffic	597 244			350 C15				14 534				:1 877 651	
Police 5 7 gr				10 830		22 332	152 303						
Postal Union	103 403						193 045						
Textiles and Garments	51 332	71 217	122.549	10 162	9 636	19 798	40.0	in a	971			234 240	
DGB total	4 816 013						584 134	178 461	762 505				
Percentage	80,1%	19,9%	100.0%	45.2%	54.8%	100 05	76,6%	23.4%	100.084	60 1%	2012040	100.045	100,0

A detailed breakdown updated to 31.12.1994 was not available when this article went to print. The present estimate totals around 9.8 million

#### **DGB NATIONAL** EXECUTIVE

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01067 Dresden

Lennéstraße 13

63 03 61/5 96 10

<sup>\*\*</sup> Some unions have "other members" besides workers, white collar members and coll servants (e.g. freelance, personers, trainees, etc.)
They are included in the totals, which is why the bottom line does not always tally with the sum of "workers, white collar members and civil servants" \*\*\* The German Railwaymen's Union reports a total of 451 002, although the difference cannot be attributed to DGB structures



IG Bau-Steine-Erden Building, Stone and Earth

60284 Frankfurt @ 069/74 37-0 IG Bergbau und

Postfach 101144

Energie Mining and Energy Postfach 101229

44712 Bochum 図 02 34/319-0 IG Chemie-Papier-

**Keramik** Chemicals, Paper and Ceramics

Postfach 3047 30030 Hannover © 305 11/76 31-0

Gewerkschaft der Eisenbahner Deutschlands German Railwaymen's

Union Postfach 170331 60077 Frankfurt 医 069/75 36-0

Postfach 102562 40016 Düsseldorf 唿 02 11/77 03-0

Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft

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34063 Kassel 図 05 61/93 79-0 Gewerkschaft

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図 0211/9040-0

**Wood and Plastics** 

Gik Gewerkschaft Holz

und Kunststoff

ir:surance

Handel, Banken und Gaststätten Commerce, Banking and Food, Beverages and Catering

> 22711 Hamburg © 040/3 80 13-0

Gewerkschaft Leder Leather

Willi-Bleicher-Straße 20 70174 Stuttgart ® 07 11/29 55 55/56

IG Medien Media Postfach 102451 70020 Stuttgart **図 07 11/20 18-0** 

IG Metall
Metalworkers Postfach 710418 60519 Frankfurt

**図 069/66 93-0** Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuß-

Postfach 501180

Transport und Verkehr **Public Services, Transport** 

個 07 11/20 97-0

Police Postfach 309

40703 Hilden GB 02 11/71 04-0

Postal Union

Gewerkschaften

Postfach 320460

70031 Stuttgart Gewerkschaft der Polizei

Deutsche Postgewerkschaft

Rhonestr. 2 60528 Frankfurt/Main

Textil-Bekleidung

ÖÜV Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, and Traffic Postfach 103662

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