

ABC OF TRADE UNIONISM

III

TRADE UNIONISME IN SOCIETY

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International Confederation of Free Trade Unions**

Editor: Hubert CAMBIER

Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 155
B - 1210 Brussels

Tél: (32 2)224 02 11

Fax: (32 2)201 58 15 - 203 07 56

E-Mail: internetpo@icftu.org - WEB Site: <http://www.icftu.org>

FOREWORD

This ABC of trade unionism has been drafted by the ICFTU at the request of its Coordinating Committee for Central and Eastern Europe. It aims to present the basic principles of trade unionism in a form accessible to rank and file trade unionists, local and regional leaders.

The document is divided into three parts:

1. What is a trade union organisation?
2. The work of a trade unionist.
3. Trade unionism in society.

Each section is presented as follows: first, there is a theoretical presentation, aimed at defining the different aspects of trade unionism, then there are examples of concrete experiences to show that trade unionism is first and foremost a living and very diverse process. Before each concrete example there are a list of questions or comments to guide the reader.

This ABC has been designed to be used:

- either as reference material, that the reader can look through at her/his leisure;
- or as a teaching manual. The questions and comments can be used as a guide to collective study. It goes without saying, however, that the trainer is perfectly free to use the manual as s/he sees fit, particularly in her/his approach to the content of each chapter, both the theoretical parts, and the concrete examples.

The trade union movement, as can be seen from reading this ABC, is essentially a pluralist, diversified movement. It is built up within each society, by its own activists. This document is not, therefore, intended as a "model" that can be applied mechanically to every situation. Rather, this ABC aims to encourage the trade unionists that read it to think about what the trade union movement is, and could be, in their own country, or region. In addition, therefore, to the presentation of general principles, and the concrete examples, from Western Europe or elsewhere, there is a third aspect to be developed, which is that of studying the trade union movement as it exists in the reader's own social context. The ABC will have fulfilled its purpose if it succeeds in facilitating this type of study.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRATISATION AND THE TRANSITION TO A MARKET ECONOMY

The societies of Central and Eastern Europe, together with many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, are today undergoing a crucial period of change and upheaval. First there is the transition to democracy, which must be consolidated at all costs. Secondly, these political changes have opened the way to economic and social change which will lead to the integration of these countries into the international economic and trading system, etc.. All these countries will no doubt encounter many difficulties and obstacles throughout the transformation process. Those experiencing these difficulties at first hand are the workers and the population at large.

The trade union movement in these societies is at a crossroads. On one hand it has to assume an enormous responsibility. With their sights firmly set on short term economic indicators (limiting the budget deficit, curbing inflation, foreign trade performance...), the governments of these countries seem convinced that the "social" dimension is an unaffordable luxury. But the sharp rise in unemployment, the strangulation of the education system and the health system... the lack of a minimal safety net for a population that found itself thrown into poverty from one day to the next...are putting the future of these societies in the balance, jeopardising hard won progress. Without social justice there can be no lasting democracy. Far from being a luxury, a break on progress, as some seem to think, the role of the trade unions is of the greatest importance, because it helps consolidate the social dimension, without which democracy would remain unstable.

PROMOTING SOLIDARITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The importance of trade unionism is particularly well demonstrated by the dual nature of its functions. On the one hand, workers expect their organisations to defend their practical, day-to-day material interests; on the other hand, it is recognised that a trade union organisation is inconceivable without a social role, or without defending certain values, in particular those of solidarity, social justice and equal opportunities. Although the day-to-day business of trade union workers is often taken up with negotiations and demands aimed at providing workers with their "bread and butter", underpinning this process, and giving it meaning, lies the conviction that it is possible for workers to improve their position in society, and that they should enjoy greater recognition. In short, democracy does not apply only at the level of parliamentary institutions, it touches on all aspects of all of our lives. Trade unionism does not stop at the factory gate, just as the dialogue between trade unions, employers and government representatives is not limited to social issues. In this sense, the commitment required of trade unionism is clearly a commitment to a free and democratic society.

SOCIAL RENEWAL THROUGH THE RENEWAL OF TRADE UNIONISM

Assuming these responsibilities and the role which they imply, that of promoting real solidarity between workers, also represents a

formidable challenge to trade unionism. Practically everywhere you see trade union organisations being created, trying to find their niche or struggling to renew and reform their ways. If the renewal of societies comes about through a new, independent role for the organisations representing workers, it follows that the opposite is also true. In order to enable trade unions to assume the new responsibilities they are demanding, in the name of workers, it is necessary for them to be given the means to breathe life into the values which they promote at all levels of their activities. The democratisation of society requires the same of trade unions, and democratic social organisations are the best guarantee that society will be capable of firmly committing itself to the road towards democracy.

"Trade Unionism in society". The third section of this "ABC of Trade Unionism" is intended to provoke a debate on the social and democratic commitment of trade unionism, and therefore attract attention to a number of issues which arise within both trade unions and modern society. How can we ensure real equality of opportunity for everyone, men and women, young and old, skilled and unskilled workers? How should we react to cases of social exclusion, and the rise in racism and xenophobia which is too often its corollary? How can we protect the rights of workers, which unfortunately also include those of children, whenever they come under attack, wherever this may be in the world? All of these questions are urgent, whatever some people may think. Because society cannot, under pretext, for example, of economic priorities, relegate them to second place. And these are questions which are of the utmost importance to trade unionists.

II. TOWARDS GREATER SOLIDARITY AND A MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Theory

A trade union's members may include just a few hundred workers from the same trade, the same factory or the same industry. This type of trade union, whose only aim is to defend the interests of its limited number of members, still exists here and there. However, most of the time when we talk of trade unionism, we have in mind organisations with thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of members. The integration of different trade unions at industrial sector level, and the bringing together of trade unions in the form of large confederations in most economic sectors of a country, has all led to the establishment of highly representative organisations. In many countries their importance has even made them impossible to circumvent.

2.1. REPRESENTATION EQUALS LEGITIMACY

Moreover, arriving at this level of representation and succeeding in bringing together 20%, 40% or 80% of all workers is an aim in itself for a trade union organisation. It is by basing itself on its members and on what they represent in the life of a country, that a trade union gains the authority required to intervene with employers or the government whenever it believes it necessary. Signing up members and increasing its level of representation is therefore a vital preoccupation for any trade union organisation. It is in fact its main reason for existence. Without members, without officials, without the membership of the greatest possible number of workers, it is hard to see from where a trade union organisation could draw its legitimacy. Not to mention that it is the number of members and the confidence which they show in their union, which underpins its strength and its ability to rally support in order to make itself heard at the negotiating table with employers and political authorities. All of which explains why, in certain countries, separate trade union organisations, which are sometimes rivals, are beginning to work together or even merge. We speak louder and more forcefully when we speak with a single voice, or when we speak in unison, than when spokesmen disagree, each one claiming to represent the interests of the workers more than the other.

2.2. UNIFYING WORKERS AROUND COMMON CAUSES

But this level of representation also creates obligations. Defending the interests of workers in a single company means that we have to take into account all the various demands they are submitting to their employer. But defending the interests of the workers in a whole country obliges us to consider just about every aspect of social and economic life. We have to intervene in the fields of education and culture, as well as in the choice of infrastructure to be developed or in the role and tasks delegated to public services, to take just a few examples. In short, the more representative a trade union organisation, the more it has to extend the scope of its activities and be in a position to advance the point of view or interests of its members in fields which often fall well outside the economic and social sphere. It is also obliged to think more in terms of a coherent whole in the interests of all workers. It is not difficult to see that this

requires a certain amount of internal debate. It is not always easy to choose between salary claims and issues affecting job creation, and this may require judging between opposing claims! At first sight it may seem simple enough to speak on behalf of all workers. But when you realise what is involved in considering those who have work and those who are unemployed, those who live in a booming region and those who live where industry is in decline, those who enjoy high salaries and those on the legal minimum (where it exists), you can see that it is not such an easy task. This is especially true in crisis situations or in difficult economic conditions. During such periods, even more than at other times, the trade union movement cannot simply draw up a list of all the demands emanating from the various groups or social classes it represents. Choices have to be made, and a programme drawn up taking into consideration certain priorities. All this assumes that a trade union organisation defines the values (social, ethical) which it means to defend, the development model (socio-economic) which it is promoting as an alternative to the economic programme which the government is endeavouring to impose, the concept of society (civil rights, how society functions) which it wishes to protect, because just like any other organisation, it knows that this will give it a certain freedom to exercise its activities. In other words, a trade union organisation cannot be content with fighting for workers' "bread and butter", it must also widen the scope of the combat to include a real social ideal.

2.3. TOWARDS A SOCIETY WHERE WORKERS ARE WELCOME

A trade union organisation is not a political party. Each to their own task. It would be especially ruinous for a trade union organisation to link itself too rigidly with the programme of an organisation whose primary aim is one day to gain power, govern, and assume the responsibilities associated with managing a society in which there are many forces other than those representing unionised workers. When the trade union movement becomes organised regionally, nationally and eventually internationally, it opens the doors to problems well beyond the clearly circumscribed difficulties encountered within a company. Building real equality between men and women, combating racism and xenophobia, promoting equal opportunities, protesting against the various assaults on workers' rights, as well as human rights, defending democracy whenever it is under attack - these are the issues which have motivated, and still motivate, trade unionists almost everywhere in the world. By committing itself to this cause, trade unionism does not escape its primary role. It simply extends the basic, bread and butter issues which form its day-to-day business. Getting these demands heard presupposes a certain number of acquired rights in the field of liberties, individual rights and unrestricted democracy. In short, in order to fully carry out its mission, trade unionism must not have one arm tied behind its back. Along with its defence of immediate, material interests, it must be able to mobilise itself in defence of certain values. Its aim is to promote what could be called a society where "workers are welcome".

2.4. THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE IS THAT OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE

Clearly, this commitment by trade union organisations is not unanimously welcomed by all social and political forces. It could even be said that this is the aspect of trade unionism which is most frequently

criticised. After all, workers are allowed to get together in order to collectively negotiate their working conditions, salaries, and security of employment; there are only a few "tough employers" or particularly nasty "little Hitlers" (especially in small private businesses), who claim to disapprove of this. On the other hand, if unionised workers in a company react against a particularly unjust government economic policy, or protest against the application of measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund, which threaten everybody's social protection and the right to education, the situation would be quite different. There would be plenty of critics queuing up to denounce "unions who exceed their mandate", as if the role of trade unionism was not to build solidarity between all workers, to defend all of them, both as producers and citizens! And how could we fail to be pleased if the workers' struggle becomes linked to that of the community as a whole, where demands for a better life form part of a general desire for a better future in the interests of everyone?

2.5. DEMOCRACY FOR ALL IS AT STAKE

Contrary to what many people claim, a trade union organisation does not form a "society within society", an organisation which, in the name of its own special interests, opposes the democratic choices made by the population as a whole. Now, as in the past, the fight for universal suffrage, for the democratisation of a society where all the levers of power have been taken over by a single party, and for equality for all, regardless of race or religion, all form part - an integral part - of trade unionism. Wherever these different fundamental rights can now be considered to exist, the struggle continues in the form of demanding greater democracy, especially in its economic and social dimensions. Trade unionism, living and democratic trade unionism, could well be considered, in this sense, as an element strengthening democracy and liberty. Because the two are indivisible. And just as economic freedom is a poor sort of freedom if it is not accompanied by political freedom, so a democracy which limits itself only to political and parliamentary aspects, and which remains closed to social and economic life, is a pale imitation of real democracy!

2.6. DEFENDING AND STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

Trade unionism is born of democracy, and forms a vital part of it. No society can function democratically if it resorts to a confrontation between the State and individuals, with the State as a legislative and administrative body for the whole of society and the people isolated within their own individual plans and situations. Political parties, citizens' organisations, consumer associations, environmental groups, youth groups, women's movements - all of these are indispensable for the proper functioning of a society where dialogue is considered to be a basic precept, where everyone has a real opportunity to participate in social, economic, cultural and political life. By bringing workers together and giving them the chance to discuss their immediate concerns, by focusing their struggle on certain values, trade unions, which are moreover frequently the most representative organisations, play a leading role in civil and democratic society. In the final analysis, this provides the best defence against the temptation to resort to the authoritarian, or even totalitarian, measures, to which a State can so easily succumb, especially when confronted with a crisis situation!

Practice

2.7. WHY THE ACTU WANTS FEWER MEMBERS

In a good number of countries, where the trade unions are based on a profession or occupation, there is today still a veritable patchwork where several trade unions, sometimes very few, overlap each other, or even compete to enlarge their spheres of influence. The fact that there are historical reasons for the situation does nothing to resolve the problem. Especially when changes in industrial and social structures make such divisions between workers increasingly artificial and force separate negotiations to take place with employers in various industries.

The Australian Confederation of Trade Unions, which we are about to examine, may seem extreme to some people. It is nevertheless true that the issue of trade union amalgamation, intended to bring together all the workers in the same company in order to create powerful unions capable of influencing an entire sector of activity, is being raised in almost every country. After having read the following section, compare it with the issues being raised in your own trade union organisation. In your opinion, what are the advantages and drawbacks which accompany any such reorganisation of trade union structures?

"In their rule books, some Australian trade unions take thirty pages or more to define the groups of workers whom they can represent. The ACTU's "Future Strategies" document (1987) gives some figures: "of the 3.18m members recorded in "Trade Union Statistics", 2.5m belong to one of the 163 unions which are presently affiliated to the ACTU. These affiliates include all 33 unions which have more than 30,000 members. On the other hand, a further 42 unions have fewer than 1,000 members... and a further 56 unions have fewer than 5,000 members". And from all of that, the "Future Strategies" draw a stark conclusion: "It is obvious that Australia has too many unions."

By unanimously adopting the "Future Strategies" at the 1987 ACTU Congress, the unions made that conclusion their own. They also accepted the next step in the argument: "unions need to amalgamate to form larger, more efficient units! The most appropriate bases for each reorganisation appear to be broad industry categories." The document goes on to list 18 categories and suggests a programme of mergers and federations.

This is not to say that the number of

ACTU affiliates will drop to 18. Most union officials decline to put a timescale on amalgamations or to estimate the eventual number of unions. As the "Future Strategies" point out, strong loyalties have built up over the years. Also, in a country the size of Australia, many people will think twice before swapping a locally-based union for a big national one. Nevertheless, a considerable reduction seems certain. This will entail changes in the law, which at present imposes "unrealistic criteria and voting requirements upon unions who wish to amalgamate." The amalgamations are not an end in themselves. The aim is to boost the unions' efficiency, and also their recruitment.

Australian trade union membership stands at a nationally very respectable 46% of the employed workforce (1988 figures). There has, however, been a decline of 3% "during a period of Labour government and substantial employment growth" and this, say "Future Strategies" is "a disturbing trend in itself". The unions say they will have to step up their recruitment drives, but they will also have to pay more attention to "establishing and maintaining contact with

grass-roots membership". A new media campaign should help in this, as should the provision of a wider range of services to union members.

"Future Strategies" also suggest that the ACTU itself should also undergo some restructuring. "While maintaining a relatively small ACTU organisation, and continuing the ACTU's pre-

sent functions, the emphasis should be on industrial services for affiliated unions. The ACTU should aim to provide "one industrial officer to each broad industry grouping"

(Source: "Free Labour World" - ICFTU. Brussels 18.2.1988)

2.8. THE LOSS OF TRADE UNION INFLUENCE?

Is a strong union one which represents 80% of the working population? Not necessarily, because every "member" of a trade union is not necessarily an "active" member. You only have to recall that in all societies with "one party-one union", the trade union organisation with membership of 98.5% of workers was not necessarily an organisation with much to say, nor did it always fight for company workers' rights nor influence the economic, social or democratic choices of the government.

This does not mean that union representation, the number of workers or the share they represent of the working population, should therefore be underestimated. Changes taking place over the last few years are worrying from this point of view. Almost everywhere unions are seeing a decline in their level of representativeness. This is linked to various factors: the economic crisis, the rise in unemployment and problems of integration of non-manual social categories.

The ILO study summarised below (World Labour Report 1993) presents a brief overview of the subject in the different regions of the world. After reading it, take a look at the situation in your own country and perhaps compare it with what is happening in neighbouring countries.

- * **How would you describe the changes which your organisation has undergone in the past few years, and what in your opinion are the main factors which explain these changes? What are the reactions of your trade union to this problem? What type of strategy can you think of to extend the social base of your trade union?**

"High levels of unemployment and changes in the nature of work are threatening trade union membership. The shift from heavy industry to services, and the rise in the number of women workers, "whom the unions have not recruited so successfully in the past", have hurt the unions, while the growing number of people without work means that a pool of alternative labour is available for employers who want to get rid of their unionised workers. Legislative attacks have also made it more difficult to recruit members, or to strike.

Membership levels in the OECD countries range from 81% of the workforce in Sweden to a mere 10% in France. But the report stresses that unions' influence can go beyond their membership. "In many countries, the collective agreements that unions reach are often extended to cover the whole workforce, unionised or not".

Unions appear to be in much worse shape in the developing world. In Africa, only 10% of the workforce are employed in the formal sector, and

only a small proportion of these belong to unions. However, "the wave of democratisation which is sweeping across the continent, is often prompted, or strongly supported by trade union action", the report says.

In Latin America, just 20% of workers are trade unionists. The report blames both the economic recession, which is driving more people into the informal sector, and the difficulties unions face in adapting to a changing political environment.

Membership in Asia ranges from 20 to 40% of the workforce. Many

unions in the region are closely linked to the party in power, or are kept in check by governments who believe that unions hinder economic growth.

Overall membership levels in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States remain high according to the report, reaching 90% in some areas. But the report puts this down to the unions' still having role in the distribution of social benefits".

(Source: "Free Labour World" - ICFTU. Brussels - May 1993)

2.9. THE EFFECT OF THE THATCHER LAWS ON THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

"Trade unions are fine, but they should wield as little power as possible". This is probably the line of thought taken by certain governments which believe that economic freedom and the flowering of the market economy require trade union organisations to be effectively muzzled.

In Western Europe the government which most clearly illustrated this approach was that of Mrs Thatcher, who dominated the 1980s. As the text below explains, from the outset this government abandoned the system of dialogue which had characterised industrial relations in Great Britain up until that time, and slowly but surely put in place a whole arsenal of measures intended to contain trade unionism within companies. The text also recalls certain initiatives (with bonuses as a prime example!) taken to actively incite workers to give up trade union membership. All of this took place in the context of an almost unrelenting campaign opposing freedom, trade unionism and democracy.

Mrs Thatcher is probably the Prime Minister who most relentlessly and obstinately followed such a course. Nevertheless, the policy which she pursued had become a sort of "sign of the times" which also affected other societies to a greater or lesser

extent. After having read this text, try to sum up the situation prevailing in your own country. How does the government look upon social dialogue? How do private and public employers perceive their relations with trade unions? Do you know of situations where trade unionism has to fight to maintain the right of workers to join the organisation of their choice? What is the public image of trade unionism in your society?

"Mrs Thatcher's arrival in 1979 which, in accordance with her pledges, brought open conflict with the British trade unions, contrasts with the previous periods under Labour and Conservative governments during which the unions took part in the conduct of economic and social policy.

Although the Thatcherites took a hard attitude towards the trade unions, the public authorities chose a phased approach to eliminating what Ian McGregor, chairman of the Coal Board, called the "enemy within". To avoid giving any foothold to trade union industrial action, which might have had a destabilising effect, the government introduced a whole series of laws over a period of time.

In order to achieve their objectives, the public authorities based their reforms on four fundamental points.

Firstly, the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 gave a strict redefinition of what was meant by a legitimate labour dispute which legally could only involve the employers and employees within the confines of their particular company. From that point on, any sympathy strike which might take place in a company or establishment other than their own was totally banned. Then, in order to defend individual choice, all picketing was made illegal, and before any strike a secret ballot had to be held by mail one week before the planned start of the strike. In addition, the closed shop, which affected 2.6 mil. workers, was severely constrained. Finally, the law brought an end to the total immunity which trade unions had enjoyed since 1906, in the case of a dispute. If the law was not respected, the union was deemed to be legally, morally and financially responsible. "Damages" in the case of a dispute being ruled illegal varied between 100,000 pounds sterling, if the union had less than 5,000 members, and 250,000 pounds sterling where the union had more than 100,000 members.

As a footnote to this legislation, the government repealed the mechanism for trade union recognition as it appeared in the law of 1975. The repeal of the mechanism for trade union recognition, just like the laws on trade unions, contributed to the reduction in both trade union negotiating power and representation. In addition, in the public sector, in 1987 the government did not hesitate to suspend the negotiation procedures in the education sector up until 1990

following the teachers' strike in 1988. At the Cheltenham secret intelligence gathering centre, the government forbade the workers to form a union and gave them a bonus of 1,000 pounds in compensation for the loss of this right. Finally, the government put limits on union representation in the main institutions for macro-social control. This was the case in the Manpower Commission, which dealt with employment and training issues, the Health and Safety Executive and the Equal Opportunities Commission. In all these tripartite institutions the balance of representation between trade unions and employers was altered in favour of the latter.

These laws certainly disrupted the unity and cohesion of the trade union movement. In 1984, as a sign of protest against this "indigestible legislation", to use the words of the Secretary General of the TUC, N. Willis, the TUC withdrew from the National Economic and Development Council (NEDC). But confident of its domination, the Conservative Party undertook other reforms to limit the trade unions to a strictly economic role. In 1989 at the time of the TUC Annual Assembly in Blackpool, N. Fowler, the Minister for Employment, proposed that any strike action which did not obtain 70% support in the strike ballot should be declared illegal.

(Source : IRES. Syndicalismes. "Dynamiques des relations industrielles" Dunod. 1992)

2.10. THE NEW RESPONSIBILITIES OF AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

How can democracy advance in societies which have lived for years, sometimes for decades, under a single-party system? How can a society of dialogue prevail, where people can freely express their opinions and demands, during an economic crisis often without precedent? Such questions are today being asked in many societies, in Western (and of course Central and Eastern) Europe, but also in Africa, and in certain third world countries even less well armed to confront the triple social, economic and political challenge.

Trade unions carry an important responsibility in these various societies, frequently all the more important because they are often the only organised representative force. Because it is often the whole social

and political structure in these societies which needs to be reconstructed in a more democratic way. At the same time, it can be even more difficult to reconstruct since the trade unions themselves are in need of reconstruction, or at least of defining their position and the forms and boundaries of their activities. And this, sometimes, in the teeth of the various demands made on them by political parties lacking support, or legitimacy.

Read the text below and discuss the main issues. Do the ideas which it develops seem relevant to your own society, or the societies around you? Do you find the same type of debate within your own trade union organisation?

"In a recent address to a group of African trade unionists, meeting in Paris under the auspices of Force Ouvrière, the French trade union, the ICFTU General Secretary Enzo Friso summarised the challenge facing the trade unions of Africa. In most African countries, he said, "the trade unions, as the only organised force, have been the driving force in the process of democratisation. At a time, when the political fabric is still weak, they have an even more crucial role to play.

In countries like Benin, the Congo, Mali, Niger and Zambia, it was the fight for trade union independence which first caused the single-party systems to falter and, from 1990 onwards, pushed the trade unions into the spotlight. This calls to mind the role played by the unions in the struggles for independence, a role so significant that some of the leading political personalities in the newly-emerged states came from among their ranks.

Today, however, in their concern not to be brought down with the single parties who had gradually come to be their patrons, and proud of their rediscovered independence, the trade unions are approaching the question of politics with due caution. The trade union representatives from Mali and Niger were unanimous in saying "we want to put the process of democratisation on the right track and return as soon as possible to our true role as trade unions". This will be a difficult task, given the current political vacuum and especially, when we consider that the trade unions are among the few organisations enjoying popular support

which, remarkably enough for Africa, transcends ethnic boundaries.

Faced with the entreaties of the new political parties, who see in the power of the trade unions a way of acquiring the popular base they lack, several unions, including the USTN in Niger, and the UNTM in Mali, have re-designed their general approach and their structures in order to safeguard their independence and the democratic nature of the movement. In particular, they have passed rules banning trade union officials from holding political and trade union office at the same time. In the view of Bakary Karambé the general Secretary of UNTM, "the vocation of a trade union organisation is not to assume power, since this would be contrary to its mission, which is to defend the interests of the workers". Accordingly, the UNTM has several times refused invitations to change itself into a labour party or to accept ministerial posts. The fact is that, for the people, the trade unions have become the guarantors of the democratic process, which accounts for their presence in the "national conferences" set up by a number of African countries in order to lay down the basis of a pluralist democratic system.

Having assumed a pivotal role in the debate on the future of their countries, the trade unions have come to be viewed as a threat by the former élites which are still holding on to power. As a result, there has been an upsurge in trade union repression in Chad, in the Central African Republic and in Morocco, not to mention the flagrant case of Sudan. Furthermore, in several countries

such as the Ivory Coast, Togo, Malawi, Burundi, Madagascar, the Central African Republic and Zaïre, the wind of change has not yet succeeded in sweeping these élites from power.

Some governments have been more subtle and, under the pretext of promoting multi-party politics, have sought to weaken the power of the independent trade unions by encouraging a plethora of trade union organisations. The most blatant instance of this practice is to be found in Zaïre, where some 70 organisations are vying for attention. Some observers see this as the work of the Mobutu régime. A similar trend, less marked, but equally worrying, is to be found in a dozen African countries. Everywhere, the challenge facing the unions is the same: they must see to it that the process of transition runs smoothly and at the same time try to ensure that democratisation responds to the aspirations of their impatient people. The

disastrous economic legacy of the single parties is by no means the least of the obstacles to be overcome in this struggle.

Paradoxically, however, for the governments of the industrialised countries, and for the international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, it represents a unique opportunity to promote democracy and development at one and the same time. As the trade unions point out, the double-dealing characteristic of the single parties can be avoided only if the representatives of the workers are included in the preparation of economic and social policies and if aid is made conditional upon progress in the areas of democracy and human and trade union rights".

(Source: "Free Labour World" - ICFTU. Brussels November 1992)

III. TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS IN RELATION TO THE STATE AND EMPLOYERS

Theory

Should trade unions in companies be content with just being the mouthpieces for workers demands? Or should they go further and, for example, put the workers' point of view directly to the company management whilst assuming, in return, joint responsibility for decisions taken at this level? This debate, which we touched on in section II of this "ABC of trade unionism" - "The job of the Trade Unionist" - is present at all levels of society. As representative organisations, trade unions assume great responsibilities, which do not stop at the simple and direct material, social and economic aspects, but touch on the whole issue of how society functions. It is therefore quite reasonable to ask: just how far should trade union organisations go in this dialogue or in participating with the various groups in charge of economic and political decisions who normally assume responsibility for the choices made by a country?

3.1. SOCIAL HARMONY DEPENDS ON THE LEVEL OF REPRESENTATION OF THE VARIOUS SOCIAL PLAYERS

How to organise social dialogue is a preoccupation in almost every country, at least in countries where trade union organisations have succeeded in demonstrating that they are representative. Furthermore, this is the prerequisite for such a dialogue to have real content, once it becomes institutionalised. It is clear that the way in which the various forms of concertation and negotiation (between employers and unions) take place - and this is just as true of what happens in a tripartite (unions, employers, government) committee -, what is discussed and the effectiveness of the agreement or the negotiation, depend largely on the weight of representation carried by each of the participants at the negotiating table. If workers' representatives are to make use of the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of members which exist on paper, but these members feel no urge to act when the unions commit them to such and such a course of action ... one can easily imagine the lack of interest the employers or government will feel for a dialogue which is likely to be maintained only for the sake of form. The same thing applies of course to employers' organisations, and even to the government. Whenever trade unions discover that their counterparts are incapable of committing themselves properly to a certain course of action and make declarations which never result in practical measures, they should start asking themselves what is the point of a dialogue which is little more than symbolic.

3.2. DEFENDING A DEVELOPMENT MODEL BASED ON SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

However, for trade union organisations, participating in social dialogue does not always mean demanding and obtaining "more". Practically everywhere over the past few years, one could almost say the opposite is true. Crises, reform programmes and structural adjustment, problems associated with integrating into international trade ... all of these significantly modify what used to be the main objective of social dialogue. Nowadays we hardly ever talk about sharing the fruits of

growth. On the contrary, we attempt to discuss the social priorities which will guarantee the future of a certain development model, how to reconcile the requirements of economic efficiency with those of social justice and solidarity. More often than not, the trade unions find themselves in the position of defending their gains, or values, confronted by the demands of employers or the government to give priority once more to business competitiveness, and to do everything possible to ensure the transition to a market economy, to reduce the public debt at the double, and so on.

Although the socio-economic context has profoundly changed the nature and the relationship of internal forces within the social dialogue, this does not mean that the trade unions therefore have no further role to play. Quite the contrary. Faced with purely economic logic, it is essential to defend (which is the function of trade unionism) the idea that a durable development model must take into consideration normal social requirements - the right to work, security of existence, access to education and culture - for the working population. Rather than demands and counter demands, social dialogue thus becomes a place where different visions of the paths which society should take come face to face in order to prepare for the future.

3.3. THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE SHOULD NOT COMPROMISE THE INDEPENDENCE OF TRADE UNIONISM

How far should trade unions become involved in this type of debate? As far as possible, you might say. As long as they can maintain their autonomy as organisations representing workers. Just as trade unions cannot change into political parties without damaging themselves, neither can they provide a substitute for the responsibilities of the State or public authorities. By taking too much of a leading role in certain bodies concerned with agreements or joint decision making, whether with employers or public authorities, they run the risk of being seen by the workers as a "conduit" for what is decided primarily by the State, or between the State and international financial institutions, for instance. There are good examples of trade unions which, thinking they were acting for the workers, allowed themselves to be co-opted by public authorities or the employers, agreeing to explain their position in exchange for certain social advantages which they could then pass on to their members. It is from their members, whom they represent, that the trade unions derive their legitimacy. It is at the level of members, and particularly of union activists, that the results of any social dialogue and the position taken by union representatives, can be gauged. Any commitment which is not based on a mandate which has been properly discussed by union workers and has not been democratically debated taking into consideration the medium and long-term, as well as short-term interests of the workers, would call into question the very reasons for the existence of trade unionism.

3.4. SHOULD WE PROMOTE SOCIAL OR INDUSTRIAL INITIATIVES?

Everything we have said so far supposes that the State and employers (private and public) effectively assume their role in society. This is far from always being the case. A large proportion of the problems encountered by some countries is due to the lack of dynamism or a sense of responsibility on the part of employers. Or in some cases the

State which, through policy or inability, abandons everything to do with economic and social development to the responsibility of individuals and private organisations, and to the forces of the partly regulated and partly chaotic free market. Confronted with such a situation, similar to that encountered by the first Western European trade unions when they were formed in the last century, it is normal for trade unions to adapt their strategies and take steps firstly to simply issue a list of demands and negotiate with employers, and later deal with the political authorities.

In general, the greatest problem faced by trade unions is employment. There is no lack of societies where the failure of employers or the absence of a government industrial policy leaves the working population impoverished by endemic unemployment. Such situations are of course common in certain third world countries, but they also exist in an increasing number of developed countries where whole regions are afflicted by "industrial decay". Faced with such tragedies, trade unions around the world have been searching for new ways to help workers. This might involve participating with the public authorities and economic players in drawing up redeployment policies on a large scale or, on a more pragmatic level, taking direct initiatives to create jobs, such as small enterprises, non-capital intensive cooperatives, vocational training programmes enabling workers to enter directly into working life, etc., etc. It goes without saying that, by taking part in such initiatives, trade unionism makes no claim to take over from those with primary responsibility for a country's economic and social development. But it is equally clear that it cannot remain indifferent to situations where a large part of the working population is excluded from "normal" working life. It suffices to consider the case of certain third world countries. If trade unionism cannot come up with new ways of addressing the problems of impoverished communities in rural areas, and the problems of those excluded from the labour market in large towns, the weakness of industry, and therefore of salaried employees, will eventually result in trade unions limiting their activities to workers who form sometimes only 2 or 3% of the working population!

3.5. MAKING THE STATE AND EMPLOYERS FACE UP TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

The same factors explain why trade unions have developed a whole range of economic and social activities to counter-balance the shortcomings of the State and employers with regard to security of existence and social protection for workers. These can include cooperatives for providing assistance, aid in the event of illness, invalidity or death, orphans' allowances, facilities for members to take holidays at union organised holiday centres etc., etc. In the beginning, the majority of trade union organisations invested in such forms of solidarity and practical assistance. That is to say at a time and in a context where the social security systems which have now been constructed did not yet exist. At the same time, we should stress that by taking such initiatives trade unions highlighted the urgent need for generalised measures which guarantee a certain security of existence for everyone. Which is something trade unions themselves are, by definition, incapable of assuming, since this can never be their principal role. In addition, we ought to point out that such security of existence cannot simply concern solidarity between workers alone, but it is for society as a whole to ensure that its members enjoy proper conditions affording employment, income and

personal development. This is why the primary issue is to compel the State, and those in charge of the economy, to face up to their responsibilities in these matters. And if trade unions do have a job to do, it is much more than just monitoring and making demands, and includes not accepting that public bodies offload onto them what rightly belongs in their own domain!

Practice

3.6. SHOULD WE RETAIN THE SWEDISH MODEL OF A NATIONAL DIALOGUE?

The government is one thing, trade unions another. This formula is still valid, even in countries such as Sweden where trade unions represent around 86% of all workers. But this does not mean that the trade unions should be indifferent to government policy decisions. Even less so when this policy sets objectives which go against workers' interests.

The text below summarises the conflicts in "philosophy" between the Swedish government, obsessed with its programme to reduce costs and the deficit, and the trade unions, for whom a policy of revival and job creation takes priority. This conflict is compounded by another which is developing between the trade unions and employers, that the traditional model of cross-sector agreements (applying to the entire country) should be abandoned in favour of case by case negotiations depending on the situation within each company. For the trade unions it is clear that abandoning national agreements would above all signify abandoning the weakest workers.

After reading this text, compare the positions taken by the Swedish government to combat the economic crisis with the measures taken by your own government. How would you describe the behaviour of your trade union? Is a "summit level" social dialogue with the employers and government real, or symbolic and only for the sake of form?

"Too much is too much. The Swedish unions have taken their government to the ILO over its latest attempt to make the workers bear the burden of the country's economic crisis.

The new legislation that comes into effect on April 1, 1993 will strongly affect the whole Swedish working class. Because of the introduction of a one-day waiting period into the new sickness insurance legislation, the workers will not be paid for the first day of sick leave they take and in case of injury, they will also lose part of the benefits to which they are entitled. Moreover, changes to the Work Injury Insurance Act in December last year move the burden of proof in cases of employment injury onto the worker, whereas once the Act, bearing in mind the ILO convention 121 on Employment Injury Benefits, ratified by the Swedish government in 1969, presumed the occupational origin of certain injuries "unless considerable stronger reasons speak against it".

It is obvious for both Swedish trade

union Centres, the LO and the TCO, who are affiliated to the ICFTU, that the new legislation violates ILO convention 121. Therefore, a complaint was submitted to the UN body together with the ICFTU against the Swedish government at the end of January 1993.

A NATIONAL EFFORT TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT

How did they get to this point? With unemployment set to rise to 7% according to government - 8% according to the unions, the worst rates since the thirties in Sweden, and a public deficit of 172 billion krona, Sweden's minority conservative government is desperately trying to cut costs. Turning to a reduction of the amount spent on sick leave and employment injury benefits was a predictable move, by which the government hopes to reduce spending by 6 billion krona a year. But workers will be hit even harder.

In September 1992, as the crisis in the country's economy reached a peak, a consensus on two so-called crisis packages was reached between the government and opposition. The aim was to restore confidence in the krona and to make industry more competitive.

The unions went along with the first package, but this was not enough to prevent devaluation of the krona. The unions were highly critical of the second package which, they said, was insufficient in the fight against what they saw as the most serious problem in Sweden today, record unemployment. Instead of a "concerted national effort to keep jobs", it contained proposals for 45.000 further job cuts (in the public sector), increased VAT on food, and the loss of two days statutory annual leave; measures the unions said, which would hit the low-paid the worst, those who tend not to have more generous leave provisions under collective agreements.

FOR A NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Both the LO and the TCO therefore started campaigns to push for an alternative economic policy. LO put forward two programmes which, if they were put into action, would create 250.000 and 300.000 jobs, with a net cost of 9 billion krona. According to TCO, 20.000 new jobs could be created annually by bringing forward investments in infrastructure. Together the two trade union Centres called on the government to stimulate growth in small and medium-sized companies by ensuring credit facilities.

Despite the crisis packages, the Swedish economy is still in the middle of a deep recession. Output is predicted to fall by another 1.5% in 1993, and unemployment, which was 20 in 1990, is still rising. In its budget proposals currently under discussion, the government foresees

large spending cuts as part of its plan to eliminate the public sector budget deficit of 172 billion krona.

A reduction in labour costs, enabling the country to become more competitive and boost its exports, says the government is the only way of reducing unemployment in the long run. The unions disagree. The reality for their members is that purchasing power is expected to fall by approximately 3.5% because of low wage increases, rising unemployment and price increases because of higher VAT. Apparently an increasing number of Swedish citizens share this analysis.

MAINTAIN INTERPROFESSIONAL SOLIDARITY

The unions are highly critical of the anti-trade union policy pursued by the minority conservative government since it came to power by the end of 1991. Seizing the opportunity, the employers launched a campaign to limit the scope of negotiations. This year, the Employers' Federation, the SAF, has offered a "zero", or no pay rise agreement. The unions see this as an attempt to use the present economic crisis to move away from centralised bargaining towards factory-level bargaining. "A zero agreement would of course mean success for the employers' strategy to achieve company-based agreements", underscored the LO President Stig Malm. "No-one needs to tell us that the scope for pay increases is limited. But when there is only a small amount of money to distribute, it is important to concentrate on the low-paid". Such a deal has been rejected outright by the employers, who insist that there will be no return to the so-called Swedish model of centralised bargaining.

(Source: Free Labour World - ICFTU. Brussels, March 1993)

3.7. THE VENEZUELAN WORKERS' CONFEDERATION (CTV): FOR OR AGAINST PRIVATISATION?

Almost everywhere governments are engaged in policies for the privatisation of public enterprises in the name of greater economic efficiency and in order to reduce the deficit in public finances. Such policies are doubly important to workers. Firstly, those who are directly concerned, who often risk losing their job when the restructuring which usually accompanies privatisation is carried out. But such policies also affect all workers and the entire working population insofar as they concern their country's development, and therefore imply a social and economic impact over the medium-term.

The text we present below takes up the point of view of Raoul Matos, executive secretary of the CTV and chairman of the Privatisation Committee of the Chamber of Deputies in his own country. As you will see, Raoul Matos is calling for much greater participation by trade unionists in this arena. Firstly, in order to ensure that privatisations form part of a general policy of revival and allow for social measures to accompany industrial restructuring, and also to avoid letting privatisations purely and simply turn into national monopolies in the hands of a few rich families. This is behind many of the measures proposed by the CTV, such as the right of workers to acquire a significant number of shares in privatised companies.

After reading the text, discuss what it says. How does the issue of privatisation apply to your country? What is the point of view of the trade unions on the subject? Do you believe that the State should retain control of certain enterprises? Which ones? Do you think that workers should be able to retain an element of control in their companies? In what form?

"Worker-managers represent one of the most important victories of the trade union movement of Venezuela, as they have enabled trade union organisations to participate in the decision-making bodies of state enterprises. The fundamental principles of the law on Workers' Representatives was approved in 1966 and came into force in 1978. When the new labour code was approved in 1991, the full provisions of this act were maintained and added to it.

The CTV is currently involved in a campaign to strengthen the role of workers and unions in state enterprise. This is the more important that the process of structural adjustment began in 1989 of which privatisation is one of the principle aspects. The privatisation process in Venezuela began in 1990 but DID NOT take off UNTIL mid-1991.

TIE THE PRIVATISATIONS TO A POLICY OF ECONOMIC RENEWAL

It is one thing to restructure in order to improve productivity, but we want to avoid privatisation, particularly in the civil service, being used as a pretext for large scale redundancies, leaving workers with no unemployment benefit, and no future. The unions therefore are advocating the creation of a stability or unemployment benefit fund for a period of eight months or a year, and a parallel retraining fund.

We need to reach a consensus nationally to curtail the role of the state, without making it disappear altogether, and to concentrate on vital industries such as oil, which is our biggest foreign currency earner. Furthermore, it's an industry that supplies energy for the other sectors of the economy.

It should be borne in mind that privatisation at the moment is taking place at a time when the country is in the grip of economic recession and high interest rates. This excludes the small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who are already finding it difficult to survive and cannot contemplate purchasing the shares offered for sale. Another reason they lose out is that the economically powerful are taking dollars out of the country. There are now said to be 70 billion dollars abroad. To counteract the concentration of wealth in the hands of the family clans that still dominate Venezuela, the unions are proposing preferential treatment for workers, particularly for those who form associations, and for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The CTV has asked that privatisation be linked to a period of economic growth and is pressing the government to adopt a comprehensive social policy to promote the creation of small businesses in the service sector, thereby generating employment. This has already happened in the dockyards, where service companies have taken up the excess workforce created by privatisation.

STRENGTHEN WORKERS' PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS

However, the over-flexible and unregulated form that the privatisation process is taking and the prevailing free market policies point to a return to a concentration of wealth among a privileged few, preventing the democratisation of capital, which is the prime concern of the trade

unions and the social democratic sector. In our view, some strategic enterprises should remain in part state property, like the telephone company, where an 80% privatisation programme was foreseen. We succeeded in getting that the State will keep 51% of the shares.

The level of worker participation, or co-determination, is set forward by the government and in certain instances, the workers have been totally excluded. In some cases, they have been given 5%, in others nothing and in others again 20%. But there is no regular pattern. In the Commission, it was proposed to introduce a minimum 10% participation.

There is presently a law on the "transfer of goods" adopted under Leoni's labour government in the 1960s, which greatly favours the workers. It has its weaknesses however, which is why we have asked for it to be repealed. The new law protects the workers less, and so the Commission is negotiating with full trade union support for preferential treatment for the workers.

The problem until now was that workers were not trained in joint management skills, which is why the CTV has created a special co-determination unit, promoting the formation of workers' associations that can make collective share purchases which will give them decision-making rights on the board of directors.

(Source: Free Labour World - ICFTU. Brussels, 15-2-1992)

3.8. A NEW, CREATIVE ROLE FOR TRADE UNIONS FACED WITH SOCIAL CHANGE?

Should the economic reforms being undertaken in Russia and the Central and Eastern European countries concern only the State, on the one hand, and a class of budding capitalists on the other? Should trade unions in these countries stick to the job of defending employment and maintaining a link between salaries and purchasing power? P. Siedeneck and M. Randow, two observers working for the DGB consultancy department, do not think so, and outline the idea that trade unions should also take certain initiatives intended to create what they call a "social economy", which functions within the framework of market mechanisms, but incorporates criteria other than pure profit.

- * **What do you think of this idea? Is it realistic? Doesn't it run the risk of diverting trade unions from their principal tasks? Do you think that a "third way", a social economy within a market economy, has a place in the process of change now affecting your country, or the countries in your region? How would similar initiatives be perceived by the members of your organisation?**

Provided they have not allied themselves with those who are attempting to block reforms, trade unions in countries which have embarked on the reform path must endeavour to organise social and legal protection for the workers. However, given that the new market economy system has still not taken hold, its operating functions remain largely unknown, the transformation process and simultaneously the social and economic disintegration is initially gathering pace, and the democratic basis has not yet been secured, trade unions are being forced, to a far greater extent than their counterparts in the West to take on creative roles.

Examples from the West, which are scarcely mentioned, demonstrate that this is possible: the housing, urban renewal and lending policies of the German trade unions made considerable contribution to the country's social and economic development in the aftermath of the two world wars. Their economic and social success has never seriously been contested.

In Italy, the CISL trade union took the initiative during the 1980s of being an independent social employer ("imprenditore sociale"). With the establishment of the CENASCA (Centro Nazionale per lo Sviluppo

della Cooperazione e dell'Autogestione), the CISL has developed activities in three areas: promoting the establishment of self-managed initiatives and companies, supplying advisory and support services for cooperatives, and, finally, cooperation with the national cooperative associations. The commitment of the Italian trade unions coincides with the promotional policy of the Italian state, and demonstrates that the promotion of the "economia sociale" can contribute to the development of private employer initiatives (this applies both to cooperative and other types of enterprises).

COOPERATIVES, SELF-MANAGED FIRMS, SOCIAL ECONOMY

Indeed, the Commission of the European Communities has singled out the special role of cooperatives in regions undergoing economic transition. Financial assistance, professional advice and adapted decentralised measures are necessary. The specific type of membership of cooperatives or other types of self-managed firms can muster domestic capital relatively quickly, unlike firms in Central and Eastern Europe, where the modest foreign investment is insufficient to finance growth by domestic firms. Given that, in Eastern Europe, it is pri-

marily the small firms who seek opportunities in foreign markets when their own domestic markets are weak, the promotion of new, smaller companies, and self-managed firms (if only as a market economy experiment) might well prove to be an economically viable proposition. This is particularly true of independent initiatives of the free trade unions in countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

State encouragement could enable companies in the "social economy" to successfully continue with plants experiencing difficulties in individual cases, and ultimately to be weaned off subsidies. In such cases it is important to note that the experience of Eastern Europe demonstrates that assistance should be carefully moni-

tored, because neo-liberal ideas are understandably gaining ground with many decision-makers, as a counterpoint to state economic mismanagement. As such, state support must be tied to conditions. A request for a workers'takeover of a plant must be linked to specific requirements concerning capital resources and the company's plans. However, the decisive question is whether the trade unions are in a position to carry out such fundamental reforms, from an institutional and organisational point of view?

(Source: Trade Unions and economic and sociological change in Eastern Europe. Mathias v. Randow and Peter Seideneck. Publication of the DGB. 12/1992)

IV. TRADE UNIONISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD OF WORK

Theory

The world is changing. And with it, the world of work. This much must be obvious to everyone. However, it does pose a number of questions for trade union organisations who were often founded on a certain type of specific industrialisation. So today, if it wishes to avoid being seen as a "spent force", the trade union movement must accept that its strategies, style and programme of activities be regularly re-examined.

4.1. WORKING CLASS TRADE UNIONISM BASED ON LARGE ENTERPRISES

Naturally, the first question to be asked concerns the members the trade union movement represents. In the beginning it was seen as a "working class" movement. It was in large enterprises where social exploitation was at its most visible, and at the same time solidarity between productive workers could most easily take form, that the budding trade unions found conditions most conducive to development. Hence the standard profile of the typical trade union recruit: the skilled or semi-skilled worker, with a strong feeling of antagonism towards the bosses or the employers' representatives. Such a recruit would also, typically, be a man, because this very same trade union movement, despite the fact that it boasted a few great women leaders, and although women provided a significant part of the labour force in many industries, was a man's world. This was notably because of cultural discrimination and traditions, which are still found all too often

4.2. TRADE UNIONISM ALSO MEANS PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND RECOGNITION OF THE EQUALITY OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS

Since its inception, it is clear that the trade union movement has evolved. Most trade union organisations have been aware for a long time that they could not simply limit their definition of a worker to the old-fashioned concept of a manual worker. New strategies therefore had to be devised to address the concerns of public service employees, salaried workers, technicians and managers, women, young people and immigrant workers. In many cases this meant setting up special organisations: union federations for public service officials, unions catering mainly for women, unions for young people, etc. In other cases trade unionism quite simply adapted to social changes which had already taken place. The distinction between native and immigrant workers is losing its relevance because they work alongside each other on a daily basis. The need to be defended and to benefit from the support of other workers is more readily accepted, including amongst managers and salaried workers who are traditionally less unionised, when they perceive that they, just like other workers, are confronted with unemployment, that they are also at the mercy of the arbitrary decisions of the bosses. The appearance of large numbers of women on the labour market (in the sense of paid workers, since for a long time women have done more than their fair share of unpaid work) has led to the number of women union members progressively approaching that of men (we

should mention in passing that this proportion is hardly reflected at managerial level!). And there is no lack of further examples.

Does this mean that things are improving in all trade union organisations? Certainly not. Because although, as in any social institution, trade unions are obliged to follow changes in society, this does not preclude the sheer weight of organisations, traditions and preconceived ideas from all too often resulting in the trade unions dragging their feet. You only have to compare the composition of the working population with the social profiles of unionised workers to realise that there is still a long way to go. Even where the heavily unionised working population represents almost all levels and classes of society, significant differences often continue to exist between the members of a trade union and those who lead it. And just as problematic are what could be called the weak spots of trade unionism: its presence in small and medium-sized enterprises and its ability to organise the unemployed!

4.3. HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE A COLLECTIVE APPROACH WHEN CONFRONTED BY A CULTURE OF INDIVIDUALISM?

Many factors explain the difficulties unions have in taking root amongst the unemployed and in small businesses. The isolation of the former, and the dependence of the latter on an employer, who often sees her/his business as a family affair within which s/he is hardly likely to accept a challenge to her/his authority, often constitute formidable obstacles. But these "physical" or "institutional" obstacles also reveal the difficulty which trade unionism can face in changing its approach (which is fundamentally collective) towards people whose situation and existence is lived as an individual. Whether unemployment is widespread or not, this does not prevent a person who has lost her/his job from experiencing a personal drama where s/he is impoverished as an individual. All the more so since in such a situation s/he is isolated from the social contacts, and therefore the support, found in working life. Technological changes in many new businesses are producing exactly the same individualism, this time experienced in a positive form. Moreover, many employers are right to encourage their workers to see themselves as "service providers", or as "workers involved in a common project", and thus to stop thinking only of their salary status! It is fairly obvious that against a background of systematically organised "enterprise cultures" trade unionism can rapidly begin to appear irrelevant.

4.4. MAKE WAY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Addressing these new social categories therefore requires that the trade union movement should be capable of re-thinking its style, approach and procedures. Let us consider extending trade unionism to young people, who surely have problems in common with other workers? But they also have problems of their own, perhaps because they are in a training situation, or simply because the political authorities have dreamed up various formulae for promoting the recruitment of young people according to rules which differ to some degree from the "normal" ways of obtaining an employment contract. In addition there are the problems of finding a job and of getting into the job market, which young people experience much more acutely than other workers. Finally, and this dimension must also be taken into consideration, young people do not necessarily see themselves firstly, or primarily, as workers.

Their way of socialising is based at least as much on leisure and cultural activities as on work. Opening the trade union movement up to young people and helping them not only to benefit from the support of the whole world of work, but, at least as importantly, making it possible for them to participate actively and contribute, requires a considerable effort to adapt on the part of trade unions. This explains the creation here and there of special organisations - committees, departments, or even autonomous organisations - led by young trade unionists according to the principle that "young people can best cater for young people". This also requires an effort to re-think activities and demands in accordance with the preoccupations of young people, including the integration of these preoccupations into the framework of workers' overall demands. Whether this is within the company, at sectorial or national level, the best way of defending these different "new" categories of workers is still to link them with the struggle of all workers to defend their rights and improve their living conditions.

4.5. MAINTAINING WORKERS' UNITY BEYOND THEIR LOSS OF STATUS

But beyond the integration into industry of workers who have been assimilated to varying degrees (young people, women, immigrants), the trade union movement still has to confront the restructuring which companies are imposing on the "traditional" labour force. Almost everywhere employers are now engaged in massive reorganisations of working practices, with flexibility as the key word. In the name of efficiency, speed, productivity and adapting to the requirements of production or marketing, the bosses are inventing a whole range of new techniques which, more often than not, have the direct effect of breaking up the unified workforce of the company. Devolution of an ever-increasing share of tasks to sub-contractors, hiring workers on a "per task" basis, or as freelance workers, giving small working groups responsibility for production "contracts" ... there is a proliferation of new ways of organising work which break with the Taylor or Ford tradition. The latter used to bring together workers with more or less equal status on the same production line. No doubt the traditional company, with the relative stability of workforce which it implies, is not about to disappear. But it is plausible that it will increasingly become an island within a social and economic fabric which is much more diverse and less rigid. This is certainly one of the major challenges with which trade unionism is now confronted. Because a trade union movement which restricts itself to organising workers in large, stable companies, and fails to construct the new forms of solidarity required - with the help of workers in small businesses, those acting as sub-contractors, and with all temporary and part-time workers - would risk no longer being, or at least to not to the same extent, what we still mean today by trade unionism!

Practice

4.6. INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNIONS

The primary objective of trade unionism is to defend workers. But this means at the same time that each worker should have her or his recognised place within the trade union, that she or he be able to take part in discussions, put over her or his point of view, her/his concerns. The example of women workers, however, frequently suffices to demonstrate that, in many cases, we are still very far from where we would like to be. The fact is that, even if, in many societies, women workers nowadays account for a far from negligible number of trade union members, we only have to look at the composition of the managing bodies of this trade union to realise that much still remains to be done.

- * **Why is this so? The text which we present below sets out a certain number of reasons, which relate as much to the practical ways in which trade unions operate as to the culture which all too often continues to dominate in them. Alongside this brief analysis, the text goes on to propose certain concrete lines of action. Read this analysis and these proposals, and then discuss them. Try and find practical examples which bear out, or which contradict, what is stated below. Does your trade union contain a department or committee which deals more particularly with the specific problems of women workers? What are its activities? If not, how is your trade union organised to better promote women's rights, both in the union and in society as a whole?**

OBSTACLES TO EQUALITY WITHIN TRADE UNIONS

Family responsibilities: A women active in her trade union normally faces a triple burden of family responsibilities, her job, and her trade union work.

Traditional and stereotyped roles: certain religious taboos and certain cultural inhibitions make it difficult for women to penetrate the masculine world. Society has in many cases assigned women a secondary role compared with men, and this can lead to a lack of confidence when women are called upon to assume a public role and management tasks.

Segregation at work: At work, women often work in hierarchically lower jobs under the control of men in higher posts. Trade union structures which reflect segregation at work can prove an obstacle of women's promotion. The fact that women are in a majority only in a

few occupational groups, their representation in committees and in negotiating teams is very limited. At the same time, it is difficult for women in lower ranking jobs to represent men in more important jobs. The fact that women are poorly paid can also constitute an obstacle given the cost of raising children.

The trade union environment is frequently considered as being dominated by men and hostile to women, according to the following criteria:

- the idea that trade union work takes up 24 hours a day;
- the tendency for meetings to take place in the evening;
- traditional procedures and regulations governing meetings, which women find unnecessarily complicated;
- trade union terminology and sexist language;

- unofficial pro-male structures (old male activities... in particular at election times);
 - little encouragement given to women;
 - in certain places, women have less access to training;
 - in certain countries, high levels of illiteracy and malnutrition.
- In general, women feel that lack of time, support and training prevent them from moving forward.

HOW TO OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES?

We give below a certain number of principles, the implementation of which is already helping women to participate better:

- holding meetings during working hours, without loss of pay, or organising them during the lunch break or immediately before or after work;
- providing child care facilities during meetings, or paying for child care;
- organising transport;
- paying for trade union work;
- reviewing and transforming trade union structures, practices and procedures;
- using non-sexist language in

trade union documents (in particular in terms of the terminology applicable to the office of woman president);

- conducting trade union meetings in a better and more flexible way, in order to encourage participation;
- placing importance on a better distribution of members by sex (in order to understand their different needs);
- increasing demands in collective bargaining. This constitutes a major attraction for women members;
- using women's committees and networks in order to overcome women's isolation and support female leaders.

A survey of 100 trade union central offices, carried out in the United Kingdom, showed that the most frequent innovations have consisted of adapting the times and places of meetings to women's needs and to paying the cost of child care or organising child care where the meetings are taking place.

(Source: Education Ouvrière. "La participation des femmes dans le syndicat". ILO Magazine, Geneva, 1990-1993/1).

4.7. INTRODUCING TRADE UNIONISM OUTSIDE ITS TRADITIONAL SOCIAL BASIS

Female labour represents, almost everywhere and in every society, a substantial portion of overall manpower. On the other hand, it is worth noting that women are still too often relegated to the socially least recognised, most precarious and least paid activities. When a company is faced with economic difficulties, it is frequently the women who are dismissed first. In other words, there is still a long way to go in achieving true equality between men and women workers.

In the sectors of activity in which we find a certain number of women, the professional status which they are often forced to accept further accentuates the difficulty of achieving a broad opening up of trade unionism to female workers. In this sense, many of the questions evoked below, such as the unionisation of rural or part-time workers, involve all workers, male and female alike. In certain societies it is a key issue.

The following text, taken from an ILO study, examines the organisational difficulties faced by various categories of workers, who can be considered "marginal" in relation to the occupational sectors which are represented in the majority in trade union organisations. After reading the text, look and see whether the same questions, or other similar ones, arise in your own country. Is your trade union organisation discussing the organisation of these categories of workers? Imagine the strategies best adapted to open your trade union to these workers, women and men alike.

ORGANISATION OF WOMEN OFFICE EMPLOYEES (CANADA)

"Most female employees wish to maintain the best possible relationships with their employer and consider that trade union membership can only serve to weaken these relationships. For this reason, we need an entirely new approach to the area of organisation.

Above everything else, a special effort must be made so that working women "perceive" trade union representatives as having the same interests as their own, and therefore as colleagues who are open to their problems. Rather than appearing directed against the employer, the campaign should emphasise the "quality of life at work".

As a general rule, experience in organising women office employees has shown that trade unions, once they decide to approach this sector, are well advised to take the following items into account:

- closer relationships should be established between the trade unions and the workers in the enterprises, who will help it establish the first contacts;
- the trade union's strategy should aim to have done with the still widespread opinion that "syndicates are male bastions for militants and workers";
- there is little point in undertaking campaigns limited to specific problems, without first undertaking a survey of the place of work of the people working there. Trade unions do not make sufficient use of long-term planning. And this becomes visible when they begin to organise campaigns."

THE DEFENCE OF MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS, WORKING FROM HOME

In Australia, the organisation of persons working from home began with the demand for the "legalisation" of this type of work. This was followed by a massive and fruitful campaign for the rights of persons working from home. This campaign provided the basis for a number of demands presented on behalf of persons working from home. After a four-year (1986-1990) campaign, the trade union was forced to observe that it was unable to make further headway in the area of the community work of people working from home. As a result, many persons in the informal sector are not yet organised.

In the Netherlands, one essential objective of the women's trade union and the centres it set up to defend the interests of people working from home was precisely the need for new legislation covering persons working from home. In 1992, a law was adopted covering the health and safety of persons working for home, and the trade unions continues to plead for a reform of the law at both national and European level.

In Canada, enough good laws already exist which, at least theoretically, afford protection to persons working from home. However, most of those involved work outside established rules, and the legislation is not effectively applied. The trade union has scarcely made use of traditional methods for establishing links with persons working at home, and has set up an organisation with the purpose of proposing associate membership to persons working at home.

Obviously, these trade unions have a problem of resources. No trade union can finance the intensive, long-term work which is essential in order to take effective care of persons working from home, solely out of its own resources from members' contributions.

THE UNIONISATION OF PART-TIME WORKERS

In Great Britain, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), after seeing its membership melt away, decided to review the way it operated. It commissioned a certain number of studies to look at various areas, in particular in the areas of management and long-term planning. In so doing, priority was also given to looking after part-time workers. Part-time working is a growing sector, and one which demands sustained efforts if it is to be unionised.

Completely new communication material was developed in order to emphasise the advantages of trade union membership, and to increase the interest of women members. The information campaign set out to change the image which part-time workers of both sexes have of trade unions, and to foster a positive perception of the role and advantages of trade unions in today's world.

The studies carried out also showed that superficial changes or propaganda alone were totally insufficient. The trade union had to change, not only its image but also its negotiation programme so as to enable it to be relevant, on an equal footing, to men and women working part-time.

The survey highlighted certain problems - in particular working hours, pay, pensions and job security - which are specially important to part-time workers and which the trade union ought to be able to help solve efficiently at the collective bargaining stage.

INTRODUCING TRADE UNIONISM AMONG RURAL WORKERS

The International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (IFPAAW), has carried out a number of projects in favour of women in rural areas. In addition to the IFPAAW's participation, a Project for Asian Women has been launched and financed by the International Labour Organisation and DANIDA (Danish Agency for International Development). The main objective of the project, carried out in India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, was to mobilise non-organised women. Between 1987 and 1992, the project trained a nucleus of women who, through a wide variety of approaches, have succeeded in motivating village women to play an increasingly important role in the activities of their workers' organisations. Given the still limited percentage of rural women belonging to workers' organisations, the project has made special efforts to reach a larger number of women by facilitating training, by discussing questions of day-to-day interest, and by organising income-generating activities.

(Source: Education Ouvrière, "La participation des femmes dans le syndicat". B.I.T. Magazine, Geneva 90-1993/1).

4.8. WESTWARD HO?

Emigration and immigration, at times for political reasons, but in most cases driven by economic necessity, are to be found in most of our societies. And, we could say, increasingly so.

It is not always easy for trade unionism to define its position towards these phenomena. Whilst obviously one worker is equal to the next, regardless of her or his nationality or colour, and that everyone should therefore benefit from the same rights and is owed the same respect, it is not acceptable that the organised importing of foreign labour should have the effect of "breaking" salaries and social benefits which the workers of a particular country have frequently acquired through long combats. At the same time, it is important to avoid, at any price, that this type of "social dumping", frequently organised, or at any rate encouraged, by enterprises wishing to obtain cheap labour, generate into a conflict between workers, with all the associated risks of racism and the xenophobia.

The text reproduced below looks at the question of the immigration affecting Central and Eastern Europe, due in particular to the social and political changes of recent years. Discuss your analysis of it in the light of the situations known to you, in your own and in neighbouring countries. Does your trade union organisation have a precise position on this question? For you, is this struggle against racism and xenophobia an important one for the trade union movement?

"Germany and the United States are the favourite destinations for emigrants from Eastern Europe, according to a recent study by the International Metalworkers' federation (IMF). The deplorable and dangerous working conditions are the workers' greatest concern and also one of the main reasons for migration.

"Unemployment benefits, where they exist, are extremely low and only cover a limited period; employment creation programmes haven't really got off the ground yet and foreign investment hasn't lived up to expectations" says M. Malentacchi, the general secretary of the IMF.

The report fears an upsurge in illegal migration. "The initiative to emigrate does not always come from the worker" it points out. Western employers in search of a cheap workforce turn to agencies specialising in the recruitment of illegal labour. Once these workers arrive in the host country, they have to carry out arduous, badly paid, and dangerous jobs.

The size of migratory flows from the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is difficult to estimate. There are no statistics on these illegal migrants, but the IMF confirms the growth of the phenomenon. However, "it is expected that emigration from East to West will be limited in volume", as suggested by Anne Herman in a study carried out for the Socialist Institute of European Studies (SIES) in Brussels. This view is shared by other experts, who, when speaking of the former USSR, say that "it is more likely to see a redistribution of the population within the former USSR than a rush to leave it."

Anne Herman stresses "the many positive aspects of migration. As a controlled element of economic, political, cultural and human relations and exchanges, migration can contribute to greater familiarity and a strengthening of trust between East and West.

"The migration policy and the integration of migrant populations will be one of the most important tasks of western governments during this

decade, says A. Herman. "Europe must contribute generously and effectively to the economic and social development of eastern Europe. It is not just a matter of solidarity, it is also in our interests, obviously". This solidarity is most important, as the countries of Central and East Europe will be the first hit by

migrant flows from the former Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia and Poland could well be the first stages for migrants from the former CIS.

(Source: Free Labour World - ICFTU. Brussels. 31-1-1992)

4.9. INTERNATIONAL CHILD LABOUR CAMPAIGN

The trade union movement's primary concern is to organise workers. What should it do when workers are children, and therefore even less able to defend themselves against their employers? Unfortunately, this question poses itself in extremely concrete terms. In Asia, as the text below explains, entire industries are based on child labour, with conditions of health, safety and working hours which would be unacceptable even for adult workers.

Nor is child labour limited to Asia, or to third world countries. Everywhere where social structures are incapable of providing a decent income for every worker, or - where this is not available - a replacement income enabling her/him and her/his family to subsist, children and young people are forced into "little jobs" and "getting by" in a more or less organised fashion, and with a greater or lesser degree of exploitation. Such a situation exists even in certain European countries, and in the United States.

Read the following text. Is this is a problem which you have already been led to discuss, in your company, in your trade union organisation? Do you believe that your trade union ought to concern itself increasingly with this problem, and eventually become involved in this type of international solidarity campaign which ICFTU is proposing?

"Child labour exists in every country, and the ICFTU aims to campaign against the problem globally. The ILO estimate that there are around 200 million children working, although exact numbers are hard to obtain due to authorities unwillingness to make appropriate statistics available. Approximately half of these children are to be found in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and in South East Asia (the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia). Due to this the ICFTU has specifically identified these regions for action.

The textile and garment industry, including the carpet industry, is a

growing industry in South and South East Asia. Being an export oriented labour intensive industry this is positive both for employment and foreign currency earnings. The main comparative advantages in the region are the cost of labour and the availability of cotton. As a part of this growing industrialism, a growing number of children have been taken in to the workforce. This happens mainly in three ways:

One was underlined by the ICFTU study in Nepal. Here children were recruited from the rural areas, sometimes by giving the parents a sum of money, and brought to the factory located in the capital Katmandu. Here the children were held inside

the factory gate 24 hours a day. Their "contracts" included the deduction of the payment to their parents and for lodging, which ends up being what we normally call forced unpaid labour, bonded labour or slavery.

Another method is the one revealed by the ICFTU study in the Philippines. Here part of the production is given out of the factory to subcontractors. These subcontractors bring the half-made products around to villages in the countryside where subcontractors of the subcontractor hire workers including children for doing the work either at home or in the home of the sub-subcontractor. This "pyramid subcontracting" system is used especially by transnational companies.

The third method is described in the ICFTU study from Sivakasi India. Here children travel daily from their home in the nearby villages into the fireworks and match factories. The factories sometimes provide buses. This system can mean that children leave their home in the countryside as early as 4 a.m. and return as late as 9 p.m.

THE STEPS OF ACTION

Combating child labour includes three elements. The first is appropriate legislation. Most countries have such legislation, and the ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age provides a minimum standard.

The second is the enforcement of legislation. Here public opinion plays a key role. The reason that the employers can continue taking out the marginal profit from employing children is that there are no strong measures taken against it by the authorities. To build such opinion is a task for the trade union movement representing the working people. International boycott action is one way of building such opinion.

The third element in combating child labour is to ensure alternative worthwhile activities for children. The most effective and best solution is to provide the children with primary education. Where the primary education system is sufficient, the number of

child workers is considerably less. According to UNICEF, even the poorest parents send their children to school and not to work when given the choice. In India this can be observed in the state of Kerala where primary education is the highest and child labour is said to be the lowest in the country.

The individual child already recruited into the industry is the most vulnerable person when efforts are made to eliminate child labour. They may be the only or major bread winner in their family if the parents are unemployed. In the fight to stop children coming into the industry, measures must be taken to ease the transition for already employed children. Such measures can be to return the children to their village, or to replace them with unemployed adults from their own family, keeping a bread winner in the family.

OPINION BUILDING

International actions like consumer boycotts and legislation banning the import of goods made by children can be an effective support for the necessary changes. To boycott a single company may affect this company's behavior, but may not prove to be efficient for cleaning up whole industries. What has been recommended by NGO's working with the issue of child labour based in countries like India, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines is to target a whole industry or all producers of one product at the same time. This will have an effect on the industry concerned and so generate increasing pressure in the countries forcing the governments to take action. This was also the conclusion of the two ICFTU regional seminars on child labour for the South Asian and South East Asian regions held in July 93 and where all the ICFTU affiliates in the region were present. A useful example of such product-based action is the "Toycott" campaign in the United States, concerning toys produced in China.

The one product the ICFTU will propose as the first target is hand-made carpets from South Asia. This is a fast growing export-oriented industry, in

which many children are employed. The industry is already a target for boycott actions in a number of countries, including Germany and the Netherlands. Responsible employers in the industry have responded to the actions by proposing the creation of a label marking those carpets made exclusively by adult workers. These carpets would then be excluded from boycott actions. Under the current proposal, making the label will be a task for an independent body created by the carpet manufacturers association and NGO's fighting child labour.

Besides consumer boycotts, import regulations are an important instrument to use. The United States Congress will this autumn debate a proposal to ban the import of products made by children, the so called Harkin Bill. Even before debate in the Congress this proposed bill has had

some effects. In Bangladesh the textile exporting industry association has put increased pressure on its affiliates to clean up their factories and come in to line with the Bangladesh legislation on child labour.

The bill does not call for a total ban on imports from a country, nor for an overall increase in trade restrictions for a country. The bill does approach a whole industry and not only individual companies. This seems to have the effect of creating a local opinion against child labour which is the most effective way to get results. The bill allows for the establishment of a labeling system, where products guaranteed as being made only by adults will be sheltered from any restrictions.

(Source: ICFTU Working group on Problems of child labour - 21-25 Sept. 1993)

V. TRAINING TRADE UNIONISTS - EDUCATING CITIZENS

Theory

How does one become a trade unionist? For most trade unionists, this begins with a commitment, one which is tested "on the job", by the experience gained of the need for solidarity, both in the company and in society at large. Similarly, it is by participating, directly and on a day-to-day basis, in the various struggles of a trade union, that one learns how a trade union is organised, how it operates, what practical techniques it uses to defend workers. The first education which trade unionists receive, is, so to speak, life itself, along with their personal commitment, meetings and discussions with other militants, and with their own and other union leaders, in short, everyone with whom they will be involved in a common struggle.

5.1. THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT NEEDS TRAINED ACTIVISTS

Does this mean that trade union organisations can do without more organised training? Certainly not. Almost everywhere, the trade union movement has set up centres and institutions for training its activists, and has developed more or less ambitious training programmes. In general, with a double concern: firstly, developing a trade union organisation demands a systematic effort to promote a trade union spirit and values. Then as the field of action is enlarged, the trade union requires more and more activists and leaders with "specific" know-how, and increasingly complex skills. For a trade union, therefore, training is part of its objective of redeployment, of widening the base of the trade union organisation. But, increasingly, it also represents a need linked to the demands of trade unionism today. An activist, a trade union leader, must in fact be able not only to fight on a day-to-day basis, "in the field", but s/he must also be able to think in terms of strategies adapted to the medium and long-term developments in society. S/he needs to be able to negotiate "equally armed", with employers or with a representative of political authorities.

5.2. "TECHNICAL" AND "SOCIAL" TRAINING

Training is a special means for a movement, or an institution to organise and direct, in a conscious fashion, its own reproduction. In this way it becomes the focus of a pro-active policy, addressed not only to the needs of the moment, but above everything else, to preparing the future of the movement or the institution. Trade union training does not escape this rule. In this way, a large number of training programmes are centred on teaching "various techniques" that are part and parcel of day-to-day trade union action: How so you lead a workers meeting? How do you negotiate with an employer? What procedures are available, and how does one defend a worker with an individual grievance with the employer? How does one use legislation and official regulations to promote better health and safety conditions at the workplace? How does one assess economic and accounting information on the enterprise? How does one analyse this information in order to be able to anticipate employers' decisions, and to target potential demands more precisely?

In addition to these various aspects, trade union training is also the forum where trade union values are discussed, and compared with the actual situation which the trade union movement sets out to transform. A trade union activist who is unable to understand and analyse how the society in which s/he lives and works, the economic mechanisms which govern a large part of enterprises' choices, will have a lot of difficulty in planning her/his action and the strategy of her/his organisation, beyond the immediate needs of the present moment. Moreover, it is important for trade union activists to be able to position themselves as such. The societies of which they are part have in many cases been fashioned by a certain number of social struggles. These struggles have given birth to solidarity mechanisms which are one of the trade union movement's essential contributions to the model of development as we know it, for example, in Western Europe. Day-to-day combat for the concrete improvement of workers' conditions, is indissociable from that for more democracy, for the recognition of civil, social and economic rights for everybody. And so on. Indeed, it is perhaps the latter element which best underlines the importance of trade union training. Which is probably one of the special and privileged moments in which activists are able to ask themselves what trade unionism is really about. In which, through collective discussion, we are able to discuss not only what formed the movement yesterday, but also and obviously more importantly, what mobilises it today.

5.3. TRAINING WOMEN AND MEN COMMITTED TO THEIR SOCIETY

Trade union training is essentially critical training. It is not a question of teaching knowledge or skills which have been developed once and for all. Of primary importance is to train activists, people committed to their organisations - which means to society as well, and who are able to think for themselves and to defend, personally, values to which they freely adhere. The fact is that these values - of solidarity, social commitment, democracy - cannot be inculcated in a mechanical fashion. Adhering to them means living them out, discussing them with others, confronting them with the resistances and difficulties encountered every day. It is only these values which give sense to trade union training, which, if it were to be reduced solely to its "technical" aspects, would risk turning very rapidly into vocational training. However, rather than being a place where knowledge is transmitted, trade union training assumes a mission, which can be seen as being essentially educational.

Speaking of education, when it comes to trade union activists, means placing the accent on training women and men involved in and committed to a society, rather than, for example, on these people's need to learn the "trade" of trade unionists. Not that such an apprenticeship is superfluous, quite the opposite. But simply because, whilst it is important to provide activists with the "weapons" for their fights, it is even more essential to educate activists themselves to know why they are fighting, what justifies their commitment, for themselves and for others. In this sense, trade union education also has a function of emancipation and promotion of workers, who learn in this way to become committed citizens, and critical players in the society to which they belong.

5.4. "SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION"

Education is a value which is generally recognised in most societies. However, we have to observe that equal access to education and to

culture is an ideal which, for workers, is still far from being achieved. Because the educational system reproduces, and only too often repeats, the social inequalities which are found in society at large. Within this context, trade union education becomes part of a fight for the democratisation of teaching. For many workers, it constitutes, so to speak, "second chance education", providing a social, general and human training which they did not necessarily enjoy during their initial schooling.

This opportunity of "second chance education" is particularly important in those societies where social and cultural inequalities are highly marked, or where access to good basic education remains a luxury, inaccessible for many. This is why, in certain countries, trade union organisations have taken the initiative in developing major literacy programmes. Not that being able to read and write is a specifically trade union objective, but it does represent the essential key to any critical analysis of society with which workers find themselves confronted. By providing similar basic educational activities, the trade union movement seeks to train both citizens, able to access modern-day communication networks and to pursue their own training, and trade unionists, equipped with the necessary intellectual tools for a critical understanding of the social and economic situation. At the same time, this highlights the fundamental importance, in every society, of access to quality education for all. The fact is that democracy demands, not only a certain number of material and political conditions, but also the democratisation of knowledge and culture.

5.5. INDIVIDUAL EMANCIPATION - COLLECTIVE PROMOTION

Trade union training therefore is very much a tool of workers' emancipation. Individual emancipation, by permitting those participating concretely in training activities to master different types of skills, and to acquire training in a number of areas. Collective emancipation too, in the sense that training cannot be dissociated from the promotion of workers as a whole. The knowledge gained by those who have the opportunity to take part in training will serve to advance the trade union movement as a whole, through being made available to everyone involved in this collective commitment. This collective dimension is also reflected in the special methods used in trade union training. Trade union training can be defined, above everything else, as "training in action", the task of appropriation of knowledge, motivated essentially by the demands of action. Nor should we forget that the people taking part in trade union training are not "pupils" coming "to school" but are adults, frequently with a very rich experience of social action, militants who are committed to their organisation and to society. This is why, just as the trade union movement is built up of all its militants, in the same way, trade union training can only be conceived as a shared project. A project for which those participating carry primary responsibility. By contributing, by comparing actively their differing know-how, their reflections and the problems they encounter. But also by mobilising themselves to acquire the resources and additional benefits enabling them to pursue, better armed, their commitments as trade union militants and citizens.

Practice

5.6. TRADE UNION TRAINING, AN ACQUIRED IDEA?

Training militants. But also helping them to assume the responsibilities which are theirs, as workers' elected representatives, in the tasks they assume within the trade union. Most trade union organisations organise their training programmes based on very concrete needs. Which does not prevent them, of course, from developing a certain number of additional training programmes, based on topics which the trade union wants to give priority to, or in order to strengthen the training base itself. Hence, for example, the development of training programmes for trainers.

The text below presents the principal lines of a systematic training programme which is being developed and implemented by the CFDT for all its militants and elected representatives. As one can imagine, organising such training requires sizeable resources.

The fact is that, today, for many trade unionists, training is no longer as a luxury, reserved for a few, but is both an essential precondition for trade union action and a right for everybody. As soon as a trade union numbers several hundred thousands, or even several million members, this calls for a major, long-term effort. And seeking supplementary sources of finance, over and above trade union subscriptions. It is obvious that without "workers' education holidays", without training entitlements negotiated and included in collective agreements, neither the CFDT, nor indeed any other French trade union, would be able to carry out its present programme of training activities, a programme which is still far from fully responding to the needs of all its militants.

After reading this text, examine how training is organised in your own trade union group. How is it structured? Which items are organised by industry federations, and which by the confederation (at regional or national level)? Can you think up additional ways of developing your training activities?

"A precondition for collective action, practice-related, trade union training represents an investment in the future. Revealing as it does the gap between the theoretical right to education and the right as actually used and practised, all the resources of this type of training are still far from being fully exploited. We are frequently unaware of their diversity.

Trade union training programmes have existed since the 1950s. However, since then they have developed and diversified. The introduction of workers' education holidays opened the way to the provision of various training programmes, on numerous topics, responding to

the needs of different target groups from both the public and private sectors. The law currently governing workers' education holidays dates back to 1967."

TRADE UNION MEMBERS AND LEADERS

They are entitled to 12 working days a year, taken in one or two sessions.

Theoretically, given the beneficiary quotas, more than 800,000 workers could, every year, take part in a session. However only 120,000 employees from all trade union organisations counted together and from both the public and private sectors have spent time in training centres. In

other words, much of the field for trade union training remains fallow, at a time when it is important to win over workers for trade union action.

NEWLY ELECTED WORK COUNCIL MEMBERS

Every freshly elected works council member is entitled, during the period of her/his office, to five days' training in economics, taken during working hours.

This is a recently acquired right. It is aimed at strengthening elected representatives' ability to intervene in the economic area, an important one for trade union action. We can only regret that these 5 days are deducted from the 12 days granted to trade union members and leaders.

This right relates to 106,000 elected representatives (numbers provided by the Ministry of Labour), of whom some 20,000 are CFDT members. It is not yet possible to estimate the number who have already availed of this right or are preparing to do so.

NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND WORKING CONDITION COUNCILS

The right to training applies to the elected representative's first term of office, in enterprises with more than 300 salaried staff. This right is similar to that enjoyed by newly elected members of works councils. Below the 300 threshold, training and the financing of it must be included in a collective agreement for the sector or in an enterprise agreement.

In total, almost 140,000 elected representatives are entitled to this training. Of the 20,000 belonging to the CFDT, an estimated 8,500 would be eligible for taking part in this first wave of training for health, safety and working condition missions, which are essential for the CFDT.

CONCILIATION BOARD MEMBERS

The CFDT has almost 2,000 elected representatives on these boards.

Theirs' is an arduous and valuable task, in which practical and theoretical knowledge of workers' rights is essential.

Conciliation board members are entitled to 6 weeks' training over 5 years. This may appear a lot, but ultimately, it is insufficient given the size of their tasks, which demands constant investment in continuing training. This training represents a rich collective source from which CFDT conciliation board members can draw for their day-to-day work.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL SECURITY AND NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES

Recently, training opportunities (minimum of one week a year) have become a further form of recognition of the mandates exercised by trade union representatives, and of the increasing role of trade union organisations in certain areas.

SOURCES OF FINANCING

Trade union training brings with it three types of costs: trainees' salaries and travel costs, the cost of the courses (lodging, working room etc.), and the cost of the infrastructure (training teams, training material etc.).

All in all, the CFDT organises 150,000 training days a year. The costs are met as follows:

- Ministry of Labour 10%,
- Social Security, territorial authorities: 18%,
- Enterprise council 34%,
- Trade unions and trainees: 38%.

A precise knowledge of the resources available for trade union training leave is a condition for applying, dynamically, a right which closely matches activists' expectations and the CFDT's objectives.

(Sources: "Syndicalisme" - CFDT. 6 June 1985)

5.7. CLAIMING AN EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT?

Trade unions do not provide training simply in order to increase the ability of trade union activists to take action. This provision also includes a general training, aimed at helping participants to understand more fully, and to commit themselves better, to the society they live in. It is also training aimed at workers' personal development.

As the following text highlights, many workers have had little systematic initial education. Or they felt out of place in the school system which they attended. For they themselves, for their families and friends, and for their commitment, this lack of general education poses a certain number of problems for which, in general, scant provision is made in official educational structures. Hence, for example, the initiative taken by the Canadian automobile workers' union to develop an alternative training programme for its members. The contents are those of a general education programme (including economics, history, and society, but are aimed at strengthening students' communication, self-learning and similar skills), but the method is non-academic.

* **Read the text below, and discuss it with other colleagues. Would similar initiatives be useful in your society as well? Do you believe that it is the job of trade unions to provide solutions to these questions, or that the responsibility lies rather with the State, for example, or with private individuals?**

"Most workers do not have many fond memories of their years in school. For the few who did "well" in school, there are many more workers who either (a) dropped out for a variety of legitimate reasons, (b) were "streamed" or "tracked" into dead-end paths that separated them along class lines from their friends in the "academic" stream or (c) simply stuck it out until graduation, totally bored.

Even more disturbing is the fact that workers who had those experiences are then expected to "blame" themselves as individuals for being so-called "failures". This is why so many workers are heard to say, "I should have worked harder at school", or "I wish I hadn't dropped out", or "I want to make sure that my kids get a better education than I did"...

Unless some event or personal circumstance forces adult workers to re-think their school experience, these kinds of attitudes become permanent scars on their self-image. If, as we suggest, this is true for most adult workers, then the scar is really a collective problem.

AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Paid Education Leave (PEL) program is not school as you remember it. Like any other school, of course, there are classrooms, some fairly strict rules about attendance, assignments, and eventually graduation. But if that's all you see, that's all you'll get.

For many, probably even the majority, of the 3,000 Canadian Automobile Workers' members who are PEL graduates, this four-week program has been the event that unlocks the mysteries of not only the educational system but, more importantly, begins to answer the important questions that working struggle with in everyday life.

The PEL program, in our view, is really an alternative education program. The curriculum is established by workers and it is controlled and delivered by workers. To that extent, it is openly biased and partisan in its answer to the question, "knowledge for whom?" For working people! (2) The goals of PEL are many but revolve around some key themes that

also answer the question of "knowledge for what?". Those minimal goals are:

- to give working people an ability to critically analyse and make sense of the world in which they live;
- to encourage workers to develop their individual skills and abilities to better achieve the goals and aspirations of all working-class people;
- to instill a confidence to participate in a democratic fashion in the union, the community and the nation; and,
- to become involved in the struggle for social change at local, national and even international levels.

TO SERVE THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

These principles and objectives will be better understood if we spend some time at the beginning of Level 1 discussing why such a program as PEL is necessary in the first place. This means returning to our individual and collective experiences with the public educational system. The

simple truth is that PEL is necessary because the school system which we have all gone through was never designed to serve or advance the interests of working people.

Where does this discussion lead us? Perhaps in many directions, but it also leads us at least to one common conclusion: working class families in Canada must CLAIM an education that satisfies the hopes and aspirations of themselves and their children.

The difference between "getting an education" and "claiming an education" remains a large gap. It will only be closed by a lot of hard work and a lot of political activism by the labour movement and working class families in school board and municipal election campaigns.

In the meantime, for adult workers who are members of the CAW, the PEL program offers a beginning to this process of "claiming an education". Let's begin that important process now.. and do it together.

(Source: "CAW'S Paid Education Leave Program". CAW Education Department. Ontario. Canada. 1991)

5.8. CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKERS-STUDENTS

Training trade unionists does first of all and mainly mean training adults, people who are engaged in social life, having their own experiences and who are capable of clearly identifying the contents of the training they want/need. This is a major pre-requisite to be taken into consideration. It is indeed this very same starting point which will determine the identification of the appropriate methodology. Trade union education as an activity requiring the involvement of adult trainees is of a totally different nature for the participants from teaching pupils in a school. If one wants to actively train workers, who are fully responsible people, he will need to break the type of hierarchy that exists between "those who know" and "those who don't", between "those who have power" and "those who don't"

The following text comes from an educational publication of the ILO. Do you agree with the characteristics of the student-worker it gives? Discuss the different pedagogical approaches you know and how participants react to these different types of training.

"There are certain characteristics that are common to worker-students all over the world. They are important because they influence the methods and techniques used in workers' education.

A VOLUNTEER

The most important single feature of workers' education is that it is undertaken voluntarily. Attendance at workers' classes is not usually compulsory as in the case of school attendance; nor is there the challenge of examinations with a view to graduation that exists in university and technical education. It is true that, in developing countries, the need for trade union officers may be so great that potential leaders undergo training with specific aim of qualifying for a trade union post. It is also true that in some advanced countries the award of certificates may be used as an added incentive to study but in general, throughout the world, the motive for engaging in workers' education is natural interest or curiosity.

The voluntary nature of worker's education is by no means a liability. Adult educators have noted time and time again what rapid progress a group of willing adults with practical experience can make. In the space of three to five months they can acquire the same amount of information that it takes a half-grown youth dozing on the school benches three to five years to assimilate. This keenness on learning quickly makes itself particularly felt when trainees can clearly see the jobs to be done that demand the information and skills they are acquiring, as in many developing countries. With the right approach and the right teaching methods, great progress can be made. With the wrong approach and the wrong teaching methods, no students will stay.

EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

Two things are needed for rapid progress in adult education - keenness and practical experience - and the second is certainly as important as the first. Even young workers after only two or three years at work have

a broader background than school-children into which to fit the facts and ideas of worker's education courses on, for example, collective bargaining, economic history or labour laws. Probably they will also already have had frustrating experiences which will have convinced them of the need to be able to express themselves clearly and forcefully. Such experiences may well add to their willingness to learn, and an able tutor will turn them to good account.

It follows that workers' education should start from and be related to actual experience of the students. A course or a talk for new worker-students about the development of trade unionism should begin not with a historical survey of the workers' movement throughout the world but with a discussion about the present position of the local unions, going on to explain how the present has developed from the past, and only later coming to the national and the world situations. Workers' education should proceed from the known to the unknown, from the local to the distant, from the present to the past and the future and from the concrete to the abstract.

For worker-students, unlike normal students, life has not been neatly divided into compartments, labelled "psychology", "history", "economics", "geography", etc. The artificial subject barriers of the schoolroom and the university have often been proved meaningless by daily existence, and so workers' education must attempt to deal with problems across the board.

LACK OF LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The wide experience of life of many worker-students must not, however, blind us to the fact that most of them will not be skilled in the techniques of studying, and to handling the "tools" of learning: words, ideas, books, simple mathematical concepts and abstract thought. This is perfectly natural. They themselves would be the last to expect newcomers to their own occupation to engage in it without having been taught how to use the tools of the

trade. Participants in workers' education courses thus require practical training in how to be students. The need is often strongly felt, both by teachers and students, for a class on the techniques of intellectual work. Some trade union training centres therefore provide instruction in how to read books and use libraries, how to prepare speeches, how to run debates, how to conduct social investigations, how to prepare reports, etc. In other words, they try to train the "apprentices" by showing them the tools and explaining how to handle them.

This type of training scheme is becoming increasingly popular in countries with a long tradition of workers' education, where it was found that earlier education programmes which assumed that the students already had this basic knowledge tended to appeal only to an elite and failed to attract the rank-and-file worker."

(Source: "Workers' Education and its Techniques". ILO, Geneva. 1976)

VI. TRADE UNIONISM: INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Theory

Trade unionism was born in specific business enterprises and in specific occupations or activities. But it has also been conceived, from the outset, as movement of solidarity, extending beyond the regional or national framework. For example, the fact that in most European countries the first local and industry trade unions grouped together to create an organised force was due more than anything else to the impetus given by the International Workers' Association ("First International": 1864-1871) and the Socialist International ("Second International": 1889-1914), followed by the International Trade Union Federation (officially founded in 1933). And even if we still frequently tend to view trade unions as essentially national organisations, in fact the international dimension is always very much there. Indeed, it is one of the very reasons for the existence of the trade union movement!

6.1. UNIVERSALISATION INDUCED BY THE MARKET ECONOMY

One could even say that international solidarity between workers is more important today than ever before. For various reasons. First of all, because the economic situation is changing. The market economy is becoming increasingly universal, linking up economies which, even yesterday, could attempt, for better or worse, to develop autonomously. The various "structural adjustment" programmes undertaken in Latin America, Africa, etc., and the upheaval in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of the '80s, have everywhere revealed the same choice: that of bringing previously protected economies into a free trade network, straight into an open and global system. Whether one likes it or not, all, or nearly all economies are today interdependent. Certain, moreover, much more so than others...

6.2. THE PROLIFERATION OF SUPRANATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The second reason, which follows on from the first, is that, confronted with this process of economic internationalisation, traditional nation states, in which workers' movements were founded, are finding their room for manoeuvre increasingly limited. Which explains the often highly disparate burgeoning of supranational institutions. In the economic area: the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, the ERBD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). In the political area: the UN (United Nations) and its various agencies: the HCR (High Commission for Refugees), the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation), the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), etc. In the cultural area: UNESCO. In the social area, the ILO (International Labour Organisation). At regional level, the EEC (European Economic Community), since transformed into the European Union, the OAU (Organisation for African Unity), ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations). Not forgetting the military organisations (NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) or more informal structures: G7 (a talking

shop for the governments of the world's most industrialised nations). And this list is far from exhaustive. In fact it represents a veritable mosaic of more or less coordinated institutions, which our world secretes in order to meet the need of managing international "public affairs".

6.3. ORGANISING SOLIDARITY AMONGST WORKERS

All this calls for a direct response from trade unionists. Economic internationalisation means that negotiations now take place within a very different framework from the one which existed when workers dealt with an employer from their own region, conducting her/his business within a framework strictly regulated by national legislation.

Economic integration is also leading to competition between regions and countries, in many cases with very different human, technological and material resources and advantages. Knowing that populations and workers are less mobile than enterprises, a company can decide, for purely profit considerations, to up stumps and move elsewhere. Solidarity between workers in different subsidiaries of the same company in different countries can therefore often be a determinant factor. In any event it will advance the conditions and rights of all workers, whatever the concrete situation and the national frameworks in which they live. Finally one should add that if institutions are being founded, there is every interest in ensuring that they accept to take into account a certain number of democratic social and economic concerns. Here it is the responsibility of internationally organised trade unions to make sure that workers' voices are heard, when it comes to agreeing on basic rights which should be respected everywhere, or to pressing for the gradual harmonisation of national regulations and legislations relating to the world of work, or to influencing those in political and economic power to ensure that working populations receive their fair share.

6.4. THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS, CONFEDERATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

In this sense, the trade union movement's task at the international is not fundamentally different from that at national level. Indeed, we find the same structures: international trade secretariats grouping workers and trade unions from the same sector of activity, plus two or three international trade union confederations (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the World Labour Confederation, and what remains of the World Trade Union Confederation) bringing together all trade unions organised by country and by sector. The job of the international Secretariats is to ensure that workers from the same enterprise or the same sector of activity receive equal treatment and to make sure that over-expectations by one part of the trade union body does not lead to the other part being put out of work. The task of the confederations is to promote a general framework which is valid for all workers, whatever sector of activity or company they belong to, and to do everything possible to ensure that general legislation and universally recognised rights are genuinely respected. This includes conventions between employer's federations and international trade union federations, recommendations, directives adopted within the tripartite ILO framework, and recourse and complaints procedures in cases of discrimination and infringements of workers' basic and recognised rights. At an international level, we find

more or less the same "tools" as are encountered in the various countries in which social dialogue is practised in a normal fashion.

6.5. SOCIAL DIALOGUE, A KEY COMPONENT OF DEMOCRACY

Let us add a further point. The trade union movement can operate in a "normal", "regular" way only when faced with employers who accept to play the game of social consultation, and with governments who believe that defending workers' rights and introducing and maintaining a climate of permanent social dialogue, are part of the basic principles of democracy.

Obviously, this is far from being the case everywhere. Hence the particular importance of building this dimension into supra-national institutions. For example, the construction of the European Union has made it possible, little by little, to force dialogue between employers' representatives, who were originally not particularly interested, and trade union federations who, on the contrary, were very interested. The situation is not nearly so advanced when it comes to the various international economic bodies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in which international trade union confederations do, it is true, have the possibility of expressing their point of view, without, unfortunately, however, being particularly listened to.

6.6. WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE ESSENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS

But there is worse. There are all the violations of workers' rights which are, so to speak, built into the basic directions of societies: societies which, for example, "chose" to base their development on racial segregation, on the authoritarian monopoly of a managing class, on the merciless exploitation of workers deprived of their basic rights. It is obvious that, in these cases, fighting for the recognition of workers' rights requires long-term action, which will have all the more chances of success if it takes a two-pronged approach. First of all internally, in the organisation which the workers themselves set up, and secondly, from outside, through concrete solidarity structures which other workers and trade union organisations establish. The long-term value of such a struggle is demonstrated by the developments of recent years, on almost every continent. What makes this development so important is, above everything else, the fact that no state or society is any longer able to withdraw, whether ideologically or economically, from the network of exchanges and values which are today the life-blood of today's international community.

Practice

6.7. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY SERVING THE DEFENCE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS

Trade unionism is far from being recognised everywhere as a normal right of workers to organise themselves. As we will read below, in many countries trade unionists are the victims of more or less direct discrimination, and find themselves pursued and persecuted. For many employers and governments, trade unionism acts as a brake on the rights of free enterprise, as a counterpower which cannot be tolerated. Even in 1993, at a time when one might have thought that the principles of free association, of the collective defence of workers' rights and of social dialogue had imposed themselves everywhere, universally. And between these rights which are recognised by various international bodies, and enshrined in various charters and conventions, and everyday reality, there is often a substantial gap. It is important to do everything possible to fill this gap.

It is without any doubt in this area that the need for international solidarity is the greatest. The banned trade union, the trade unionist thrown out of her/his job, in whatever corner of the globe, are rarely in a strong position to defend themselves alone. The International Labour Organisation and the UN Commission on Human Rights have developed instruments and appeal procedures for this type of situation. But these instruments and procedures are worthless if they are not underpinned by a genuine movement of workers who realise very clearly that the retreat of trade unionism anywhere in the world is always and at the same time a retreat of trade unionism as a whole.

In 1992, the ICFTU set up a special department to safeguard the respect of workers' rights worldwide. Every year a report is prepared, detailing the situation, country by country, based on concrete cases known to the ICFTU. From this report that we take the three following texts, which illustrate the importance of the problem. Read them and discuss them among yourselves.

Examine the situation in your own country.

- **Are there situations in which trade unions are forbidden, where trade unionists are the victims of jibes and persecution, and where various attempts are made to prevent workers from organising themselves? If yes, how does this happen? Are these isolated instances, or more or less generalised tendencies?**
- **What recourse is available in your country to uphold workers' rights? Are there adequate legal structures to permit the recognition of these rights?**
- **What should you do when you become aware of a situation in which workers' rights have been trampled underfoot? To what extent should you bring this in front of the arbitration and judicial bodies in your country, and to what extent should you resort to international bodies? How would you proceed?**
- **Are you aware of situations in which trade union rights are violated in other countries? Have you already considered taking part in international campaigns? If so, which ones?**

6.7.1. THE HEAVY TOLL OF ANTI-TRADE UNION REPRESSION IN THE WORLD

"Defending workers' rights all too often means losing your job, risking persecution, prison, torture, or even your life". That is the conclusion to be drawn from the Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights published on May 1, 1993 by the ICFTU.

During the year 1992, some 260 trade unionists were killed, as a result of repression by governments, security services and death squads. Most of these crimes remain unpunished. At the same time, 2.500 activists have been arrested and imprisoned. And hundreds of trade unionists will "celebrate" May Day behind bars.

The mass dismissal of unionised workers, a tactic revealed in the previous survey, continued in 1992: more than 40.000 lost their jobs simply for demanding better wages or working conditions.

A total of 87 countries is cited in the survey for violating, to varying degrees, the fundamental trade union rights that are recognised and formulated in the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY - AN OBSTACLE TO DEVELOPMENT

In the third world, trade unions are presented by their opponents/oppressors as obstacles to development or as subversive organisations. One cannot even consider this as "too high a price to pay for development", says the general sec-

retary of the ICFTU, Enzo Friso, in the Foreword to the Annual Survey. Because reality shows that "the poorest countries tend to be the most repressive ones. Attacks on trade unions are more than a threat to the labour movement, they are also a threat to democracy and an obstacle to development."

The many cases cited in the survey support this view, be it violence in South Africa, attacks on the independent trade union movement in other African countries, restrictions on trade union rights in Asia or the ruthless treatment of trade unions in Latin America. All are at the hands of those who fear democracy and the loss of their privileges: authoritarian governments, land owners, farright groups and local oligarchies. Many employers have no hesitation in adding to the repression, and several of the multi-national companies operating in developing countries showed their anti-union colours in 1992.

The industrialised countries have not been spared the wave of neo-liberalism and restrictions on trade union freedoms. "Such policies, says the ICFTU general secretary, have simply meant that unemployment has increased, and the workers' purchasing power has been drastically reduced."

(Source: "Free Labour World" - ICFTU. Brussels. May 1993)

6.7.2. WORKERS' RIGHTS IN EUROPE

The outbreak of a full-scale civil war in the region bringing massive and gross violations of human rights has tended to overshadow the serious problems that continue to be experienced in the exercise of full trade union freedoms in Europe.

Such difficulties were most evident in Central and Eastern European coun-

tries which continued with greater or lesser degrees of success, in their transition from centrally-planned economies, to market-base systems, in many cases experiencing severe social and economic dislocation.

The possibility of independant trade union organisation and activity previously denied under the system of

state-monopoly unionism has continued to be obstructed by inappropriate legislation, and by the fact that the successor organisations to the former state-monopoly structures have generally laid claim to, and retained control of their very considerable assets, and functions, including social insurance and recreational facilities. This has been compounded by their close relationship with state enterprise management with whom they have co-operated for decades. Such situations have made the equitable distribution of state union assets a point of particular importance and concern with regard to the exercise of basic rights.

POLITICAL HOSTILITY FROM THE GOVERNMENTS?

The complete revision of labour legislation undertaken in most of the countries in transition has not generally produced fully satisfactory results, and whether by design, or as a result of unfamiliarity with the practical implications of such basic concepts as collective bargaining and the right to strike, many inconsisten-

cies with international standards remain. The unwillingness of some governments to countenance regulations which they consider to be detrimental to the workings of the free market has also contributed to legal inadequacies in these areas. But even where this type of obstacle has been overcome, the frequent absence of independent employers or employers' organisations has acted as a drag on the development of genuine collective bargaining.

In the different circumstances prevailing in West European countries, the political hostility of a significant number of governments to trade unionism, and their desire to limit the role that unions play in society, has led to limit collective bargaining, strike, and organisational rights. Here, as elsewhere, trade unions are concerned to ensure that full respect of union rights is a minimum condition in any process of regional integration."

(Source: Annual Survey of violations of Trade Union Rights. ICFTU. Bruxelles. 1993)

6.7.3. TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

"Trade union and other worker's rights form an integral part of human rights, within the meaning of all relevant major international legal instruments. The protection of worker's rights, particularly that of freedom of association, was one of the main objectives in setting up the International Labour Organisation (ILO), founded nearly thirty years before the United Nations. Today, the ILO's achievements in the area of human rights, and especially trade union and other worker's rights, are widely recognised in the international community. In addition to the ILO system, however, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the European and the Inter-American Conventions on Human

Rights all specifically guarantee trade union rights, the core of which is the right of all workers to set up and join organisations of their own choosing for the furthering of their interests.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Governments of states bound by these international legal obligations are regularly questioned about how they ensure that trade union rights are respected within their jurisdiction. A number of Treaty Bodies scrutinise the observance of civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights, including workers' and trade union rights. The fact that governments, irrespective of differences in their political, social and economic systems, level of development, and of their regional location, are usually

anxious to present an acceptable public record of compliance with their international legal obligations in the field of trade union rights, is itself a further recognition of their universal character.

To date, however, much of this universality remains theoretical. Workers' and trade union rights are under constant threat in different parts of the world. In some countries, these threats translate into attacks on workers and trade unionists, categories of citizens who often suffer the brunt of repression when in order to maintain their privileges those in power resort to killings, torture, disappearances and detentions.

The extent to which governments, security forces and sometimes employers fear the emergence or consolidation of independent trade unions, can be measured by the numbers of victims in the ranks of workers' organisations. Where such basic human rights as the right to life and personal security are disregarded, economic and social rights carry even less weight with those in power. This latter category of rights is also violated in countries which generally respect civil and political rights. In many industrialised countries, attempts are made, sometimes successfully, to curtail, deny or take away from workers the full enjoyment of their legitimate and internationally recognised right to freedom of association.

INSTRUMENTS AND SUPERVISORY MECHANISMS

In pursuing universal respect for trade union rights, the international free trade union movement has traditionally concentrated its work on the instruments and supervisory mechanisms of the ILO. The ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association and its Committee of Experts on the Application of

Conventions and Recommendations have over the years proved to be indispensable tools for the protection of trade union rights, including the basic human rights of union members, activists and leaders. Several procedures, such as representations or complaints lodged under specific articles of the ILO Constitution, which may, at times, lead to the appointment of tripartite Committees or Commissions of Enquiry, are regularly used by the ICFTU, its affiliated organisations and the ITS's. In many cases, the trade unions' use of these bodies and of the procedures which they have developed has compelled governments to bring their legislation and practice into conformity with international labour standards. The ICFTU is therefore committed to making every effort to oppose attempts by conservative forces to weaken the ILO's standards and supervisory mechanisms protecting human rights, and in particular trade union rights. Recommendations which it will bring to the World Conference will thoroughly reflect this commitment.

In addition to the ILO, two major sources are available within the UN system to the international free trade union movement in its work for the protection and promotion of human and trade union rights. The first one is the inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The second resource is the system of Treaty Bodies, or monitoring bodies set up under various UN human rights treaties to examine compliance by governments with international standards and legally binding instruments.

(Source: Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights. ICFTU. Bruxelles. 1993)

6.8. SOLIDARITY BETWEEN WORKERS AT DELHAIZE LE LION (BELGIUM) AND FOOD LION (UNITED STATES)

Increasingly companies are multinational enterprises, developing in the different countries of the world. Consequently workers very often find themselves confronted with managers in charge of day-to-day management, but who themselves have very little liberty vis-a-vis the employer proper, who is to be found at the head of the central holding company or the "parent company".

Organising solidarity between workers in different facilities, in different countries, is one of the most arduous tasks there is. Nonetheless, this solidarity remains a fundamental element of defending workers' rights, given the great temptation for employers to take advantage of disparities and competition between workers in varying socio-economic contexts, exploiting differences in social security systems etc.

The case presented below is a perfect example of this type of situation. It relates to a Belgian commercial group, which diversified by buying a distribution network in the United States. It very quickly became clear that the same group was imposing much more brutal working conditions on its American workers than on its heavily unionised Belgian workers. Hence the organisation of our campaign, in Belgium, to put pressure on the employer, and to support the American trade unions' claims.

What do you think of such action? Are there many multinational enterprises in your country? Are the workers there unionised? Are they in contact with the trade unions of other enterprises in the same group?

"Can the Brussels section of a Belgian trade union demand the head of an American boss running an enterprise on the other side of the Atlantic? This apparently crazy question lies at the heart of a guerilla war which SETCa (Employees', Technicians' and Managers' Trade Union, affiliated to the Belgian General Labour Federation) has been waging on the "Delhaize Le Lion" supermarket chain during the past four years. The result: sporadic strikes in stores during last December. Social problems at Delhaize? Not really, with SETCa emphasising that social relations with the management are "normal".

The reality, if there is a conflict, it is taking place 7,000 miles away. For example at Alachua (Florida), Hemingway (South Carolina), Fayetteville (Tennessee) and Zebulon (North Carolina). In short, in the United States, where Delhaize Le Lion has a subsidiary, Food Lion, with almost 1,000 supermarkets. A goose which lays the golden eggs repre-

senting the lion's share of Delhaize Le Lion group profits.

THE NEED FOR TRANSATLANTIC SOLIDARITY

Since 1988, SETCa has become the mouthpiece, in Belgium, of the complaints of the American United Food Commercial Workers trade union. Complaints relating to personnel management, overtime, the pension system, health and safety conditions, etc.. The matter has become bitter since American trade unions, who have a very legalistic outlook, began a series of court cases, and a parliamentary sub-committee of enquiry was set up to investigate Food Lion and its personnel management. As American legislation does not really encourage strikes, trade union tactics in that country are very different.

The UFCW approached SETCa to learn how things happened in Belgium and to envisage intercontinen-

tal action. Since then, SETCa has made this a question of principle (this will be the first conflict of its type in the whole history of the Belgian trade union movement) and of a "you return the service later" type strategy. American multinationals represent a large number of jobs in Belgium. Why not hope that, one day, American workers will march in solidarity to preserve jobs in Belgium?

In announcing the planned action, SETCa's Secretary General, Albert Faust went further: calling for the head of Tom Smith, President and Chief Executive Officer of Food Lion, an "archaic dictator" whose management methods are "worthy of the Stasi" (former Eastern European secret police). The only problem is that Tom Smith is not only Food Lion's CEO, he is also a shareholders in the company. And that, in the whole history of capitalism, one has rarely seen a just-about majority shareholder removed at the request of a trade union....

WHEN A SUPERMARKET BECOMES A MULTINATIONAL

The whole story began in 1974. At that time, European countries were beginning to introduce policies to limit the spread of super and hypermarkets. Delhaize was beginning to feel squeezed inside Belgium and was looking to set up shop elsewhere. A number of studies carried out in Europe quickly convinced Delhaize Le Lion's managers that the Old Continent was not really the ideal terrain. They then turned their eyes towards the country which is the dream of store managers: the United States, which invented supermarkets in the 1930s. In directing their gaze at the States, Delhaize Le Lion's senior management was no more original than its competitors. And the dollar then was so cheap....

The mergers and acquisition company and the lawyers' office advising Delhaize located the rare bird: a little chain called "Food Town" in the depths of North Carolina. Nineteen stores and founder-managers looking to sell part of their shares. After a few contacts by letter, the deal was complete in a week of negotiations. The

Americans were if anything rather glad to have these partners, domiciled on the other side of the Atlantic, ready to put up cash and, in particular, wanting the American managers to remain in place.

"Trading is a local matter" for Gui de Vaucleroy, Delhaize Le Lion's Managing Director. "At a certain point in time we tried to manage another American chain in the Atlanta region on our own. It was not a success." In short, in 1974, Food Town found shareholders who did not appear overly cumbersome or difficult to please and who, at the beginning, had 34.5% of the shares. The American subsidiary was very soon to grow at a fabulous pace. With a simple recipe: low prices, and in particular slightly lower-than-average sized supermarkets close to residential areas. Since then, Food Town has become Food Lion - the original trade name ran into too many problems of intellectual property.

TRADE UNIONISM BANNED

The fabulous success of the company did not make everyone happy. Very soon, Food Lion found itself under attack from the Union of Food and Commercial Workers, who did not appreciate its ferociously anti-union attitude. An idea of the spirit which reigns in the company's management can be gained by viewing the "information" cassette which is constantly screened in the personnel rest rooms, in which T. Smith affirms that "trade unions are like drugs or cancer". In the US, where most sickness and invalidity insurance is company-provided, the Food Lion CEO could not understand, he explained, what a trade union had to offer his employees.

However there is no lack of problems in the various Food Lion subsidiaries. First of mandatory unpaid overtime. Following a complaint by the UFCW and a certain number of employees, the American Labor Department decided to open an inquiry among Food Lion's 170,000 past and current employees. The inquiry launched during 1992 also looked at child labour (17-18). 1200 complaints are now pending relating to minors

working on tools as dangerous as carton compactors and meat slicing machinery. This accusation has been mentioned in Congress, where Food Lion's case has been examined, "given the shocking deficiencies compared with salary standards and the failure to respect working hours". Right now, the enterprise has still not paid 40% of salary arrears and fines.

"YOU RETURN THE SERVICE LATER"

SETCa Belgium's President concluded his conference by explaining why the Belgian trade union movement had become committed to this struggle. "This file is passionately interesting. A trade unionist who can assist in recruiting 60,000 workers at a

blow is obviously impassioned. In Belgium, this would be impossible. But it is also clear that the root cause of the problem lies in the social vacuum maintained by Food Lion, which, in refusing to make concessions, is obtaining profit margins which have destroyed other competitors." Would the Americans do something for Belgian workers if one day they found themselves in a corner? "I think so. There are links. If Food Lion was unionised, this would represent formidable support for us."

(Extracts from M. Hendricks, L'Instant (weekly magazine), Brussels, 12 November 1992, and M. Dermine, "Avancées", (monthly magazine), Brussels, December 1992.

6.9. THE DIFFICULT TASK OF CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Unions have their place in society. Not only to press workers' material demands, but also to express their viewpoint on the political, economic and social choices which will determine the future development of the societies in which they live. This is why, in most countries, trade union organisations have grouped together in one or more cross-sector confederations which take public positions on all issues which are of interest to the working population as a whole, and who participate on an equal footing in dialogue with employers representatives' and government.

How does social dialogue work in your country? Does it exist? What recognised status do workers' representatives enjoy? Employers' representatives? What issues have already been the subject of conventions or laws, following discussions between employers and trade unions and between employers, trade unions and government?

How, in your view, could this dialogue be strengthened by directives, recommendations etc. issued at the international level?

A SMALL STEP TOWARDS A EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

"In 1985 trade unions - grouped in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and European employers - grouped in the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE) - began a genuine dialogue ending with two "joint opinions", on specific topics proposed by the European Commission. Since then, eight "joint opinions" have been adopted by the social partners, since joined by the European Centre of

Public Enterprises (CEEP). These opinions are not mandatory, due in particular to reticence on the part of UNICE.

In 1989, another stage began with the preparation of a "European Social Charter" by the EEC's Economic and Social Committee (in which all social partners are represented). The ESC expressed the hope that this charter would be made into "basic commu-

nity legislation enabling all European countries to converge progressively towards the best social level".

The charter includes plans to institute, by law or negotiation, "a decent salary" for workers. It sets a minimum working age and recognises the right to the freedom of association. The ESC's wishes were only very partially met when the European Council, meeting in Strasbourg in December 1989, made do with a "solemn declaration", accompanied by a Commission "action programme" drawn up "with a view to" developing legal instruments, in particular the "directives" necessary for its application. Great Britain refused to sign. The word was then of an 11-State social Europe.

On 31 October 1991, on the eve of the Maastricht Summit, UNICE and CEEP agreed, against all expectations, to sign an accord with the ESC to conclude European-scale conventions in an autonomous fashion.

The terms of this agreement will be included, in their near-entirety, in the social protocol adopted at the Maastricht European Summit. Once again, the British conservative government decided to go its own way, against the advice of British trade unions and a large number of employers.

THE MAASTRICHT TREATY, GREATER ROOM FOR INITIATIVES

The Maastricht social protocol now gives a new dimension to social dialogue, by providing for conventions to be concluded at European level.

These can be implemented in two ways. Certain of them can be based on the negotiation procedures and practices which exist between social partners in Member States, without involving European Directives. The second approach, limited to more important matters (social security protection, working conditions, equal opportunity, information for and consultation of workers, and the integration of people excluded from the labour market), requires conventions to be approved by the Council of

Ministers, based on proposals from the European Commission.

Another innovation of the Maastricht treaty is that it allows the 11 to legislate in certain social areas on the basis of a majority in the Council of Ministers. In this way, no one Member State can use its veto to block one or the other measure, as was previously the case, when the rule of unanimity applied throughout. This represents a clear, if incomplete, victory for the ESC's demands.

Certain questions, not recognised as "social", remain subject to the unanimity rule. Other, in particular those relating to pay, the right to strike, and the freedom of association, are excluded from the agreements signed by the 11 at Maastricht.

Based on the Social Charter and the "action programme" aimed at its implementation, 47 proposals have been tabled, 17 of which need to be approved in the form of "directives" or "regulations". Some of the directives, in particular relating to health and safety at work, have already been adopted. In fact, the less controversial measures have been cleared from the table, but most of the important proposals - working hours, information, consultation, pregnant women, precarious work and cross-border sub-contracting - have been delayed, weakened or at times totally blocked by the Council of Ministers.

INTRODUCING A SYSTEM OF INTER-SECTORAL NEGOTIATIONS

This situation opens up two areas of action for European trade unions: firstly, developing the legal arsenal of directives and regulations adopted by the EEC and, secondly, collective negotiations leading to framework agreements between employers and trade unions.

Whilst employers seem more interested in negotiating framework agreements in order to minimise the amount of mandatory legislation, the ESC intends to play both instruments, insisting on their complementarity. The ESC makes no secret of its ambition to see the development of pan-

European negotiation at inter-sectoral, inter-regional and enterprise level, through the creation of European enterprise committees.

In July, the ESC, UNICE and CEEP confirmed their desire to continue

social dialogue. A dialogue which is certainly difficult and has still to be structured, but for which the foundations already exist.

(Source: "Free Labour World", ICFTU, Brussels, 11/9/1992).

VII. APPENDIX: THE ICFTU CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions exists to unite the workers organised in the free and democratic trade unions of the world and to afford a means of consultation and collaboration between them in furtherance of the aims here set out.

Believing that freedom of thought, expression and association must be translated into actual conditions affecting the lives of the workers and their relations with their employers, public or private, and with the State, the ICFTU proclaims the right of individuals:

- to social justice and the opportunity to lead a full and decent life;
- to work and choice of employment;
- to security of that employment and of the income deriving from it;
- to adequate protection of their lives and health in all occupations;
- to mutual protection of their interests through forming and joining trade unions which shall be free bargaining instruments and which derive their authority from their members; and
- to democratic means of changing their Government.

The Confederation, proclaiming the right of all peoples to full national freedom and self-government, will support efforts towards creating conditions for the realisation of this right at the earliest possible moment.

The Confederation affirms that universal well-being based on free labour and economic democracy together with social justice and security are foundations on which to build lasting peace and that the denial or restriction of these rights is an affront to human dignity and a threat to peace.

As an organisation fervently upholding the principles of democracy, it will champion the cause of human freedom, promote equality of opportunity for all people, seek to eliminate everywhere in the world any form of discrimination or subjugation based on race, religion, sex or origin, oppose and combat totalitarianism and aggression in any form. It pledges solidarity with and support to all working people deprived of their rights as workers and human beings by oppressive regimes.

AIMS

The ICFTU declares its aims to be:

- to maintain and develop a powerful and effective international organisation at worldwide and regional levels, composed of free and democratic trade unions, independent of

any external domination, and pledged to the task of promoting the interests of working people throughout the world and of enhancing the dignity of labour;

- to seek the universal recognition and application of the rights of trade union organisation;
- to further the establishment, maintenance and development of free trade unions, particularly in economically under-developed countries;
- to weld international trade union solidarity by giving succour to the victims of all kinds of oppression, by giving token assistance to those suffering from the consequences of natural and industrial disasters, and by providing support in all other cases where workers should stand shoulder to shoulder;
- to undertake and coordinate the defence of the free trade unions against any campaign aiming at their destruction or at the restriction of their rights, or at the infiltration and subjugation of labour organisations by totalitarian or other anti-labour forces;
- to assist in providing peoples who have been victims of war and subjugation with all practicable means for the speedy rebuilding of their economies, and in promoting international measures of aid for them, with full respect for their political and economic independence;
- to strive for the establishment of full employment; the elimination of adverse discriminations on grounds of race, sex, nationality or creed; the improvement of working conditions; the introduction, maintenance and extension of social security for all; and the raising of the standard of living of peoples of all countries in the world;
- to encourage the development of the resources of all countries in order to further the economic, social and cultural progress of the peoples of the world, and particularly of economically under-developed countries and non-self-governing territories;
- to advocate, with a view to raising the general level of prosperity, increased and properly planned economic cooperation among the nations in such a way as will encourage the development of wider economic units and free exchange of commodities, and to seek full participation of workers' representatives in official bodies dealing with these questions;
- to protect, maintain and expand the system of free labour, and to eliminate forced labour everywhere;
- to represent the free trade union movement in all international agencies which exist or may be set up to perform functions affecting the social and economic conditions of working people, and to further the implementation of their decisions whenever desirable;
- to establish and extend association with international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, in work which will further the aims of the ICFTU, in protecting and advancing the interests of the peoples generally, and guaranteeing human rights;
- to support the establishment of a world system of collective security, but pending its attainment, to further and support

within the Charter of the United Nations all measures that are necessary for assuring the defence of world democracy and the freedom of nations against any totalitarian or imperialist aggression;

- to ensure the integration of women into trade union organisations and to promote their participation in activities and decision-making bodies at all levels;
- to carry out a programme of trade union and workers' education as a necessary adjunct to the Confederation's organisational activities in those countries where trade unions do not yet exist or are still weak, and also as a means of promoting better understanding of the tasks of the free trade union movement everywhere;
- to engage in and foster publicity work which will increase the knowledge and understanding of national and international problems confronting the workers, so as to enable them to make their struggle more efficacious, and so as to realise the widest support for the Confederation's activities;
- to maintain and develop an international clearing-house of information and research on the problems of trade union organisation, wages and working conditions, labour legislation, collective bargaining and any other matter related to the implementation of the Confederation's aims.

(Source: ICFTU Constitution and Standing Orders - Brussels 1992)

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