

Global Solidarity

An ICTU Development Education Project



Newsletter

Issue 2

Global Solidarity Website

www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org

was publicly launched on 27th August by Eric Lee of Labourstart www.labourstart.org

Speaking at the launch in Dublin, Eric said:

"The website itself is an ambitious effort to involve many of Ireland's hundreds of thousands of trade union members in international solidarity issues. This marks an important break in trade union thinking about those issues. Traditionally, international affairs was the domain of top union officials, who would occasionally receive appeals for help and other information, and sometimes act on these in the name of the union. But union members themselves were rarely involved. The Global Solidarity website is a deliberate attempt to reach out to the vast majority of union members and involve them in building global solidarity."

The new website was also made Labour Website of the Week.

If you haven't already visited the site, please do so and give us any feedback you may have.

We hope by the end of the project that we will have a very useful resource which will prove a starting point for unions and their members to embark upon global solidarity work.



Eric Lee of Labourstart, speaking at the launch of the Global Solidarity website

Education and Training

Development education sessions and special briefings have been incorporated into the Congress Education and Training booklet for 2003/2004. The first briefing (October 2nd) will be a report back from the World Trade Organisation Ministerial Meeting in Cancun.

Motions at BDC

There were a number of motions in relation to Global Solidarity passed at this year's BDC in Tralee. Thanks to all of those who submitted and spoke in support of these.



'Campaigning for Workers' Rights in the Global Economy' Jim Loughran of Amnesty International, Lorraine Stronge of the ICTU Solidarity Committee, and colombian Trade Unionist Francisci Ramirez

Colombia Event

There was a very successful focus on Colombia, the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist, at this year's BDC. Francisco Ramirez, President of the Mineworkers' Union, addressed both the main conference and a fringe event attended by nearly 200 people. A leaflet outlining the background to the situation in Colombia was produced and ideas for action included.

OECD

Guidelines for Multinationals Meetings

The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD Working Group on Global Trade and Investment met on 23rd June to discuss the implementation of the Guidelines and prepare the consultations with the OECD annual meeting of National Contact Points (NCPs) on 24th June.

TUAC presented the survey of the functioning of NCPs and the working paper submitted to the annual meeting. The last part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion with OECD Watch (a coalition of NGOs working on the Guidelines) on what issues to bring up under the consultations and how to improve co-operation among NGOs and trade unions.

This international activity was mirrored here in Ireland when Congress and Christian Aid met with our own NCP (housed in the DETE) before the meetings. A report of the meeting is available, but suffice to say that it is not exactly a priority of the Department to promote the guidelines amongst Irish businesses.



Trade Justice and the WTO Ministerial in Cancun

Policy and advocacy work on the basis of the agreed agenda for trade justice continues North and South in the run up to the WTO Ministerial set for Cancun in September. In the Republic, a debate was held in the Dail on June 27th- the first time, the government has been held to account for positions adopted at the WTO. Among the issues raised were the rights of workers in the global economy, including reference to Bangladeshi trade unionist, Nazma Akter, who was here earlier in the year to launch our campaign:

"We are blind to the fact that this faith denies the need for labour and social rights to go hand in hand with the free trade rights we insist on imposing. We met a young trade union representative from the textile industry in Bangladesh and asked why the labour rights they have could not be enforced. She told us the ILO had no teeth and none of the powers that the employers have in their trade negotiations."

Eamon Ryan, T.D.

"The legacy of trade unionism, socialism and social democracy in Europe that built proper working conditions for workers in Europe over the last 150 years, is one that we as a country, and Europe as a continent, ought to carry proudly to Cancun. We have nothing to apologise for, particularly to the US or to multinational corporations, in seeking to protect and ensure minimum labour conditions"

Joan Burton, T.D.



Trade Unionist lobby in dail for Trade Justice

In Northern Ireland, NIC.ICTU has produced a UK version of the document '[Agenda for Trade Justice](#)' available on the website.

It has also been working with a number of NGO's on looking at UK and ROI policy regarding Cancun.

We have written to all NI newspapers and media outlining what policies we want our government to endorse. There will be a follow up event in October.

Full transcript available on website.

Congress will be part of an international trade union delegation to Central America in order to develop public awareness on the negative impacts of the current model of globalisation on fundamental labour standards around the world.

This will involve a focus on the situation of workers in Export Processing Zones (also variously known as Free Trade Zones or, in Latin America, Maquilas), in particular violations of trade union organising and collective bargaining rights, and discrimination issues affecting the predominantly female workforce in many EPZs.

Alisa will be in Cancun and will work both there and beforehand with other unions and NGOs on the basis of the agenda for trade justice.

More info on website and at:
www.tradejusticeireland.org
and
www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org

International Labour Conference

International Labour Conference Brendan Mackin, then Congress Vice President, and Esther Lynch, Congress Industrial Officer with responsibility for Equality, attended this year's conference as worker delegate and advisor.

Among the issues discussed were:

- Tackling poverty, inequality and repression - ILO is world's "social regulator"
- Poverty – destiny or policy?
- Global report on discrimination
- Rights at work
- Seafarers and security
- Occupational health and safety
- Employment relationship
- Human resources
- Palestinian workers
- Elections

The fight against poverty was at the centre of the discussions throughout this ILO annual assembly. Setting the tone was a report by the Director General, Mr. Juan Somavia, setting out courses of action for fighting poverty effectively through decent work.

"I take great heart from this recognition that decent work is both an end in itself and also a means to achieve important goals, especially poverty eradication," Mr. Somavia declared at the end of a discussion in which almost 300 delegates took part. "This makes the work of the ILO extremely relevant to the political challenges faced by very many countries today."

The workers' delegates welcomed the priority accorded to the Decent Work Agenda, to tripartism and social dialogue and to trade union freedom amongst the major means of combating poverty. Several of them emphasized the unique role that the ILO could or should be playing within the system of international



organisations so as to steer globalisation round to a rather different course – namely, social justice.

This year's **Global report** was on **discrimination at work**. The discussion highlighted the importance of providing a legal basis for the fight against discrimination, and also the importance of workplace equality in the various sectors. Despite decades of effort, it noted, women and racial and ethnic minorities are still far from enjoying equality of opportunity and treatment. The discussion also emphasized that discrimination is a major cause of poverty and that it is taking on new forms, relating to age, sexual orientation, AIDS and various disabilities.

In a report distributed during the conference, the Global Union Federations deplored the fact that the global report does not mention discrimination - within enterprises - against trade union representatives and members of trade union organisations. There were calls on the organisations present to set a good example by establishing positive action programmes within their own organisations.

Of interest to the ILO will be motion 23, passed at this year's BDC, calls for the development of an equality monitoring /audit/proofing mechanism for unions as employers and as providers of services. The Anti Racist Workplace Week partnership between Congress, IBEC, the Construction Industry Federation and the Equality Authority is also an example of good practice.

Belarus, Burma and Colombia

received particular attention from the worker delegates, due to the continuing serious violations of trade union freedom in those countries. Despite the seriousness of the situation in Colombia, where 184 trade unionists were murdered last year, the standards committee did not adopt a special paragraph on that country, as advocated by the worker delegates. The employers and most of the governments opposed such a move. The workers' spokesperson on the committee, deeply regretted conclusions that create the impression of "double standards", thus "undermining the moral authority of this Committee and the [ILO] supervisory system". During its session immediately after the conference, the Governing Body rejected a request by the workers' group for the creation of a commission of enquiry.

ROI Minister, Frank FAHEY, addressing the conference, said:

"I would like to thank the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in furthering the objectives of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and particularly, their efforts in raising awareness about this issue among trade unions and workers in Ireland. I also commend their involvement with the NGO in Concern in recently launching a campaign entitled "School is the Best Place to Work". I wish them every success with this initiative."

UNDP Report

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) included a strong critique of IMF and World Bank policies in its annual Human Development Report, released in Dublin in July. The report notes that 54 developing and transition countries became poorer during the so-called boom years of the 1990s and lays part of the blame on the application of 'Washington Consensus' policy prescriptions, consisting of strict public spending limits, trade liberalisation and privatisation. The report gives the example of Malawi as a country that will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals if it sticks to the policies advocated by the IFIs. The head of the UNDP, Mark Malloch-Brown called for a 'guerrilla assault' against the Washington Consensus.

The Taoiseach at the launch of the UNDP report:

"I agree with the Human Development Report's view that if the Goals are to be met we need to pay particular attention to Goal Number 8, which calls for a global partnership for development. And I agree that such a partnership imposes responsibilities on both sides.

Our developing country partners have to focus on promoting democracy, protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law and implementing sound economic management. If we are to retain public support for the level of ODA necessary to fight extreme poverty, the fight against corruption must be intensified.

On our part, we have to work for a fair world trade order that allows all countries to have a stake in the global economy. Agriculture is of paramount importance to developing countries for their food security, but also in promoting their integration into the world's trading system. The Doha Development Agenda for the current WTO negotiations provides that special and differential treatment will be an integral element of every aspect of the negotiations on agriculture. Despite the current more difficult economic circumstances, the Government is committed to further increasing Ireland's ODA and achieving the UN target of 0.7% by 2007."

Child Labour Roundtable



The Global March against Child Labour came through Dublin in 1998

Congress co-hosted a roundtable with Concern on the issue of child labour in May. The roundtable was held to mark the launch of the Concern 'School is the Best Place to Work' child labour initiative.

This is a public awareness, education and advocacy campaign that seeks to eradicate child labour by provision of elementary education for all children working as labourers, by 2015.

The campaign is run by the Alliance 2015 network of development organisations comprising Hivos in the Netherlands, Welthungerhilfe in Germany and Concern in Ireland.

The campaign calls on the European Union and the governments of the Netherlands, Ireland and Germany to:

1. Create a coherent policy on the elimination of child labour linked to the provision of full-time, formal education for all children up to 14 years of age.

2. Ensure that European Union members work together to allocate at least 8 per cent of Overseas Development Aid to formal primary education, including strategies to integrate all out-of-school children into the education system.
3. Make provisions in Overseas Development Aid to ensure that girls and young children from vulnerable groups (including those living in absolute poverty) are integrated into the formal school system.

Chaired by David Begg, the roundtable was also addressed by Minister Tom Kitt T.D., Mr Tom Arnold, Executive Director of Concern, Mr David Joyce, Development Education Officer, ICTU, Mr Geir Myrstad, Head of Programme Support, Reporting and Resource Planning, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), International Labour Organization (ILO), Ms Shanta Sinha, Secretary/Trustee, MV Foundation (MVF), India, and Mr Gerry Gibbons, Assistant to Mr Proinsias de Rossa, Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

Full report available. It is hoped to reconvene on 12th June 2004 (International Day against Child Labour) to review progress.

trade unions say **no**
to **racism** and **xenophobia**

UN Convention on Migrant Workers comes into Force

On July 1, 2003, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families finally entered into force. There is abundant evidence that worldwide documented and undocumented migrant workers - including a growing number of women - are providing key contributions in such sectors as agriculture, construction, high tech and (domestic) services.

They are, however, increasingly subject to racism, discrimination, abuse and violent attacks. We, therefore, welcome the entry into force of the Convention, although it took thirteen years to accomplish this.

Among the main obstacles for ratification - in particular in the privileged North - are fears of what this Convention will bring and a lack of political will to go for something different. Without efforts to share wealth more evenly, migration will only increase. Migration is a phenomenon, not a problem. In this matter, no short term and obvious solutions exist.

The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is not an open invitation for more migration but an instrument that provides a necessary universal basic standard to protect the human rights of both documented and undocumented migrant workers. It demands that States to prevent and eradicate illegal migration - sending and

receiving - and inform both migrants and citizens - including employers - about their rights and obligations.

As migration is not a one-way ticket without possibility to return and without a future, the Convention looks at the obligations of both the sending and receiving country, throughout the full migration process. Congress again asks the Irish Government to reconsider their priorities and to ratify this International Human Rights Instrument. Respect for the human rights of migrants should be an inherent part of every government's migration management policy.

The 2004 International Labour Conference will have on the agenda an item on Migrant Workers. The question will be addressed in a General Discussion based on an integrated approach with the aim to develop a concrete plan of action to meet the challenges, problems and opportunities posed by contemporary forms of labour migration. Congress will be expressing its views in advance to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment.

Among the concerns will be:

- Ratification of ILO migration conventions 97 and 143 and possible synergies with the UN Convention
- New areas for international standard setting
- How to promote legislation and practice that recognise the person's rights irrespective of his/her status of documented or undocumented migrant

Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland

The Institute for Conflict Research is carrying out a research programme on migrant workers in Northern Ireland.

The International Convention of the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families defines a migrant worker as;

"a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national".

For the purposes of this research it would also include that the person is neither a national of the United Kingdom nor the Republic of Ireland.

The research will draw upon legal standards and principles of human rights, equality and good relations in an attempt to determine the scale and status of migrant worker communities in Northern Ireland.

The research will establish a broad demographic profile of the migrant worker population including data on nationality, age, gender, family circumstances, employment status, income and access to benefits. It will attempt to identify the expected length of stay in Northern Ireland, the reasons for coming here, means of travel and the nature of the work contracts. We will also look at their access to health care, social security, housing and other welfare services.

The research will quantify the range, scale and variety of problems that might be currently experienced by members of migrant communities. It will aim to identify any human rights abuses and / or problems related to equality issues. Additionally it will review forms of information, support and assistance being provided by statutory, community and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland and any deficits therein. We would encourage trade unions to participate in the research programme.

**For more information contact Kathryn Bell at:
ICR on 028/048 9074 2682**



Survey news

Business in the Community, Ireland

www.BITC.ie have launched the first ever Survey of Consumer Attitudes in Ireland towards Corporate Responsibility.

Key findings include:

- 60% of Irish adults believe that industry and commerce do not pay enough attention to their social responsibilities
- 70% say that a company's commitment to social responsibility is important when buying a product or service
- Just over half claim that they would pay more for products/services that are environmentally and socially responsible
- Over three quarters believe that health and safety in the workplace should be a major focus

This demonstrates that there is a clear business (as well as the obvious moral/human rights one) for Irish companies to take their responsibilities in this area seriously. Also the treatment of employees and how a company's activities impact on the environment is of interest to the Irish public.

Ireland Aid

Ireland Aid also published a 2002 MRBI survey on attitudes towards development cooperation in Ireland.



Key findings include:

- 51% indicated they are 'very much for' helping countries in the developing world
- 85% said they had helped in some way or other
- Buying Fairtrade products was listed as the third most 'popular' activity by people who had 'ever helped developing countries'. It came after contributing to charity, and organising fundraising. 10% of respondents have bought Fairtrade products
- 79% of respondents thought buying Fairtrade Mark products would be very helpful/quite helpful
- 92% of respondents state that TV news is the source of their info; interestingly, trade unions were not mentioned here as a possible source of info
- Public support does not necessarily translate into knowledge about issues or what Ireland is doing
- Overall, people don't have a clear image of what overseas development aid comprises; 60% never heard of Ireland Aid

More info and copies from Development Cooperation Ireland: +353 01 4082000



DCI Website

Congratulations to Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), formerly Ireland Aid, on the launch of their new website.

www.dci.gov.ie

It is a very accessible site with much information on the development cooperation programmes of the Irish Government, including a jargon busting development dictionary!

There is a link to the site from our website.

EU Presidency

In January 2004, Ireland takes up the position of EU Presidency. The development community here is urging the government to give a high priority to development issues.

Trocaire has launched its proposal: Seven Steps towards the Millennium Development Goals.

copies from Trocaire: at +353 01 629 3333.

Talking Trade Justice

Over 100 people attended a debate on Trade Justice, in Belfast on 18th of June. Chaired by Seamus McKee from the BBC, and hosted by ICTU, Oxfam NI, Save the Children, Trócaire and Tearfund.

This was an opportunity for lively debate on the issues of Trade Justice and a chance to put questions to local politicians and experts, in the lead up to Cancun.

Bananas

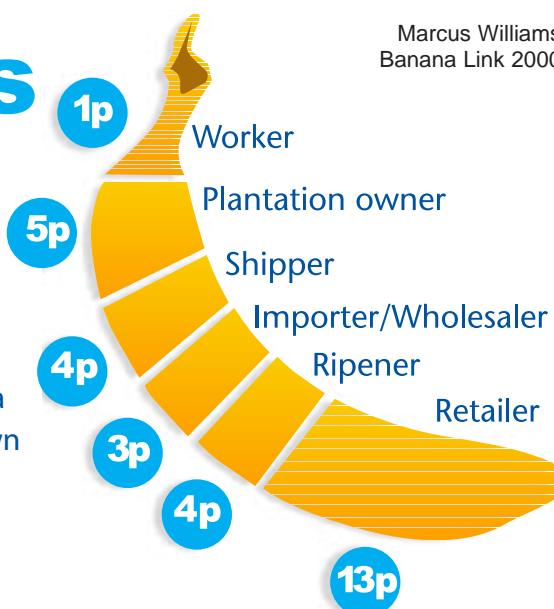
In Belize, the new executive of the NTUCB met with the Prime Minister last April and since then, the government has mediated and has successfully gotten the Banana Growers Association to sit down with the union to begin a dialogue.

Some good news to report: the Mayan King farm there have since reached an agreement with the Christian Workers Union to have its workers join that union. Workers on other farms continue to face problems such as postponement of paying wages, forcing them to move to other farms and operations.

Meanwhile, Fyffes (who buy all bananas from Belize), faced pickets at their AGM in Dublin in May because of their record in relation to fulfilling their own commitments in their code of practice in relation to workers' rights.

The context for all of this is a continued race to the bottom in terms of the retail price being paid for bananas.

Marcus Williams
Banana Link 2000



Asda/Walmart and Tesco are engaged in a price war in the UK that means that growers in places like Costa Rica cannot sell to them unless they are willing to make a loss! The lions share of any profit in the industry is being taken by the supermarkets and those at the bottom of the supply chain (i.e. Workers) are suffering most.

No company can continue to claim to be trading ethically when it slashes supplier prices to the point where growers who respect their workers and environment are cut out of the market!

Fair Trade

www.fairtrade.ie

Sales of Fairtrade products continue to increase in Ireland, making a real difference to the lives of producers in the Third World.

For more producers to benefit, they need more shoppers to look for the Fairtrade mark and urge their local shops to stock. As well as the existing coffee, tea, bananas, and chocolate brands out there, look out for a new Roberts tea, a wide range of own brand Fairtrade products at Tesco, an



Fair Trade celebrated at the festival of world cultures

Amnesty International own brand chocolate bar and Fairtrade mark banana beer!

Congratulations, also to Clonakilty for becoming the first Fairtrade Town in the Republic of Ireland.

Debt Action



Petitions in the Bertie Cake

'A Birthday With A Difference',

July 19th marked the first anniversary of Ireland's debt policy supporting 100% debt cancellation. Supporters gathered at the top of Grafton Street to invite passing shoppers and tourists to sign our petition calling on Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to make 'Debt Cancellation' a priority for his EU Presidency in January 2004.

Music and dance to attract public attention was provided by groups from Korea, Nigeria, Ireland and the Philippines.

Over 4,000 signatures were collected, with many organisations (including Congress) joining us for the Public Signing outside The Central Bank in Dame Street. Here, over 350 people gathered representing various Development Agencies, Trade Unions, Churches, Parishes, Political Parties and concerned individuals.

Supporters then made their way to Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's office carrying the "Bertie Cake", and handed in the petitions. Well done to all concerned.

More info at:
www.debtireland.org

Tobin Tax Declaration

In the last issue we highlighted the launch of a new campaign to urge support for the Tobin Tax – www.tobintaxireland.ie The campaign is urging organisations to add their name to an Irish Tobin Tax Declaration that would demonstrate support among civil society organisations in Ireland for the idea. **Why not add your unions name to the Declaration?**

Economic Processing Zones in Honduras

Alisa Keane and Fiona Dunne will represent Congress as part of an ICFTU international trade union delegation that will visit Economic Processing Zones/Free Trade Zone in Honduras to raise awareness of labour standards abuses before the Cancun meeting of the WTO.

There has been a global expansion of Export Processing Zones (EPZs), which are specially designed to attract foreign investment, especially in manufacturing. Though a valuable source of employment, especially, they nearly always play host to systematic violations of workers' rights.

The focus of the mission is to bring public attention to the situation in the zones and in particular violations of international labour standards. It will also highlight the need to integrate recognition of labour standards at the WTO.

This has important context in our local economy- for example, looking at the textile industry, this visit will chart how the garment industry is constantly on the move to the poorer countries of the developing world.

This movement in search of workers who can be paid less, for longer hours, and in increasingly dangerous conditions is a key feature of globalisation.

**For more info contact:
Alisa or David
and look at the 'News' section
of the website.**

Solidarity Committees

The Solidarity Committees (NI and ROI) continue to be the vital link between Congress and affiliates on solidarity issues. These Committees work closely with the Global Solidarity Project to ensure that it reaches affiliated unions of Congress and meet regularly during the year. They continue to act as a link between the project, their individual unions, and the membership.

These Committees encourage affiliates to engage with the project and looks to embed solidarity linking within trade union structure.

Some affiliates (NIPSA, IMPACT, PSEU and ESBOA) have formed their own structures to engage with international solidarity issues.

**If you would like more information,
please contact Alisa or David**

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