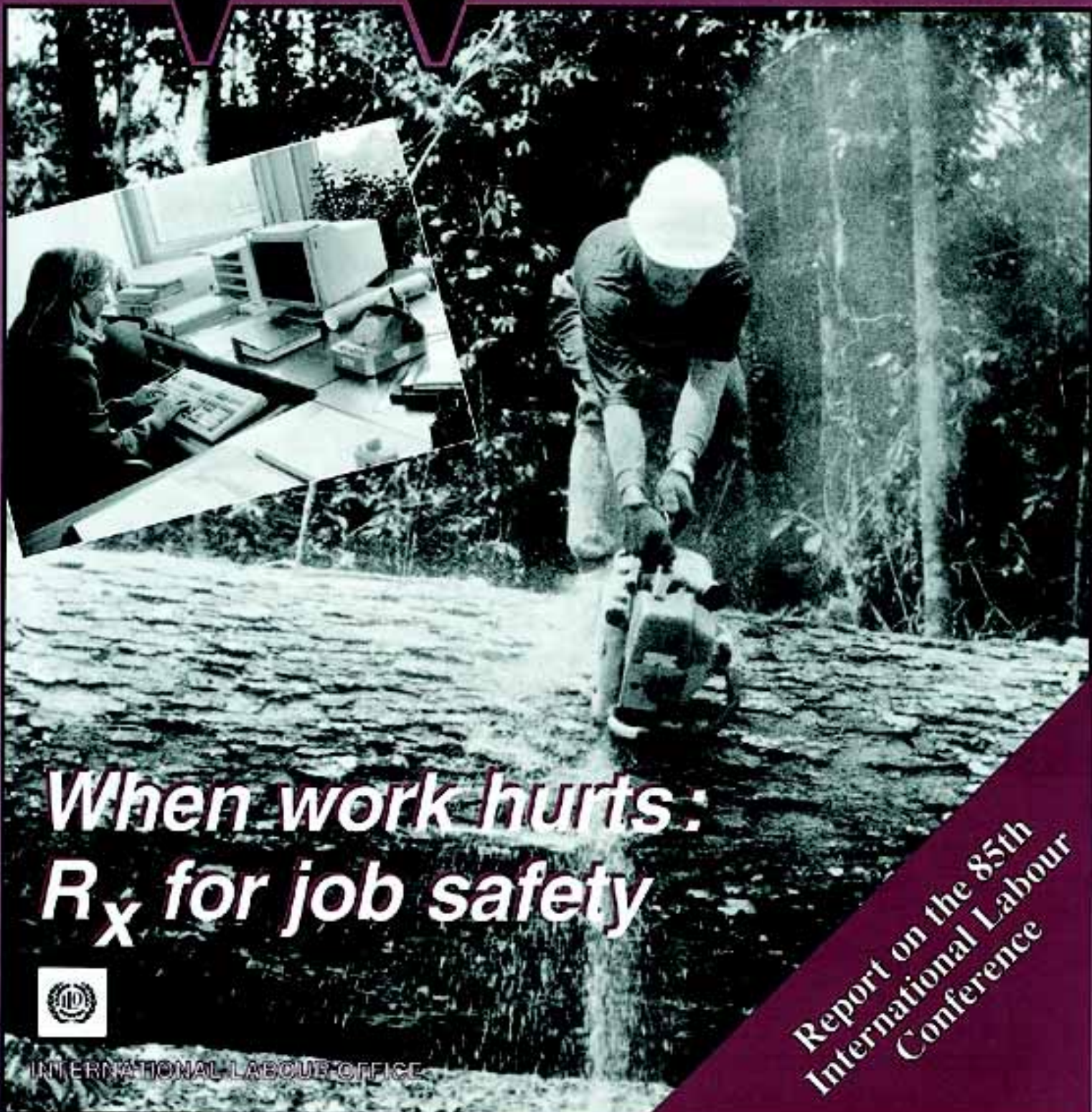


# WORLD OF *Work*

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ILO



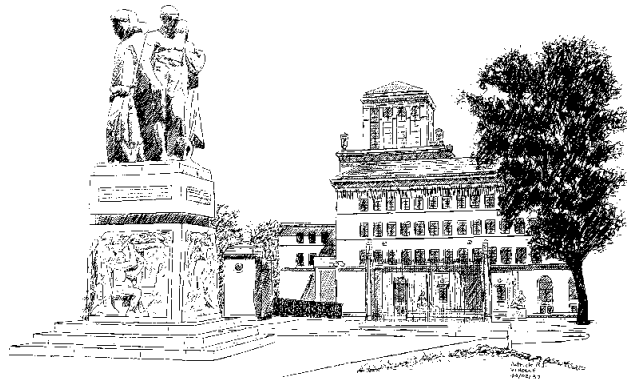
*When work hurts:  
Rx for job safety*



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

Report on the 85th  
International Labour  
Conference





World of Work magazine is published four times per year by the Bureau of Public Information of the ILO in Geneva. Also published in Chinese, Czech, Danish, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Japanese, Norwegian, Russian, Slovak and Swedish.

■ Editor:

Thomas Netter

■ German edition:

Hans von Rohland

■ Arabic edition:

Khawla Mattar

ILO Office, Beirut

■ Spanish edition:

in collaboration with the ILO Office, Madrid

■ Production Manager:

Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman

■ Cover photo:

Peter Poschen/ILO

Inset: Jacques Maillard

This magazine is not an official document of the International Labour Organization. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the ILO. The designations employed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

Texts and photographs may be freely reproduced with mention of source. Written notification is appreciated.

All correspondence should be addressed to the Bureau of Public Information, ILO, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.

Tel. +4122/799-7912

Fax +4122/799-8577

<http://www.ilo.org>

Readers in the U.S. should send their correspondence to the International Labor Office, Washington Branch, 1828 L Street, N.W., Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036.

Tel: +202/653-7652

Fax: +202/653-7687

Printed by ATAR SA, Geneva

ISSN 1020-0010

# The ILO in history

## Before Versailles: The Genesis of the ILO

Although it is hardly remembered today, the late summer of 1897 – exactly a century ago – was a watershed in the history of social legislation and labour rights. Two international congresses, in Zurich and Brussels, sparked important developments in the campaign for the establishment of international social legislation and the creation of an “office” to give it impetus by acting as a centre for research and action. And in their story lies the story of the genesis of the ILO.

The idea of international agreement on labour legislation was relatively new. At first touted by economists, social theorists and enlightened employers, the concept soon won the endorsement of the workers themselves. Through their trade unions, they saw it as a powerful means of strengthening their ability to act effectively and lent their muscle to the campaign.

Soon, the matter became the subject of international political debate. According to G. Decurtins, a member of the Swiss National Council, “conditions under which labour is exploited in any one country are not without influence on the workers of neighbouring countries... Suppose an eight-hour day were introduced in Switzerland... while neighbouring states still kept to a 10-hour or an 11-hour day: it would only have the disastrous effect of weakening Switzerland in her competition abroad, and the Swiss worker would himself suffer”.\*

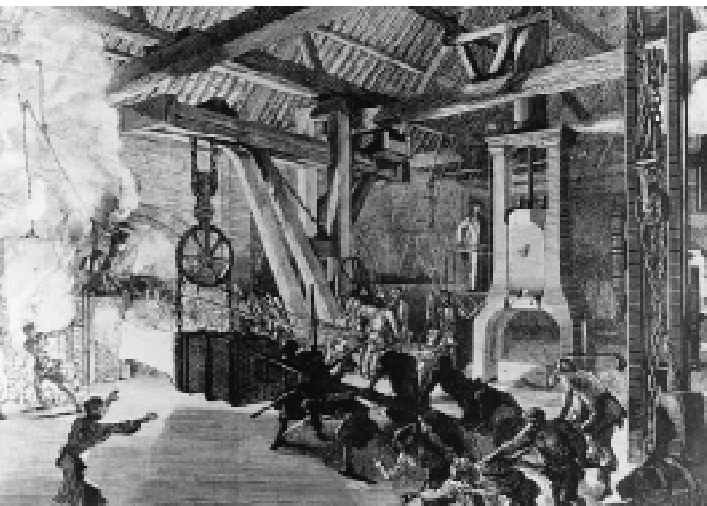
Soon, Decurtins’ concerns were being discussed widely. Yet, even though a first inter-governmental conference was held in Berlin in 1890, specific measures took some time to appear. Under pressure from trade union activists, 263 delegates representing workers from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and several other countries

met in Zurich on 23-29 August 1897, to discuss “ways and means of realizing the international protection of labour”. After reviewing the most pressing problems – Sunday rest, the work of children, youth, women, and dangerous trades – they invited “Labour Parties of every country and all shades of opinion” to call for international legislation and urge governments to adopt such legislation. Furthermore, they called for the establishment of an “International Office for Labour Protection”.

One month later, at a meeting in Brussels, another international congress, attended mainly by jurists and economists, established the foundations of what would become the International Association for the Legal Protection of Workers. This Association,

the true forerunner of the ILO, was officially created in Paris in 1900, and established its headquarters in Basel in 1901.

Eighteen years later, the ILO was founded under the Treaty of Versailles as an autonomous institution associated with the League of Nations.



\*Sources: “The Christian Social Movement and international labour legislation”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. VI, No. 1, July 1922. See also “The origins of the International Labor Organization”, Vol. 1, James T. Shotwell, New York, Columbia University Press, 1934, and “Labor in the League System”, Francis Graham Wilson, Stanford University Press, 1934

---

# CONTENTS

## ● *Listening to our pain* ..... 5

### **PREVENTING WORKPLACE INJURIES AND ILLNESSES THROUGH ERGONOMICS**

For many people, work means pain: eye strain, back pain, trauma, strains and repetitive motion injuries. Ergonomics focuses on the prevention of such injuries through the proper design of equipment, workstations, products and working methods, according to peoples' capabilities and limitations. What is ergonomics, how does it work and what is the ILO doing about it?



## ● *No more "Hang ups" and "Widow-makers"* ..... 8

### **NEW FOREST CODE AIMS TO PROTECT LOGGERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Forest work is a dangerous business. Every year, thousands of forest workers die or are maimed due to unsafe practices and the danger of working with huge, falling trees. In addition, unsafe forestry also has an environmental impact, causing more damage than necessary to trees that survive the loggers' chain saws. A Code of Practice on forest safety marks a new departure.

## ● *Half light in the Norwegian Arctic* ..... 11

### **MAKING THE ILO CONVENTION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WORK: SAAMI PEOPLE SEEK THEIR DUE**

The Saami people living in Norway's arctic regions are reluctant to trap themselves in folkloric stereotypes, such as reindeer herders. Eager to build a new society, Saami leaders are focusing their attention on gaining meaningful influence over the wealth of their traditional lands and waters. One tool available to them has been ILO Convention No. 169. Journalist Jo-Anne Velin explains how the Saami are using this as a political tool.



## ● *An analysis of independent work in Quebec* ..... 13

### **SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS CALL FOR THE SAME SOCIAL PROTECTION AS WAGE EARNERS**

Last May the government of Quebec (Canada) published an *Analysis of independent work*, the first exhaustive study on independent work in Quebec. This document was followed up by a day of debate during which self-employed workers proposed that all workers, regardless of their status, should enjoy the same social protection. This was a first in the short history of the resurgence of independent work in Quebec.

## ● *The ILO Economic Brief* ..... 15

### **"SOCIAL FINANCE" IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD**

As globalization continues to increase, so does the amount of money being pushed around the globe. Yet, while hundreds of billions of dollars surge electronically across national boundaries each day, more than one billion of the world's destitute still eke out daily subsistence on less than US\$ 1. In an effort to address this anomaly, the ILO has created a "Social Finance Unit". This brief explains how the ILO Social Finance Unit is helping globalization's "have-nots" gain access to financial services.



● **Special Report: 85th International Labour Conference** ..... 17

**CONFERENCE DISCUSSES LABOUR RIGHTS, CONTRACT WORKERS, SMEs**

The 85<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference was marked by extensive discussions on a set of innovative proposals submitted to it by the Director-General of the ILO. The Conference also adopted a new international Convention on private employment agencies designed to increase the efficiency of labour markets and protect job-seekers using their services.

Committee on Application of Standards cites labour abuses in Iran, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Swaziland

Voices from the podium: The sound and the fury



● **The fight against poverty: Not all is lost** ..... 24

It seems that not all is lost in the fight against poverty. While the success of east and south-east Asian countries and also of some South Asian countries in alleviating poverty is quite well known, a careful look at data from countries of Latin America and Africa may offer at least some glimmer of hope.

**News Section** ..... 25

- *Most intolerable forms of child labour targeted at the Cartagena Meeting*
- *Report: Social labelling and child labour; further examination needed*
- *National Conference on Enterprise Development and Job Creation in Russia*
- *Russian wage arrears reach astronomical proportions*
- *Meeting of Experts to redefine purpose of workers' health surveillance*
- *International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities held*
- *Role of trade unions in the fight against child labour in Asia*



● **The ILO and the World Wide Web** ..... 30

**NEW PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNET USE AT THE ILO:  
CAN THE INTERNET CHANGE HOW ORGANIZATIONS WORK?**

With the generalization of the use of information and communication technologies, much has been said about their impact on organizational structures and ways of working. At the ILO, choices made in setting up and running the Organization's Internet site may well have some impact on future ways of working within the Office.

**Features**

**THE ILO IN HISTORY** ..... 2

How the late summer of 1897 saw the birth of an idea that is the ILO today.

**AROUND THE CONTINENTS** ..... 32

- *Fighting child labour: Fund raising in Italy*
- *Child labour: Finding "best practices"*
- *Pension reform*
- *Promoting ILO standards in Latin America*
- *Employment and sustainable livelihood*
- *The 1996 performance of the multi-bilateral programme*
- *Twelfth Asian Regional Meeting in Bangkok*

**WORKING WORLD:** ..... 34

A quarterly review of trends in unemployment, labour agreements, social security and pensions, other milestones

**MEDIA FOCUS, THE ILO IN THE PRESS** ..... 36

**MEDIA SHELF** ..... 38

**Created in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) brings together governments, employers and workers of its 174 member States in common action to improve social protection and conditions of life and work throughout the world. The International Labour Office, in Geneva, is the permanent Secretariat of the Organization.**

## Listening to our pain

# Preventing workplace injuries and illnesses through ergonomics

***For many people, work means pain: eye strain, back pain, trauma, strains and repetitive motion injuries. Ergonomics focuses on the prevention of such injuries through the proper design of equipment, workstations, products and working methods according to people's capabilities and limitations. This article explains what ergonomics is, how it works and what the ILO is doing about it.***

In the United States, back disorders caused more than 27 per cent of all non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work in 1993. Government studies have put total costs of low back pain to society at between US\$ 50 billion and US\$ 100 billion annually. Moreover, up to 30 per cent of US workers routinely perform activities that may increase their risk of developing low back disorders, and it is estimated that half of the workers in the US hold jobs which have the potential for causing them cumulative trauma disorders.

At the Colmotores automobile factory in Colombia, where 1,600 employees produce 100,000 cars each year, most sick leave and occupational injuries are due to musculoskeletal disorders. Company medical experts realized that the work environment had to be improved and that ergonomic principles had to be applied. The experts understood that better working conditions would be the most effective way of reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.

These are two examples of ergonomic-related injuries and illnesses which affect workers worldwide. Such injuries range

from eye strain and headaches to musculoskeletal ailments such as chronic back, neck and shoulder pain, Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTDs), Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) and Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMIs), three terms which are used interchangeably.

While no global figures exist, data concerning such injuries are largely gleaned from national sources, the bulk of which are from industrialized countries. Millions of workers around the globe probably suffer from one or more of the above ailments each year. The result: downtime, reduced productivity, and high costs for both workers and employers.

To date, reliable figures are generally not available to describe the extent of ergonomic-related injuries and illnesses in non-industrialized and newly-industrialized countries. It is encouraging however, that in a number of developing and newly-industrialized countries, such as Hungary, Tunisia, Singapore and Myanmar, musculoskeletal diseases, repetitive strain injuries and vibration-related diseases are recognized as occupational diseases. This means that a physician or employer who detects a work-related case is required by law to report it to the competent authority. The reporting system breaks down, in many industrialized countries as well, when there is a lack of motivation on the part of employers, workers and physicians. Without accurate reporting, reliable figures cannot be obtained to describe a country's situation.

"Ergonomics", which is the field integrating knowledge derived from human sciences – anatomy, physiology and



Jacques Maillard

**Straining to work: A glaring example of a poorly set-up work area.**



psychology – to match jobs, systems, products and environments to the physical and mental abilities and the limitations of workers, has a proven track record in reducing such ailments.

The experience of the Norwegian State Institute is a case in point. Ergonomic improvements made to workstation layouts and seating halved absenteeism due to back pain in one year. In the Colmotores automobile factory, its medical director used a Finnish model of work organization and design involving choice of tools and equipment and adjustable chairs. The result was a productivity increase of 15 per cent during the first five months following the application of such measures. Experience has shown repeatedly that the application of ergonomic principles in the workplace can result in marked, even dramatic improvements.

## The scope of the problem

Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) are a category of injuries which occur from repeatedly performing a task putting stress or strain on a certain part of the body, causing damage to nerves, muscles, tendons and other soft body tissue. RSIs comprise more than 100 different types

of job-related injuries and illnesses with some so crippling that they may require surgery or cause permanent disability. RSIs can cause severe pain and often make daily tasks such as getting dressed, shopping, turning taps, cooking, and child care, etc., difficult or even impossible to perform.

Increased tension at home and at work is frequently associated with RSIs due to several factors. For one, since RSIs are not usually visible to the naked eye, colleagues and family members may not believe what they cannot see. In addition, the resulting disabilities usually affect the type of tasks which can be performed at home and at work which may temporarily increase the burden of work for others. Moreover, those not suffering from the condition often don't understand the nature of the injury or illness. Finally, depending on the extent of the condition, treatment and healing time can range from a number of weeks to more than a year. Some cases never heal and may leave the injured person permanently disabled.

Not localized to any one type of job, RSIs tend to affect workers in a wide variety of occupations ranging from assembly line and food processing jobs to secretarial work, data processing and work at visual display units, or VDUs

(also called visual display terminals, or VDTs), to name a few.

RSIs can take years to develop and therefore tend to strike when the worker is in the prime of his or her career, usually at around the age of 40. Treatment is available and in many cases can yield good results, especially if the symptoms are diagnosed early. Once "cured" however, if a worker returns to the same working conditions which caused or aggravated the condition in the first place, then a recurrence of the condition is likely, which in turn usually necessitates more days off work.

Here are some examples of RSIs:

- In an 11 December 1996 article in the Washington Post, then US Labor Secretary Robert Reich acknowledged that RSIs were the fastest growing job-related impairments in the United States. In March 1997, the United States Department of Labor reported that 6.6 million work-related injuries and illnesses were reported in the USA in 1995. Sixty-two percent (or three out of five) of the workplace illnesses were disorders associated with repeated trauma, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

- Outlined in the 1994 issue of Euro Review on Research in Health and Safety at Work, research has shown that in Sweden, for example, one out of every four workplace accidents and more than 50 per cent of the reported cases of occupational disease involve the musculoskeletal system. Two thirds, or around 19,000 of the cases involve symptoms of the neck, arm/shoulder, or hand. On average, musculoskeletal injuries lead to more than 100 sick leave days per case. The group in Sweden found to be at highest risk for RSI is women in the manufacturing industry. The risk of musculoskeletal disease among women who perform assembly work in the Swedish electronics industry has been reported to be 20 times higher than in the country's working population as a whole. Germany has also reported a clear trend towards a higher prevalence of RSIs among women. Another startling statistic from Sweden reveals that across the board, injuries of the lower back are estimated to make up almost 40% of all musculoskeletal injuries on the job, in any country, with some cases resulting in permanent disability.

- A 1992 report on workplace injuries published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the majority of workplace disorders that

## WHAT IS ERGONOMICS?

*Ergonomics is a field which integrates knowledge derived from the human sciences (in particular anatomy, physiology and psychology) to match jobs, systems, products and environments to the physical and mental abilities and limitations of workers. Ergonomics stresses fitting the job to the worker as compared to the more usual practice of obliging the worker to fit the job. The aim of ergonomics is to optimize, first and foremost, the comfort of the worker, as well as his or her health, safety and efficiency. Applying ergonomic principles, however, is beneficial not only to workers. The benefits to employers are equally significant and are both visible and measurable in terms of increased efficiency, higher productivity, reduced lost work time due to illness or injury and decreased insurance costs, to name just a few advantages.*

*A workplace philosophy which encourages learning about and applying ergonomic principles at work can be engendered by the adoption*

*of sound guidelines and even better, by national legislation. Workplace guidelines on ergonomics exist in most developed countries, but to date, with the exception of existing legislation in Belgium and Sweden, no other country has legislation on the application of ergonomics in the workplace. In Europe, the European Commission (EC) has formulated a number of Directives concerning ergonomic issues (for example, Directive 90/269 on Manual Handling of Loads, and Directive 89/654 on Workplaces), however it is up to the member States of the EC to transpose these Directives into national law. With the exception of Belgium and Sweden, thus far no member State of the European Commission has taken this forward-looking step. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has formulated a number of ergonomic standards which have been adopted by some countries but which are not found within the framework of legislation specifically on ergonomics.*



Jacques Maillard

**Bad vibes: Hammering on ergonomics is better.**

year were associated with repeated trauma, affecting some 282,000 workers or 62 per cent of total private industry illness cases in the United States.

● A 1994 report of the Health and Safety Commission of the United Kingdom showed that during the financial year 1993-94, there were at least 107,000 people in the UK alone suffering from musculoskeletal symptoms brought on as a direct result of poor workplace design. Half of these symptoms caused an absence of three or more days off work. The cost of these to British industry, including lost output, medical treatment and individual suffering, exceeded UK£ 90 million (US\$ 144 million). The total cost of musculoskeletal symptoms to British industry is conservatively estimated at UK£ 25 billion (US\$ 40 billion) a year.

These disorders, however, should not be considered as a hazard of only modern day life. According to the 1994 issue of Euro Review on Research in Health and Safety at Work, Repetitive Strain Injuries were reported in the former East Germany as early as 1952, with between one and two thousand cases documented every year thereafter.

### **Carpal tunnel syndrome documented most frequently**

The most frequently documented Repetitive Strain Injury is carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), today a compensable occupational disease in many countries. CTS occurs when the median nerve (a major nerve in the wrist) is unable to

function adequately because of pressure caused by repeated finger motions and/or bent wrists. Symptoms can include numbness, pain and/or tingling in the thumb and fingers, a burning feeling in the hands or forearms, a dry, non-sweaty palm, reduced strength of the hand noticeable by the inability to open jars, to lift or hold objects, and discomfort in the arms, shoulder or neck.

Some of the symptoms may occur during the night rather than during the day. Extreme cases can result in permanent disability due to a complete inability to use the wrists in performing even a task as simple as typing or holding an object in the hand. The disease is often suffered by workers who spend long hours using computers, particularly where the computer workstation is not adequately adjusted according to the size of the user, by workers who process meat or poultry, supermarket check-out workers who use electronic scanners, as well as by other workers who perform repetitive tasks. Working with vibrating hand tools also increases the risk of CTS. Wrist-intensive activities at home, such as gardening or painting, can greatly exacerbate CTS or other repetitive strain injuries.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, every worker suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome loses more than 30 days of work. This is longer than absences from amputations and fractures. The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates the annual cost of these injuries to be along the line of \$100 million.

### **“Ergonomic philosophy” pays off**

Preventing eyestrain, headaches and musculoskeletal disorders and obtaining optimal performance can be achieved when equipment, workstations, products and working methods are designed according to human capabilities and limitations, that is by applying the principles of ergonomics. The costs of *ignoring* these basic principles include:

- Injuries and occupational diseases (including RSI, CTD and RMI)
- Increased absenteeism
- Higher medical and insurance costs
- Increased probability of accidents and errors
- Higher turnover of workers
- Less production output
- Lawsuits
- Low-quality work
- Less spare capacity to deal with emergencies.

The adoption of an ergonomic philos-

ophy in the workplace has a proven track record. For example, an ergonomic evaluation and redesign were carried out in Monstera, Sweden at the Park and Molstad school involving the janitorial staff. The project, which was implemented from 1991 to the end of 1992, obtained results which proved how beneficial an ergonomic policy can be. In this case, the results indicated a reduction in sick leave from 44.1 to 10.1 days per employee per year. In 1992, the savings to the employer and social insurance system amounted to SEK 417,000 (US\$57,000). Productivity rose by 150 personnel days and job satisfaction among workers increased.

In the case of the Norwegian State Institute which studied the incidence of back discomfort among office workers, the ergonomic improvements made to workstation layouts and seating for the workers in the study cut back-related absenteeism by half, reduced turnover from 40 per cent to 5 per cent, and 40 per cent of the workers on disability leave returned to work. The importance of these data is underscored when one takes into account the fact that muscular soreness is the second greatest cause of absenteeism, after the common cold.

### **The ILO response: New publication – *Ergonomic checkpoints***

Identifying ergonomic risk factors (defined as any imbalance between the worker and the work environment which results in extra demands on the worker) is essential for preventing ergonomic-related injuries and illnesses. The first step in this process is performing a survey of the workplace using an ergonomics checklist which will allow one to perform a superficial audit of the workplace. It may contain questions such as:

1. Are carts, hand-trucks, and other wheeled devices or rollers used when moving materials?
2. Are workers trained before allowing them to use power tools?
3. Are workers consulted when there are changes in production and when improvements are needed for safer, easier and more efficient work?

Once an ergonomics checklist is employed and risk factors identified, a set of corrective actions should be outlined. Such actions might include ergonomic design changes in tools, products, process and work environment. Corrective

actions also address the training needs of all parties to identify their prevention responsibilities and to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to implement corrections.

Many ergonomics checklists are available but for most of them to be effective they have to be used by someone with a firm knowledge of ergonomics. This is where a recent (1996) publication by the International Labour Office differs.

Due to its simple and easy to understand format, the manual *Ergonomic checkpoints*, developed jointly with the International Ergonomics Association, can be used by managers, supervisors, workers and trainers, as well as ergonomics specialists, who wish to learn about low cost practical solutions to ergonomic problems which can be applied locally.

The manual's 128 checkpoints provide sound guidance for filtering and disseminating ergonomically sound workplace improvements. An ergonomics checklist is included in the book. The solutions provided have the advantage of being fully illustrated to demonstrate good working practice. This manual should prove to be an invaluable asset in any workplace and will surely contribute to improving both working conditions and productivity.\*

Today the high costs which result from the non-application of ergonomic principles in workplaces are causing policy makers, employers and workers to broaden their perspectives. There is incontestable evidence that fitting jobs to the workers who perform them, designing and redesigning jobs taking into consideration human factors, including both capabilities and limitations, yields positive results. Ultimately eliminating the human suffering experienced by workers and their families as well as minimizing the financial burden borne by employers and insurance schemes is an attainable goal. Waiting for symptoms to appear instead of preventing them will only result in further injuring and crippling millions of workers in the global work force.



*Written by Ellen Roskam, Training Officer and Pavan Baichoo, Stagiaire, Occupational Safety and Health Branch, International Labour Office, Geneva.*

*\*The manual costs 25 Swiss francs and can be ordered from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, tel: +4122/799-6111, fax: +4122/798-6358. Since it was first published in English in 1996, the ILO has licensed translations into numerous languages including Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, Farsi, French, Japanese, Korean, Polish and Thai. Translations into other languages are encouraged and welcomed by the ILO. The necessary license can be obtained, free-of-charge, by contacting the ILO Publications Bureau at the above address.*

## **No more "Hang ups"**

# New lo

***Forest work is a dangerous business. Every year, thousands of forest workers die or are maimed due to unsafe practices and the danger of working with huge, falling trees. In addition, unsafe forestry also has an environmental impact, causing more damage than necessary to trees which survive the loggers' chain saws. An ILO Code of Practice marks a new departure.***

**T**o most people forests are idyllic places for recreation, or instill awe with their beauty and majestic trees. But to more than three million people forests are also tough, dangerous places to work.

In practically all countries, forest work, in particular tree harvesting is, along with mining and construction, one of the most dangerous occupations. Accident frequencies and fatality rates are two to three times higher than those recorded in other industrial sectors. In the United States, for example, the probability of loggers getting killed on the job during a 25-year career is 1 in 20.

While the dangers of forestry work have gone largely unnoticed in media and public opinion, the forest industry



and “Widow-makers”

# forest code aims to protect workers and the environment

has been widely criticized for its adverse environmental impact. More and more environmentalists, governments and employers are realizing that caring for forests and forest workers go together. Bad practices for felling trees and extracting timber, for example, cause substantial and unnecessary damage and increase the risk of accidents. Conversely, careful control of felling direction saves young growth and reduces damage to forest soils and water courses, as well as protecting workers. Thus, a skilled and stable workforce is crucial to protect forests and workers alike. As this insight takes hold, approaches are needed that will promote putting it into practice.

In an effort to provide guidance to governments, industry and trade unions in ILO member States on ways of making safety and health compatible with environmental protection and productivity in forestry, the International Labour Organization (ILO) gathered 30 forest experts from 10 countries at its Geneva headquarters from 23-30 September with the purpose of adopting a Code of Practice\* on forest work. Major forest countries to be represented included Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Gabon, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and the United States.

## Hazards in forest work

In spite of the efforts of often dedicated individuals, the record is still sobering in most countries as can be seen in figure hereunder. In some countries, such as in eastern Europe, the safety situation is in fact getting worse.

With a wry sense of humour forest workers refer to certain trees as “widow makers”. These are trees that were to be felled but got intercepted by the crowns of other trees and are “hung up”. Attempts to bring such trees down without suitable equipment and well-developed skills are often fatal.

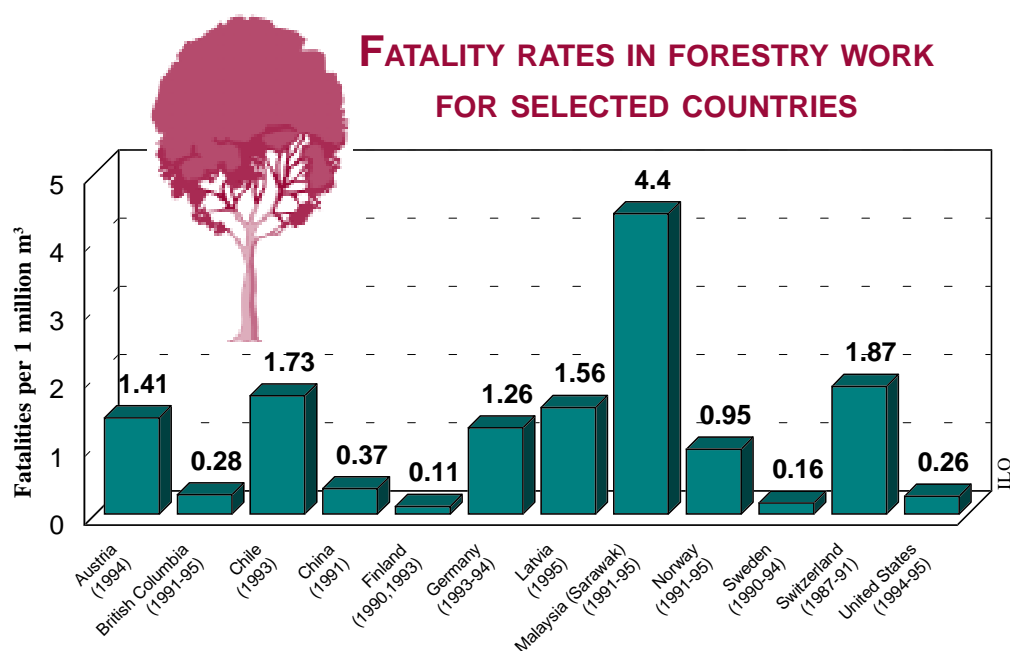
Even in expert hands, the chain saw is potentially one of the most dangerous tools ever invented. While cuts and open wounds are the most common type of injury in chain-saw work, chain saw use can also cause deafness and other physical damage from vibrations. Under full load, a chain saw produces a level of noise which may cause irreversible damage to unprotected ears after only 15 minutes. Experts say the chain saw is likely to remain the key danger in the forests. Already used universally in developed countries, its use in developing countries is expected to increase as plantations account for an increasing share of the wood harvest.

In addition to hearing damage and vibration, physical degeneration from heavy work and exposure to extremes of climate force many forest workers to retire prematurely or to change jobs. Modern machines such as tree harvesters which can grab, fell and debranch a whole

tree without a worker having to touch the tree or even having to be on the ground, have significantly reduced accident rates and reduced the need for human muscle. But machines alone are not the solution. Unless they are well-designed as workplaces and used by skilled crews according to ergonomic shift schedules, even the most modern machines can lead to incapacitating injuries. Most of these occupational diseases develop slowly and may not surface until some time after the damage has been done.

## The new Code of Practice

What can be done to make the forests safer, both in developed and developing countries? The new Code of Practice discussed at the September Meeting of Experts on Safety and Health in Forest Work has been designed to provide practical guidelines for protecting forest workers.



The Code draws on international experience in recent years which suggests that the traditional exclusive focus on technical aspects such as machine design and on the workplace was bound to fail. Forests are not factories with a stable working environment and highly standardized work processes. Making this difficult environment safer requires cooperation of all involved in the sector. The Code outlines a legal and institutional framework for safety in forestry in which governments, employers, workers, forest owners, labour inspectorates, machine manufacturers and others have specific roles to play. One of the most critical ingredients is a training system which will ensure access by the entire workforce, and lead to demonstrated and certified levels of skill.

### **Incorporating safety into overall management**

The key to safety is the company, its management and the cooperation of its workforce. The strategy advocated by the draft Code is to perceive safety as a management task at the same level as other company objectives which should not be dealt with by a separate structure and its own set of rules, but fully incorporated into overall management.

Only with a safety management system, a skilled workforce and professional work planning and organization in place will technical measures have an impact and a safety culture be developed.

### **“Safety makes dollars and sense”**

The development of the Code is not an isolated activity by the ILO, but rather part of an ongoing programme of advisory services and technical cooperation assisting ILO constituents in the forestry service to improve their safety records. In Fiji, Chile, Indonesia and Zimbabwe for example, the ILO is working with the forestry sector to generate national Codes of Forest Practices which integrate environmental protection, safety and productivity. The new Code will serve as a reference point for initiatives by countries or individual companies. Once the ILO Governing body adopts the Code, a campaign is expected to be launched to make the Code better known and to apply it. Safety is not a moral issue alone. In some countries accident insurance premiums are a major cost factor, and losses in direct and indirect costs of accidents far exceed those of



Peter Poschen

### **LIFE IN THE WOODS: IT'S PRETTY TOUGH**

*Working in the woods has given Hamonagan deep lines in his face, making him look older than his 30 years. Between 6:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day, he fells trees, earning 700 Rupees per cubic metre, good money in Indonesia. Pay is on piece-rates, without allowances for the quality of the logs and other forest or safety work. So, the more he cuts, the more he earns for himself and his family.*

*At 165 cm. and 55 kg., he weighs slightly more than three times his chainsaw, and is less than twice as tall as its 90 cm. guide bar. The chain saw is dangerous; without essential safety devices like a chain break and catcher, and poor vibration dampening, it would be illegal in most industrialized countries. The company issues him a hard hat; steel-toed boots, ear plugs, visor and cut-protecting trousers he would*

*have to buy himself, but he prefers to save the money and take the risk. The trees he cuts are huge: balancing precariously on a scaffold two metres up the trunk, he and his helper must jump 1.5 metres to the ground as 50-metres and 25 tons of wood crash to the earth with a shudder. It's no use running away: as the tree falls, branches break and rain from the sky. Better to stay put and look out for them.*

*With ten years experience, Hamonagan is an "old-timer". He is also very lucky, claiming never to have had a serious accident. Some of his co-workers have not been so fortunate; the company had ten logging fatalities last year among 700 employees. If Hamonagan is injured, though, few would know. Chainsaw operators like him work for contractors, so their accidents are not even recorded.*

prevention programmes. Backed up with research evidence, one of the arguments will be that “safety makes dollars and sense”.

Says Kari Tapiola, Deputy Director-General at the ILO: “Overall, the Code of Practice should help to create better conditions and higher productivity in the industry. Safety and training must be made an integral part of company rules and management. Also, it is natural to merge safety and health and the environment together. Our hope is that this new Code of Practice will provide the means to do just that.” □

\*Ref: Draft Code of Practice on safety and health in forest work, Geneva, 1997, International Labour Office, Geneva.

## SAFETY AND HEALTH IN FORESTRY WORK: MAIN POINTS OF THE NEW CODE

**The new draft Code of Safety and Health in Forestry Work is based on state-of-the-art international experience and designed to be relevant and practicable in most countries and enterprises. Important new features are:**

- the Code covers all types of forest workers, including groups with higher than average accident frequencies like contractors, self-employed and forest farmers;

- safety is not an afterthought and it cannot be retrofitted; the Code does not focus on technical measures and safe performance but emphasizes that safety starts at the top at the national level, but par-

ticularly in the enterprise and at the worksite;

- it outlines an enterprise safety management system that integrates safety into overall enterprise management;

- it provides for training and mandatory skill certification as a key condition for safety in forestry;

- it offers detailed technical guidance on forest harvesting and some high-risk operations like tree climbing, harvesting of windfall and forest-fire fighting which are intended to help countries and companies which have no forestry specific regulations.

## Half light in the Norwegian Arctic

*Making the ILO Convention on indigenous people work*

# Saami people seek their due

***The Saami people living in Norway's arctic regions are reluctant to trap themselves in folkloric stereotypes, such as reindeer herders. Eager to build a new society, Saami leaders are focusing their attention on gaining meaningful influence over the wealth of their traditional lands and waters. One means available to them has been ILO Convention No. 169. Journalist Jo-Anne Velin\* explains how the Saami are using this as a political tool.***

In the high Norwegian Arctic, the descendants of the indigenous Saami hunters, fishermen and reindeer herders have been drifting away from the backbreaking, land-based occupations of their ancestors. Still, the people whose ancestors have inhabited those regions for hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years have resisted massive assimilation by the dominant Norwegian culture.

“During the 18th century,” says Ole Henrik Magga, president of the Saami Parliament, an elected, consultative body without law-making powers, “the Norwegian government installed itself as a

private landowner in the Saami area, and sent in colonists from the south with paper in their hands telling them that this is your land from this valley to this river, and this mountain and so on, without asking the Saami.”

About 80,000 Saamis live across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. Now, eager to build a new Saami society with the resources provided by the land and the State, Saami leaders are focusing their attention on gaining meaningful influence over the wealth of their traditional lands and waters.

In particular during this century, the relationship between Saamis and the Norwegian government has been volatile, partly in reaction to aggressive assimilation policies which began a century before. Twenty years ago, massive demonstrations against construction of a hydroelectric dam on the northern Alta River in traditional Saami lands catalyzed the production of a landmark report – tabled only this winter in the Norwegian Parliament – on the legal and cultural basis of Saami land claims. Though its recommendations aren't legally binding, they reflect the obligations





Rune Eraker



Rune Eraker

### Norway's Saami people bridge tradition and modernity.

Norway has agreed to honour under international law.

### Norway, the Saami and ILO Convention No. 169

Norway – home to a third of today's Saami population – was the first country to ratify the only current international legal convention articulating indigenous and tribal peoples' rights, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

By ratifying Convention No.169, Norway indicated its support for the

principle of indigenous peoples' control over and access to traditional lands and waters, and their right to benefit from the exploitation of natural resources contained on or in those lands and waters.

According to John Henriksen, a legal expert on indigenous and tribal peoples' rights, the Saamis in Norway have used the ILO Convention more effectively as a political rather than a legal tool.

For example, Henriksen says, to overcome one of the built-in weaknesses of the Convention – that indigenous groups don't have direct access to the ILO's reporting procedures (only gov-

ernments, employers' and workers' groups do under the ILO's procedures applicable to all Conventions) – the Saamis have negotiated a new agreement with the Norwegian Parliament, "that allows the Saami Parliament to report directly to the ILO on how Norway implements the Convention. The ILO has agreed to accept this."

If the indigenous and tribal peoples don't find a natural fit in the ILO's negotiating structure, how did their legal struggle end up there in the first place?

According to Lee Swepston, Chief of the Equality and Human Rights Coordination Branch of the ILO in Geneva, the ILO's involvement in the situation of indigenous and tribal peoples began in the 1920s, through concern over the labour conditions of, as they were called at the time, "native peoples" in European colonies in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In the early 1950s, after leading a multi-organizational project with the new United Nations agencies to improve the working and living conditions of Andean indigenous peoples, the ILO was asked by the UN to apply its experience in setting international standards to adopt a Convention on indigenous peoples.

The ILO has now produced two Conventions concerning indigenous and tribal peoples. The first – adopted in 1957 – was based on the assumption that indigenous and tribal populations would eventually be assimilated by the dominant non-indigenous culture. But the second – a complete revision of the first, numbered 169 and adopted three decades later – turned this presumption on its head, reflecting a revolution in how these peoples thought of themselves and how they expressed this as a right to concrete means of cultural and economic survival. This was achieved mostly by supporting indigenous access to and control over traditional lands and waters, and benefiting from their natural resources.

Nevertheless, the Convention has been criticized by some indigenous leaders as not going far enough. They say the Convention fails to spell out how, precisely, control, access, and benefit can work in real life. And it fails to meet the aspirations of some indigenous leaders for a recognition of the right to self-determination, they claim.

According to Ted Moses, Cree ambassador to the UN for the Canada-based Grand Council of the Crees, "Some (indigenous groups) like 169 because it's like a stepping stone in the direction of recognizing indigenous rights. But one of 169's weaknesses, is in how it uses the term 'peoples'. The ILO has

qualified the meaning of the term 'peoples' to ensure it doesn't automatically imply the right to self-determination."

Sweepston points out in reply, that "Convention No. 169 does not qualify the term 'peoples' at all it merely leaves up to the United Nations the decision as to whether this term's use in the ILO Convention implies a right to self-determination. That door remains open, but it is not for the ILO to decide where it leads."

To date only ten countries have ratified Convention No.169, though it is close to ratification by several others. With the exception of Norway and Denmark, all which have already ratified it are in Latin America.

In a political environment where just the idea of indigenous and collective rights remains hotly debated, the ILO's involvement, according to Sweepston, "means offering States an opportunity to support and take on international legal obligations to protect indigenous peoples."

But indigenous rights lawyer Henriksen suggests the convention's real utility depends on how far dialogue between the indigenous people and the State has already progressed.

"In countries where you already have a certain level of dialogue, then such an instrument will just facilitate this dialogue by setting standards agreed to by both sides," Henriksen says. "In countries where you don't have such a dialogue, then such a Convention isn't as useful as a political tool. In principle, the Convention should be as useful in Mexico or Guatemala as it is in Norway."

Thus, the Norwegian case of a consensus-building democratic political system which can slowly be made to support indigenous peoples' rights, remains quite rare on a planet inhabited by at least 5,000 different indigenous groups. In Sweepston's view, the Norwegian example is not unique. In the two countries Henriksen mentioned, he says, Convention No.169 has stimulated a dialogue between indigenous peoples and governments. Thus, Norway's progress, and the use of this Convention as a tool, are hopeful precedents. □

\*Jo-Anne Velin is a freelance reporter based in Europe specializing in human rights and humanitarian issues. Her new reference book, "Reporting Human Rights and Humanitarian Stories: A Journalists' Handbook" has just been published in association with Human Rights Internet (Canada) and the International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting (Switzerland). For information on the handbook contact 101737.2172@compuserve.com or write J. Velin, 20c Ave. Rene Lyr, Brussels B-1180, Belgium.

## An analysis of independent work in Quebec

# Self-employed workers call for the same social protection as wage earners

**Last May the government of Quebec (Canada) published an *Analysis of independent work*, the first exhaustive study on independent work in Quebec. This document was followed up by a day of debate during which self-employed workers proposed that all workers, regardless of their status, should enjoy the same social protection. Journalist Jean-Sébastien Marsan provides this report on the resurgence of independent work in Quebec.**

### Characteristics of self-employed workers

The *Analysis of independent work* states that at the time of the 1991 census, 304,955 workers in Quebec were self-employed, i.e., roughly 12 per cent of the labour force. Between 1990 and 1995, 55 per cent of all new jobs created in Quebec were created by the self-employed.

In 1991, mainly men (75 per cent) and baby-boomers (57 per cent) are aged between 35 and 54) dominated this form of work. The majority are highly dedicated to their work (putting in an average of 43 hours per week as opposed to 37 for wage earners) and earn relatively little. A self-employed worker with no employees, working a 42-hour week, earned Canadian \$24,740 as opposed to Canadian \$25,820 for a wage earner putting in 37 hours.

The highest concentrations of self-employed workers can be found in entertainment, leisure activities and services for private individuals (16.2 per cent), agriculture (15.74 per cent), the

retail trade (13.9 per cent), services for enterprises (11.93 per cent) and construction (10.37 per cent).

### Legal definitions

In Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada, there is no official definition of independent work. The author of *Analysis* points out that "a person can perfectly well be considered as a wage earner in civil and labour law, and as a self-employed worker in fiscal law"! This permits user enterprises to circumvent labour law by granting contracts to self-employed workers.

In this connection, the study focuses on the precarious situation facing self-employed workers dependent on one single user enterprise to give them work. A typical example is of a self-employed worker working full-time for an enterprise which demands exclusivity but refuses to grant him wage-earner status; if this "self-employed worker" complains he risks losing his "customer", his only source of income. This situation of dependency closely resembles that of wage-earners.

### Legal and social protection

Self-employed workers are entitled to a less-closely woven safety net than wage earners, as the laws that form the mesh are adopted on the basis of permanent, full-time, life-long wage employment.

A self-employed worker who believes he has the right to the status of wage earner may lodge a complaint by virtue of the provisions of the *Labour Standards Act* and the *Occupational Acci-*



**Independents do their homework.**

Keystone

*dents and Diseases Act*, which protect all employees. In contrast, the *Labour Code*, which establishes the regulations governing employer-worker relations, makes no mention of self-employed workers. A derogation from the *Labour Code* can only be made for self-employed artists with trade-union representation.

Self-employed workers cannot contribute to employment insurance (the new name for unemployment insurance), which is reserved exclusively for wage-earners. They are only entitled to income security – a last resort form of assistance the sum of which does not even reach the poverty line. In the words of *Analysis*, “the dramatic rise of independent

work in our society is increasingly highlighting the disparities in the treatment of different categories of workers”.

Lastly, a poll on the entrepreneurial development of self-employed workers illustrates the difference between “voluntary” and “involuntary” entrepreneurs. Over 50 per cent of the self-employed workers questioned said they had freely chosen this form of work. In contrast, 24.9 per cent of respondents had become self-employed workers against their will after the loss of their job or a period of long-term unemployment; 3.21 per cent of those polled had been obliged to take up independent work following a decision by their former employer to convert their contract of services into one for services. As regards other reasons given, 13.25 per cent of respondents said that independent work was the usual form of work chosen by their profession.

*Analysis*, while warmly welcomed, does have certain shortcomings. It provides no information on the working conditions of self-employed workers, and of homeworkers in particular, and it fails to describe the culture of independent work and its impact on family life, social cohesion, the role of the State, etc.

### **Rewarding consultation**

*Analysis* would not have got off the ground without the Saint-Denis Advisory Group (GCSG), a Montreal-based

non-profit-making organization, which works with self-employed workers. In May 1996 the GCSG set up a task force on independent work (CTTA) made up of about 30 members representing government, trade union confederations, an employers’ association, financial institutions, teaching institutions, community concerns, etc. *Analysis* was produced in collaboration with the CTTA and with the financial backing of the Quebec government.

The GCSG and the CTTA could have contented themselves with simply publishing the document, and as we are all well aware, the fate of many such studies is just to sit on a shelf gathering dust. But *Analysis* was followed by an awareness day, with self-employed workers playing an important role. Over 250 persons attended this event in Montreal on 4 June this year.

It emerged from this “One-day forum on independent work” that self-employed workers would like to see legislation amended in such a way as to enable all workers to benefit from the same social protection. The proposal was put forward that self-employed workers in a servant-master relationship with a single user enterprise should be made wage-earners given that is precisely what they are. Furthermore, there is a clear need for a universal definition of independent work; there was widespread consensus for the definition proposed in *Analysis* (see box).

The Minister of State for Employment and Solidarity of Quebec, Louise Harel, took the opportunity to announce that an inter-ministerial committee had been set up, which had begun its work on 10 June 1997, and which would present its plan of action during the autumn.

The central issue in this area is to establish the mechanisms for involvement in a market of goods and services which is developing outside the boundaries of State-regulated employment. While waiting for the government to make a move, the CTTA is pursuing its activities, placing particular emphasis on the search for solutions. □

### **CONTRACT LABOUR DISCUSSED AT CONFERENCE**

*An initial discussion on contract labour was held at this year’s session of the International Labour Conference which opened the way towards the possible adoption of a Convention and Recommendation next year. The proposed Convention would focus on ensuring adequate protection for contract workers.*

*For a more complete summary of the discussion and the issues, please see the article on the International Labour Conference on page 17.*

\*Jean-Sébastien Marsan is a journalist based in Quebec, Canada. He provided this report for World of Work.



# “Social finance” in a globalizing world

***As globalization continues to increase, so does the amount of money being pushed around the globe. Yet, while hundreds of billions of dollars surge electronically across national boundaries each day, more than one billion of the world's destitute still eke out daily subsistence on less than US\$ 1. In an effort to address this anomaly, the ILO has created a “Social Finance Unit”. This brief explains how the ILO Social Finance Unit is helping globalization's “have-nots” gain access to financial services.***

It has become increasingly clear in recent years that globalization and the liberalization of trade and financial markets have fostered the displacement of jobs, increasing pressures on labour mobility within and among countries. The 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen recognized the links between the financial sector and social concerns. In February of this year, the **Microcredit Summit** in Washington, DC made a strong case for the use of microfinance and very small loans to help poor people to create enterprises and employment.

The ILO has long recognized the importance of financial sector issues. The ILO's Social Finance Unit (SFU) works in partnership with governments, employers, trade unionists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and investors to find ways of raising the living and social standards of poor people. It aims at helping create “level playing field” conditions for all market participants and facilitating the entry of a variety of disadvantaged people and groups into the mainstream of economic activities. In addition, it seeks to strengthen the capacity of decision-makers to design and implement policies which optimize the social benefits of finance for small- and micro-enterprises.

## How the SFU Works

The Social Finance Unit is part of the Enterprise and Cooperative Development Department at ILO Headquarters in Geneva. It works with practically all major technical departments and has close liaison with the ILO's Multidisciplinary Advisory teams. Major work items are debt slavery and bonded child labour, problems faced by rural and poor women in

getting funds, microcredit, and informal social security protection.

The Social Finance Unit offers ILO constituents information, advice and support on social finance issues; for example, guidelines and checklists on the management of financial instruments; it also carries out research and technical cooperation projects. Some examples:

- **Advisory services:** Together with the Central Bank of West African States

exchange of information, data collection, training and advisory services. The Social Finance Unit has also advised the Chinese Government on the use of guarantee funds for small enterprise development, based on the lessons learned in several ILO guarantee-fund projects.

- **Research:** A major research program has recently been started to assess the impact of financial-sector reform on the poor and their access to financial services in Ghana, Benin, Senegal and Zimbabwe. Another study is trying to determine the role of various kinds of collateral in lending to small- and micro-enterprises and new entrants. The purpose is to inform financial institutions about the comparative costs and risks of different ways of securing small-business loans. A project in Uganda and Nepal is trying to assess the impact on household income and assets of micro-loans as compared with conditional grants.

- **Technical Cooperation:** The ILO has helped the Association of Cambodian Local Economic Development Agencies (ACLEDA) to become a fully self-financing organization, offering financial services and business training to its micro- and small entrepreneur clients, 90 per cent of whom are women. In Zimbabwe, the ILO is helping to create, within the Ministry of Labour, a viable and sustainable fund mechanism, the Social Development Fund, for the financing of very small start-up ventures. In Madagascar, it is strengthening a national professional association to organize savings and credit associations.

- **International exchange:** The Social Finance Unit represents the ILO at the World Bank's Consultative Group



(BCEAO), the ILO runs a program to promote decentralised financial systems such as village banks and women savings groups. The program tries to bring together monetary authorities and grassroots initiatives in microfinance through the



to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) and serves as the ILO focal point for all follow-up to the Washington Microcredit Summit. In 1997, the ILO also hosted the annual meeting of the Donors' Working Group on Financial Sector Development which comprises some 30 donor agencies and informally discusses financial sector issues from a development perspective.

### **Action programme "Social investments: Job creation through innovative financial instruments"**

In addition to these activities the Social Finance Unit has also developed, in response to demands from constituents in industrialized countries, an Action Programme for the ILO's Programme and Budget 1998-99.

As the reduction of unemployment remains a major challenge for governments in most OECD countries, there is growing interest in private, non-commercial initiatives to create jobs for the long-term unemployed. Some are initiated by trade unions (Unity Trust Bank, UK), by the government (ADIE, France), by employers, by credit unions (Van City, Canada) or simply by concerned individuals (South Shore Bank, USA). Instruments range from the provision of credit, guarantees, risk capital to technical assistance. But their objective is the same: create sustainable jobs and contribute to economic and social development in the local community.

The Action Programme will prepare a series of surveys and case studies in the USA, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Germany. National consultation meetings will bring together the social partners, public authorities and others. The expected outcome is information on what precisely the net contribution of these institutions is to job creation, and whether they displace jobs and complement the efforts of public job creation programmes. This will help the ILO's constituents in assessing whether and how they can best support these initiatives. □

*Based on the brochure "The social dimension of finance: Banking for poverty alleviation, employment and social integration", prepared by the Enterprise and Co-operative Development Department of the ILO. For copies of the brochure, or more information, contact the department at the ILO, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, Tel: +4122/799-6070, Fax: +4122/799-7691, E-mail, ENTERPRISE@ilo.org or see the Enterprise section on <http://www.ilo.org>.*

## **GLOBALIZATION IS INEVITABLE, SAYS ILO ECONOMIC EXPERT**

*In a recent interview, ILO economic expert Eddy Lee says globalization is synonymous with competitiveness. Still, the world's economies will need to adopt "anticipatory policies" to meet the challenge, including provisions for retraining, providing assistance to job seekers and fiscal incentives for attracting new investments. Below is the report/interview carried recently by the German Press Agency (DPA).*

"Industrialized countries and their enterprises have no other choice than accepting globalization if they want to stay competitive, says the leading economic expert of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Eddy Lee.

"What is the alternative? Slow down the globalization process, protect domestic industries? All studies prove that such an approach is much more expensive for society in the long run", says Mr. Lee. He opts for an anticipatory policy able to foresee the dying of unprofitable industries and to prepare for the new situation by retraining programmes, help for job seekers, or fiscal incentives to attract new investments in a particular region. On the other side, workers should be more mobile than in the past.

"If production is concentrated in a particular region, the consequences of a transfer of activities can be a great shock, but from the macroeconomic viewpoint, this process has its advantages. The number of workers concerned is relatively low compared to the advantages of such a transfer," comments Mr. Lee. "In the end, people will have to pay if unprofitable industries are protected in the form of

enormous subsidies or higher consumer prices for products."

Mr. Lee refutes arguments that the transfer of certain industries would soon lose their attractiveness because of the awakening self-consciousness of workers in the emerging industrialized countries. Research shows that enterprises are not unduly concerned by trade union activities. Many enterprises have already reckoned with rising wages in South East Asia. According to Mr. Lee, the process in Asia is far from showing signs of fatigue, adding: "New low-wage countries are entering the scene: the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and even India."

In countries like Malaysia the comparative advantage of low wages could be maintained for another 10 to 15 years, Mr. Lee believes. What's more, enterprises are profiting from the rising training standards in traditional low-wage countries and may now find highly trained specialists in countries where such workers were impossible to find before. Research and development units of Western enterprises are also working in Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan. Overall, wage differences in these activities are still important enough to attract such investments.

Simple, but labour-intensive processes are also being transferred to the new low-wage countries. "This is a logical minimization of costs and results from the need to remain competitive. The strategy consists of moving to the next cheapest country," Mr. Lee says.

"In the end, the transfer to low-wage countries is rather advantageous: consumers profit from cheaper imports, industry gains because it imports machinery and other parts and receives profits and license fees. Only some of the workers will find themselves on the loser's side. The problem is finding the right way to compensate the losers."

# Conference discusses labour rights, contract workers, SMEs

*Adopts employment agency standards, revises Constitution*

**The 85<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference was marked by extensive discussions on a set of innovative proposals submitted to it by the Director-General of the ILO. The Conference also adopted a new international Convention on private employment agencies designed to increase the efficiency of labour markets and protect job-seekers using their services.**

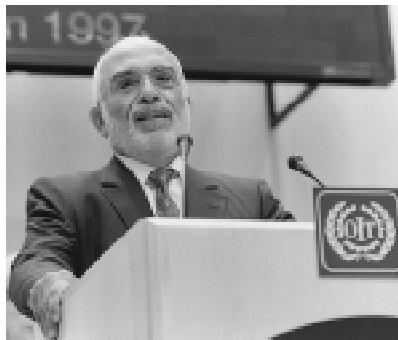
**“I**t is the ILO’s standards that will determine the place that the organization occupies in the coming century,” ILO Director-General Michel Hansenne said in his opening address to the packed plenary session of the Labour Conference, “because it is through them that the ILO can make its most valuable contribution to a world economic system based on the liberalization of trade and genuine multilateralism.”

Summing up three years of debate, the most far-reaching of Hansenne’s proposals aims to ensure universal respect for fundamental workers rights in the global economy. This would be addressed through the adoption in 1998 of a solemn “Declaration” on the subject.

As a result of the Conference discussion, the Governing Body agreed in June to consider at its 270th Session the possibility of including an additional item relating to such a Declaration on the agenda of the 1998 Conference.

***“I am not talking of modifying the mandate of our Organization, but rather enabling it to carry out that mandate fully so as to achieve its objectives and live up to the expectations placed in it.” Michel Hansenne, ILC 85***

In a formal reply to the debate, delivered on 18 June, Hansenne stated: “At the conclusion of the discussions, it seems to me that if a certain number of countries has expressed or made known their lack of agreement with this initiative ... a fairly broad consensus has emerged in the Government Group as well as in



**His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan**

*“Our world witnesses a new era today – a real revolution in all forms, that of science and globalization...Such a revolution comes at a time when the world still suffers from so many worrying social and labour problems: increasing poverty, rising unemployment, weakening means of production, the ever-increasing requirements of vocational and technological training, worsening conditions of employment, issues of labour immigration, employment of women, children and youths, as well*

*as those with special needs, and numerous other issues at the workplace. Additionally, those problems prevailing in developing and the less-developed countries in particular – such as chronic slow growth, scarce natural resources, low financial and investment capabilities, their ever-increasing indebtedness, as well as the dangers of isolationism, inequality and, finally, their economic and political marginalization – all affect their adjustment and integration into the world economy.*

*“In view of such changes, it has become clear that nations as well as international organizations have embarked on an unfair competition, leading to a situation where economic might wins over social matters, thus adversely affecting the gains of development and social welfare that were achieved by millions of workers in the world through hard work over so many years. In this respect I would like to emphasize that democratic dialogue among the concerned parties is the only course whereby conflict can give way to harmony leading to a just, balanced and fair solution to all problems.*

the Employer and Worker Groups as to the principle of the consideration of such a text and the mechanism for promotion which will accompany it”.

Hansenne said the ILO Governing Body would “continue its work on this subject,” adding that the proposals which “will be submitted to the Governing Body in November on the Declaration and its implementation mechanism should provide a sufficiently consensual basis, and should reflect the various sensitivities and make it possible for this vital question to be included on the agenda of the 1998 Conference”.

## **New Convention on private employment agencies**

By 347 votes in favour, 5 votes against and 30 abstentions, the Conference adopted a new international Convention on private employment agencies designed to allow their operation, increase the efficiency of labour markets and protect job-seekers using their services.

The Private Employment Agencies Convention and Recommendation, 1997, is an ambitious attempt to modernize existing practices in line with the realities of today’s labour markets, help



*"... (T)he notion that we have two worlds is a foolish notion. We have one world. We describe it in terms of developed and developing but they are inextricably linked, and proudly linked, in economics, in environment, in health, in migration, in crime, in drugs, in food, in war. There is no way of absenting yourself from that world. What we are seeking to do in the Bank, as you are seeking to do, is to try and recognize that the rights of people around the world are dear wherever they are, and that the issue of equity and social justice is an issue that we face wherever we are.*

*"One thing which we have come to in recent years is an absolute recognition that, unless you have sound social policies, you cannot have sound economic policies. That is crystal clear. Unless you have a solid base with the people, unless you are concerned with the rights of the individual, unless you are concerned with elements of social responsibility and social justice, you cannot have peace and you cannot have safe investing. That is a very straightforward conclusion, and it guides us and it guides the work of the Bank. And in that sense we coalesce and complement very significantly many of the things with which you are dealing in your Organization on a day-to-day basis.*

*"We respect the expertise of the ILO, we build on it and we have worked together with you... I am very*



**James Wolfensohn,  
President, World Bank**

**"Together we need to face the future of a world which is getting bigger, where poverty is increasing and where the environment is deteriorating; and we need to do it together."**

*proud that in this last year we have taken a step forward and, indeed, I look forward to a strengthening and deepening of the relationships that we have between us. We have to set priorities, we have to set achievable targets, and we have to set ourselves a framework in which we can judge our effectiveness. We have to get away from theoretical exercises, from mutual expressions of goodwill, to targets, to re-evaluation, to focusing on projects on which we can work together... Our experience will undoubtedly be in some cases great, and in some cases less than great. And we should expect both because we should have the courage to move forward, to experiment and to take on issues which none of us have faced before."*

ensure that labour not be regarded as a "commodity" and provide protection against abuses, discrimination and child labour.

The new instrument is a revision of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1949 (No. 96), adopted when nearly all employment agencies were public entities. Over the past decade, it had become clear that the previous convention required revisions, as it failed to recognize the increasingly important role played by private employment agencies – which generated a US\$ 80 billion turnover in 1994 – and was unable to provide adequate protection to workers against abuses and unfair practices.

The new ILO standard draws up general parameters for the efficient operation of private employment agencies. The Recommendation recognizes the contri-

bution of bona fide private employment agencies to a well-functioning labour market and their specific role in such a market. The new Convention will allow private employment agencies a wider scope for cooperation with public employment services, thus increasing the efficiency of the labour market and providing positive benefits for job-seekers. It underlines the role of representative employers' and workers' organizations in all the aspects of labour market policies covered by the Convention. It takes into account the interest of workers by ensuring that agencies operate in line with ethical codes and gives national authorities the flexibility needed to deal with private agencies in the context of their own realities and concerns.

Significantly, it will list general principles and guidance which also protect workers in employment and job-seekers against poor terms and conditions of em-

ployment and provide a framework for sound industrial relations in a rapidly globalizing economy. The new Convention aims at improving the functioning and governance of labour markets through the collaboration of public and private employment services.

The new Convention also calls on member States to ensure that private employment agencies "treat workers without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or any other form of discrimination covered by national law and practice, such as age or disability." The measure calls on ILO member States to protect migrant workers recruited or placed in their territories by private employment agencies, and calls on them to take measures against the use or supply of child labour.

## Contract labour

An initial discussion on contract labour at this year's session of the International Labour Conference opened the way towards the possible adoption of a Convention and Recommendation next year.

The proposed Convention would focus on ensuring adequate protection for contract workers. Delegates struggled with the definition of the term "contract labour" and the closely related issue of the scope of the proposed instrument. While the proposed Convention would be applicable to all contract workers, it would exclude workers who have a recognized contract of employment with the user enterprise or who are employees of private employment agencies, who are made available to a user enterprise to perform contract labour.

**"It is a good omen that for a number of years the entire United Nations and all of its specialized agencies (of which the ILO is one) now not only take a more pragmatic and objective look at world affairs but have also acquired a clarity of vision and a sense of responsibility that are deeply heightened."**

**His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan**

This new legal instrument is likely to outline measures aimed at preventing accidents and injury to contract workers, providing protection in relation to meeting financial obligations towards contract workers, ensuring that rights or

obligations under labour and social security laws are not denied or avoided when contract labour is used, and promoting equality of treatment between contract workers and workers with recognized employment relationships. The draft Recommendation would provide more detailed guidance in relation to these provisions. It would also address issues such as encouragement of collective bargaining in this field, compilation of statistics on contract labour and protection for contract workers from other countries.

While the employers and a few Governments remained firmly opposed to the adoption of new standards on contract labour, the workers and a majority of Governments gave their support. There was general agreement that contract labour is a growing phenomenon of considerable importance.

A clear consensus emerged as to the applicability of fundamental rights to contract workers. The Committee unanimously agreed that all workers, regardless of employment status, should receive the same protection with regard to the right to organize and bargain collectively, freedom from discrimination, and minimum age.

### Helping SMEs create new jobs

Faced with continuing concern over employment, especially in light of the impact of globalization on jobs, the Conference called for adoption in 1998 of an instrument on general conditions to stimulate job creation in small and medium-sized enterprises. The Conference noted that such small and medium-sized enterprises generate more than 80 per cent of new jobs in the world today.

The Committee on Job Creation in Small and medium-sized Enterprises suggested that the instrument should take the form of a Recommendation, or a non-binding, international benchmark for activities. It is also recognized that SMEs provide the potential for women and other traditionally disadvantaged groups to gain improved access to productive and high-quality jobs.

The Recommendation should promote respect for core Conventions of the ILO related to freedom of association, collective bargaining, the right to organize, forced labour and discrimination, in order to enhance the creation of quality employment in SMEs and respond to the concerns of member States with respect to child labour. The Recommendation would provide guidance for member States

alongside other ILO initiatives to promote the role of SMEs.

In order to create a business environment conducive to the growth and development of SMEs, the Committee recommended that member States should adopt policies to promote a stable economic environment, as regards inflation, interest and exchange rates, taxation and employment and social stability, remove constraints to the development and growth of SMEs, include specific measures aimed at assisting and upgrading the informal sector to become part of the organized sector, ensure the extension of social protection to workers in SMEs and compliance with social security regulations. It also called on member States to adopt measures in consultation with representatives of employers and workers, to create and strengthen an "enterprise culture" favouring initiative, enterprise creation, productivity, environmental consciousness, quality, good labour and industrial relations. The Committee

also called for consideration to be given to the availability of a range of direct and indirect support services to enhance the growth, job-creation potential and competitiveness of the SME sector.

### Abrogation of standards

The delegates also amended Article 19 of the ILO Constitution to facilitate the updating of international labour standards. Henceforth, on a proposal of the Governing Body, the Conference, by a two-thirds majority, may abrogate a Convention "if it appears that the Convention has lost its purpose or that it no longer makes a useful contribution to attaining the objectives of the Organization." The amendment will come into force once it has been ratified in accordance with article 36 of the Constitution. For the withdrawal of Conventions which are not in force and of obsolete Recommendations, this procedure will be applicable immediately.

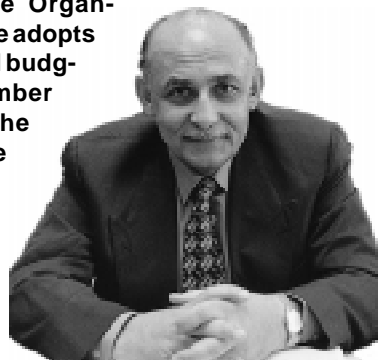


Mrs Olga Keltošová

● The Conference President was Mrs. Olga Keltošová, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

● The three Vice-Presidents of the Conference were Mr. Ali Khalil, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs (Syrian Arab Republic) representing governments; Mrs. L. Sasso-Mazzufferi (Italy) representing employers and Mr. F. Ramírez-León (Venezuela) representing workers.

● The International Labour Conference meets annually. It provides an international forum for discussion of world labour and social problems and sets minimum international labour standards and broad policies of the Organization. Every two years, the Conference adopts the ILO's biennial work programme and budget, which is financed by its 174 member States. Each member country has the right to send four delegates to the Conference: two from the government and one each representing workers and employers, each of whom may speak and vote independently.



Mr. Ahmed Ahmed El Amawy

● The ILO Governing Body unanimously elected Mr. Ahmed Ahmed El Amawy, Minister of Manpower and Immigration of Egypt, to serve as Chairman of its 1997-98 session. Mr. Jean-Jacques Oechslin (France) was re-elected as employer vice-Chairman and Mr. William Brett (United Kingdom) was re-elected as worker Vice-Chairman.

At its November 1996 session, the ILO Governing Body had identified eight Conventions as candidates for abrogation or withdrawal: Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention, 1929 (No. 28); Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention, 1931 (No. 31); Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention (revised), 1935 (No. 46); Reduction of Hours of Work (Public Works) Convention, 1936 (No. 51); Minimum Age (Non-industrial Employment) Convention (revised), 1937

(No. 60); Reduction of Hours of Work (Textiles) Convention, 1937 (No. 61); Migration for Employment Convention, 1939 (No. 66); Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1939 (No. 67).

The Governing Body will re-examine the abrogation or withdrawal of these Conventions in the course of forthcoming sessions.

The Conference also adopted the ILO's 1998-99 Programme and Budget of US\$

481,050,000 at a budget rate of exchange of 1.46 Swiss francs to the US dollar. The corresponding income budget amounts to Swiss francs 702,333,000.

The Programme and Budget adopted today represents a reduction of some 98 million dollars over the previous exercise, or approximately 17 per cent. Programme reductions accounted for 5.6 per cent of this decrease, the remainder being the result of exchange rate adjustments because of the stronger dollar. □

## Committee on Application of Standards

# Committee cites labour abuses in Iran, Myanmar, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan and Swaziland

In its Report to the 1997 International Labour Conference, the Committee on the Application of Standards determined that the non-application by Iran, Myanmar, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan and Swaziland of fundamental international labour standards, including forced labour, discrimination and denial of the right to organize, were a cause of special concern.

The Committee cited three of those countries – Myanmar, Nigeria and Sudan – as cases of “continued failure to implement ratified Conventions”.

However, the Committee also noted with satisfaction that in a number of cases, including many involving basic human rights, governments had introduced changes to their law and practice. In one particularly long-standing case, involving the right to organize of Government Communications Headquarters in Cheltenham (GCHQ) staff in the United Kingdom where workers, for many years, had not been allowed to join the trade union of their own choice, the Committee noted with satisfaction that the Government had eliminated divergencies with previous Committee rulings.

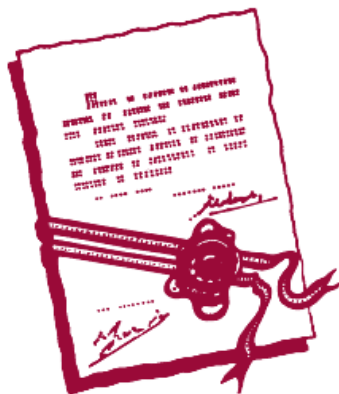
### Islamic Republic of Iran: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

In the Committee hearings, it was alleged that the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to practice systematic discrimi-

nation in employment on the basis of sex, religion and political opinion. In light of the gravity of the accusations, the Committee “strongly urged the Government to accept a direct-contacts mission as soon as possible.”

The problems concerning Iran include discrimination against women, notably in the judiciary, where, according to available information, women only held advisory and support posts in the judicial system, and in the departments for the protection of children.

The complaints also include allegations of religious discrimination which was said to take three forms: discrimination against officially recognized religions, discrimination against religions which were not officially recognized (as in the case of Baha'i), and discrimination against Moslems who did not appear to fulfill the requirements of Islam.



### Morocco: Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

The Committee regretted “with deep concern the large number of complaints concerning measures of anti-union discrimination and interference in trade union activities,” despite the Government having undertaken to submit a draft Labour Code to Parliament in order to bring Morocco's legislation into full conformity with Convention No. 98.

It urged the Government to supply a draft of the Labour Code so that the Committee of Experts could “examine whether its provisions guaranteed adequate protection to workers against acts of anti-union discrimination and to workers' organizations against acts of interference.”

The Committee also regretted that the Government had not accepted a proposal to invite a direct-contacts mission, as had been requested three years ago.

### Myanmar: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

On the basis of recognition of widespread denial of basic human rights, including the right to freedom of association, Myanmar was cited both in a special paragraph and for continued failure to implement Convention No. 87.

In addition, the Committee deplored the fact that “no Government report was



received by the Committee” and “that the Government failed to cooperate” in responding to previous rulings.

Noting that the case involving Myanmar had been discussed on numerous occasions in 1987, 1989, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996, the Committee expressed great concern “with the total absence of progress” and urged the Government to adopt the measures necessary, in legislation as well as in practice, to ensure the right of workers to join organizations of their own choosing to protect their interests.

### **Nigeria: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)**

Nigeria was cited in a special paragraph for non-observance of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No. 87), and for continued failure to implement it. The Committee expressed its great concern that, although this case had been the subject of two previous special paragraphs (in 1995 and 1996) “no concrete progress had been made to date in relation to the very grave trade union situation in the country.”

It called upon the Government to “accept without delay a direct-contacts mission to examine the trade union situation in Nigeria, including the situation of imprisoned union leaders”.

The Committee “profoundly deplored the gravity of the situation of trade unions in Nigeria,” and “urged the Government to derogate two Decrees (Nos. 9 and 10 of 1994) concerning dissolution of the executive councils of trade unions persecuted by the public authorities”. It also called upon the Government to “nullify the Decree of January 1996, which fixed the number of trade unions for each category of profession, and which reinforced the current trade union monopoly”. Forced consolidations have reduced the number of trade unions from 41 to 29.

The Report of the Committee on Application of Standards notes that Decrees 9 and 10 dissolved the executive councils of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), and the Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), adding that “these unions are still being run by a single administrator appointed by the Government.”

A number of Decrees adopted recently further aggravated the situation of trade unions in the teaching sector, universities, hospitals and research institutes. Other long-standing complaints cite imprisonment of trade unionists, human rights abuses and prohibitions on Nigerian trade unions associating with international federations and confederations.

### **Sudan: Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)**

In response to serious and long-standing accusations of forced and slave labour in Sudan, the Committee decided to mention this case in a special paragraph and to cite it as a case of continued failure to implement the relevant Convention (No. 29, Forced Labour).

The accusations against Sudan involve trading in slaves and the imposition of slavery, servitude and forced labour on people from the Dinka, Shilluk and Nuer tribes and the tribes of the Nuba mountains in southern Sudan. Committee members cited “evidence from eyewitnesses and first-hand accounts which testified to gross human rights abuses encouraged or directly inflicted by the Government and its security forces”.

The Committee heard accusations that the number of chattel slaves held in northern Sudan was estimated in the tens of thousands, with Government backed militia regularly raiding black African-Sudanese communities for slaves and other sorts of booty. Women and children were among the principle victims, and atrocities were common.

The Government responded that it was committed to bringing forced labour to an end and denied the charges as politically motivated, saying the areas where forced labour allegedly took place were held by rebels or marked by tribal warfare.

In its conclusions, the Committee recalled that it has commented on this case several times in recent years, with Sudan having been mentioned three times in special paragraphs for failure to implement the Forced Labour Convention (in 1989, 1992 and 1993).

The Committee said that it had often been called upon to respond to the accusations that forced labour was being imposed with the complicity or indifference

of the Government and that the same allegations had been made in the various reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation in Sudan, and in comments made by the World Confederation of Labour.

It concluded that “in view of the contradictory information received and the continuing denunciations concerning violations of the Convention, that the Government should increase its efforts to give full application to this Convention and request the technical assistance of the Office.”

### **Swaziland: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)**

The Committee noted with concern that provisions of Swaziland’s Industrial Relations Act contained provisions that violated the fundamental principles of freedom of Association, despite a direct contacts mission undertaken to the country in October 1996 and specific progress in the education sector.

In response to accusations of an overall climate of fear and intimidation surrounding trade union activity, including such acts as violence against and administrative dissolution of trade-union organizations, the Committee expressed its deep concern for the numerous and major discrepancies between national law and practice on the one hand, and the provisions of ILO Convention 87 on the other.

It urged the Government to respect the civil liberties essential to the implementation of the Convention and to take all the measures necessary to eliminate the restrictions on the right of workers to constitute organizations or their free choice, to hold meetings and to demonstrate peacefully. The Committee decided to include its conclusions in a special paragraph of its General Report. □

## Extracts of statements made at the 85<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference (Geneva, June 1997)

**B**elow are extracts of statements made at the 85<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference in the framework of the discussion on the report of the Director-General, “The ILO, standard setting and globalization”. These extracts address exclusively the question of the appropriate means of ensuring the universal guarantee of the basic rights of

workers as a condition for them to share in the profits of globalization.

Most of the extracts included refer above all to the universal ratification of international labour conventions dealing with basic human rights. For certain delegations, this would be sufficient to attain the objective of the Copenhagen Social Summit: the essential promotion of the

core Conventions in order to ensure their universal application. Other delegations, while supporting the objective of universal ratification of the core Conventions, consider it necessary to have available a complementary means of ensuring the immediate universal implementation of basic workers' rights in all countries, whether these have ratified the core Conventions or not. As a result, they support the proposal presented by the employers' group at the 268<sup>th</sup> session of the Governing Body, and taken up again by the Director-General in his report cited above.

Even though they are sufficiently explicit in themselves, it is worthwhile to read these extracts in the light of the complete statements which are published *in extenso* in the Record of Proceedings of the 85<sup>th</sup> Session of the ILC. The statements are listed in alphabetical order by delegation and, where applicable, within each delegation in the order usually used in documents: governments, employers, workers. The statements of observers are listed in chronological order as they appear in the Record of Proceedings of the Conference.



## Delegations

**Algeria: Mr. DEMBRI**  
(Government delegate)

We agree that concerted international action is now more necessary than ever in order to design and implement tangible actions to provide, at the international level, the necessary social measures to accompany economic globalization.

**Argentina: Mr. CARO FIGUEROA**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Security)

We support the adoption of a solemn declaration reaffirming workers' fundamental rights and their observance by all the member States of the ILO, whether or not they have ratified the relevant conventions.

**Australia: Mr. NOAKES**  
(Employers' delegate)

In debates which have taken place within the Governing Body and its committees, the employers have proposed that consideration should be given to the adoption by this Conference of a declaration of fundamental principles which would contain the essence of what have been recognized as the core Conventions... I want to express my personal commitment to ensuring that this proposal is transformed into reality.

**Bangladesh: Mr. MINTOO**  
(Employers' delegate)

...All efforts, in order to be sustainable, require resources. Social progress cannot be achieved by adopting the so-called core Conventions.

**Belgium: Mr. PEIRENS**  
(Workers' adviser)

It is time to provide for a system similar to that of the Committee on Freedom of Association which would apply to other basic Conventions – thus constituting a worldwide social basis for durable human development.

**Chile: Mr. ARRATE MAC NIVEN**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Welfare)

My country rejects all forms of protectionism which are rooted in narrow interests, which deny the poorest countries the chances of bettering their lot. We also reject that other form of protectionism which protects privileges and blatant injustices, and which prevents the benefits of trade and growth from being distributed equitably, and from reaching workers and citizens at the bottom of society's ladder.

**China: Mr. LI**  
(Minister of Labour)

The nature of this proposal forces Members who have not ratified the standards to undertake the same obligations as those who have ratified them. This is not consistent with the provisions of the Constitution. Such practice of imposing labour standards by means of pressure can only intensify disputes and it would not achieve the objective. We stand resolutely opposed to any attempt to transform the ILO into an international tribunal.

**Côte d'Ivoire: Mr. ATSAIN ACHI**  
(Minister of Employment, Public Service and Social Welfare)

Fundamental standards which imply a disguised conditionality of access to international markets would destroy efforts to achieve economic recovery which are indispensable to an acceleration of social progress in countries of the African region.

**Egypt: Mr. EL AMAWY**  
(Minister of Manpower and Immigration)

The basis for any mechanism to supervise the application of international instruments must be the express consent of States, as only ratification creates binding obligations under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

**France: Mr. CHOTARD**  
(Government delegate)

I can only state once again the importance which my country attaches to the adoption of a solemn declaration at the next session of the Conference. This declaration should be the response of ILO member States to the appeals which were launched in Copenhagen and Singapore.

**Germany: Ms. VOSKUHL**  
(Government Delegate)

...we support the idea that in cases where the present supervisory machinery does not enable the observance of the core standards to be clearly evaluated, appropriate measures should be taken to remedy the situation.

**India: Mr. KOHLI**  
(Employers' delegate)

...but the employers from India would not like a body like the Committee on Freedom of Association to be set up, or even complaints regarding infringements of these core standards be entertained, if the country concerned has not ratified the relevant Convention.

**Indonesia: Mr. LATIEF**  
(Minister of Manpower)

International trade and the application of labour standards are two different matters and are handled by two different institutions.

**Japan: Mr. ITO**  
(Workers' delegate)

The Japanese Trade Union Confederation considers that it is necessary to establish a new supervisory machinery on core labour standards, through which the ILO should be able to supervise the application of these standards, even if they are not ratified by a particular country.

**Kenya: Mr. OWUOR**  
(Employers' delegate)

...the difference in ILO standards between the so-called "core Conventions" and "non-core Conventions" is likely to create an artificial situation where some Conventions will be regarded as second-class instruments...





**Republic of Korea: Mr. PARK**  
(Workers' delegate)

In the case of Korea, none of the core Conventions has been ratified. I support a declaration of the Conference on fundamental rights and a regular Report of the Director-General on social progress, which will surely promote the instruments for social progress.

**Malaysia: Mr. DATO'LIM**  
(Minister of Human Resources)

...the Malaysian Government regrets that the Director-General's Report contained a number of initiatives which are inclined towards linking labour standards with international trade.

**Mauritius: Mr. OBEEGADOO**  
(Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations)

We reaffirm, in line with the OAU position outlined by earlier speakers, our commitment to the universal adoption of the seven core Conventions and our belief in the need to strengthen the supervisory mechanism essential to attain that objective.

**Mexico: Mr. BONILLA GARCIA**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Welfare)

To require that standards be observed which have not been approved by the competent bodies of the States is therefore a dangerous initiative.

**Oman: Mr. AL-BUSAIDI**  
(Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour)

...we feel that there is no need for us to resort to new mechanisms for international labour standards, because the present system is sufficient.

**Pakistan: Mr. TABANI**  
(Employers' delegate)

Such proposals tend to legitimize the use of labour standards for protectionism, and thus by implication, endorse the social clause.

**Portugal: Mr. LANÇA**  
(Workers' delegate)

Experience has shown that it is not enough to define standards and ensure that they are ratified by most countries.

The most important thing is to strengthen the control mechanisms and actions which contribute to the enforcement of those standards...

**Russian Federation: Mr. SHMAKOV**  
(Workers' delegate)

We support the idea of adopting a new declaration bringing together the universally acknowledged fundamental rights. We also support the establishment of a supervisory machinery...

**Senegal: Mr. DIOP**  
(Workers' delegate)

What is the point of having international labour standards if we do not strengthen the supervisory mechanisms so as to follow them up and enforce them?

**Singapore: Mr. LEE**  
(Minister for Labour)

We are perplexed that against this backdrop of trade liberalization the ILO Report entitled, "The ILO, standard setting and globalization" has proposed a link between social progress and globalization resulting from trade liberalization.

**South Africa: M. SHILOWA**  
(Workers' adviser)

The same countries which oppose the Director-General's Report are the ones who in Singapore were saying that the ILO is the mechanism to deal with the same issues of core standards. Yet they would want to remove any teeth it may have. It is time to question their precise motive. They seem more willing to satisfy the demands of unelected institutions without any due regard for the electorate.

**Sudan: Mr. BEDA**  
(Minister of Manpower)

Any declaration on core labour standards extending obligations to those who are not party to the ILO Conventions would contravene the principle of voluntary adherence of States and would create problems which prevent member States from ratifying.

**Sweden: Mr. ARTIN**  
(Employers' delegate)

The Director-General...also seems to take it for granted that all principles which were natural in 1919 or 1946 must necessarily be valid also for a totally changed world of work of the next millennium. I am not so certain of that.

**Turkey: Mr. ÇELİK**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Security)

...liberalization in international trade, and globalization, should be achieved in conjunction with social progress. Therefore, measures to be taken by the ILO to that effect deserve our support.

**Uganda: Mr. ETIANG**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Welfare)

The proposed establishment of a declaration on fundamental rights would open the floodgates to the social clause and the linkage of international labour standards to trade. This matter has been discussed at different fora and such linkage has been rightly rejected.

**United Kingdom: Mr. BRETT**  
(Workers' delegate)

We fear, however, that some of the honeyed words of praise for the ILO spoken at the WTO meeting were themselves more about avoiding the issue of core standards being on the WTO agenda than they were about strengthening those standards at the ILO.

**United States: Mr. SAMET**  
(Government delegate)

...the implementation of core labour standards will benefit all economies no matter their level of development. These standards are simply not a question of what can be afforded; on the contrary, we cannot afford not to implement them.

**Uruguay: Ms. PEÑEYRUA**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Security)

It is quite clear that the temptation to use some of the proposals for protectionist purposes should not be discarded as being merely a negative element.

**Venezuela: Mr. DE ARBELOA**  
(Employers' delegate)

Here, we [employers] share our government's and our workers' sector's concern and disagreement with any proposal for a "social label", which would be yet another barrier to the freedom of international trade.

**Viet Nam: Mr. NGUYEN LUONG**  
(Vice-Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs)

The imposition of standards and of any unrealistic supervisory mechanism will bring about only negative effects.

**Zambia: Mr. MACHUNGWA**  
(Minister of Labour and Social Security)

It is our considered view that ratification of ILO Conventions should continue to be voluntary. □



# The fight against poverty: Not all is lost

**I**t seems that not all is lost in the fight against poverty.

This conclusion may be drawn, albeit tentatively, on the basis of the experience, not only of developing Asia, but also of some countries of Latin America and Africa. While the success of east and south-east Asian countries and also of some south Asian countries in alleviating poverty is quite well known, a careful look at data from countries of Latin America and Africa may offer at least some glimmer of hope. This remark must, of course, be qualified by the limitations posed by the extremely fragmentary and scattered data, especially on Africa. Indeed, it may not be out of place to mention here that the fight against poverty needs to be accompanied by a determined and systematic effort to produce comparable and quality data on the incidence of poverty, on a regular basis, so that success or failure in the fight can be assessed with confidence.

In Latin America, Chile does appear

to have succeeded in reducing the incidence of poverty in rural as well as urban areas during the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s. Colombia also demonstrated success, especially in reducing rural poverty during the 1980s. Similarly, in Venezuela there have been some improvements in the situation since 1989. There are, of course, countries (e.g. Uruguay, Panama, Brazil and Argentina) where the incidence of poverty either increased or remained static.

As in Latin America, in sub-Saharan Africa also, there are a few countries with signs of improvement in the poverty situation. In Ghana, for example, the incidence of rural poverty declined during 1984-86 and that of urban poverty declined quite substantially during 1981-91. In Kenya, there was a slight reduction in rural poverty during 1982-92, although poverty in urban areas increased. A point to note in the context of most African countries is that the use of country-specific 'poverty lines' yields substantially lower

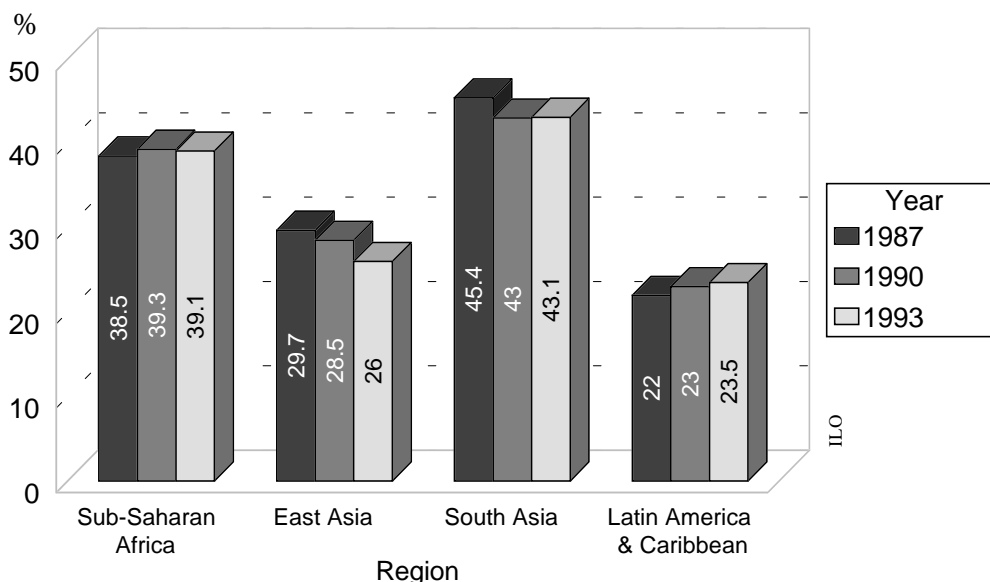
estimates of the incidence of poverty than those based on general thresholds. Also important is that data limitations are far more serious in countries of sub-Saharan Africa than in other developing regions.

As is well known, most countries of east and south-east Asia achieved remarkable success in poverty alleviation – although the degree of success varies from country to country. While China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have been more successful, the rate of decline in poverty has been slow in the Philippines. In south Asia, India and Pakistan have been able to come out of the vicious circle of poverty. In Bangladesh, poverty reduction achieved in some years in the 1980s could not be sustained. The performance of Nepal and Sri Lanka has also been disappointing.

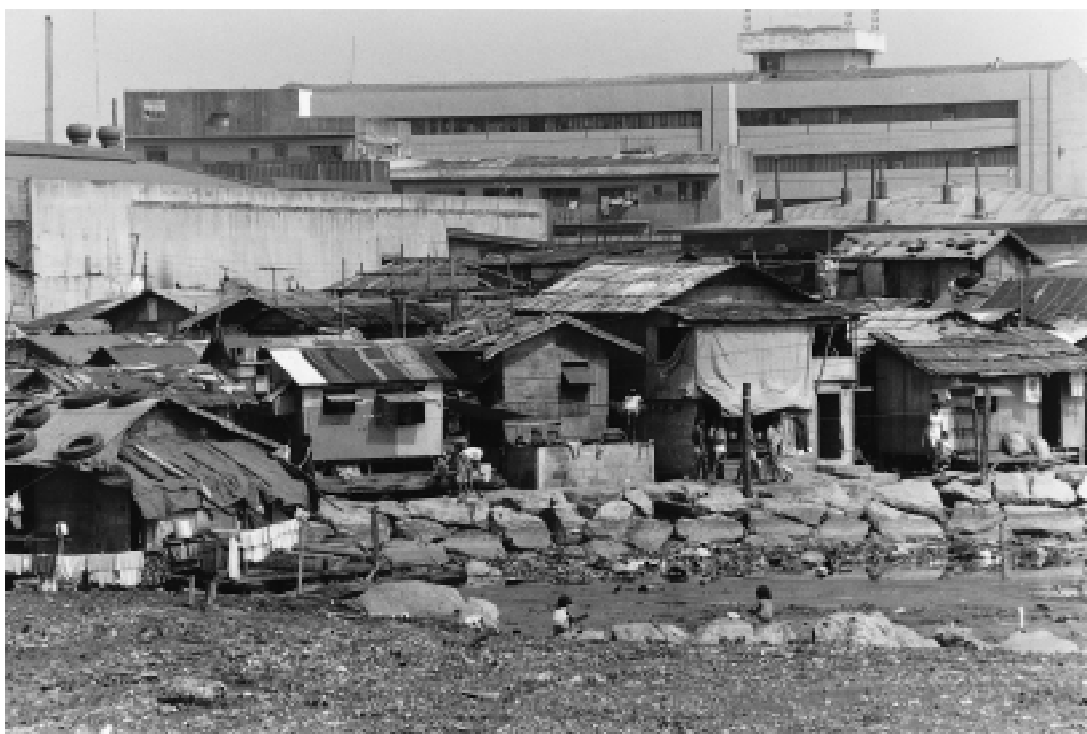
## ILO action to fight poverty in the world

The ILO's concern with poverty dates back to at least 1944 when the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization (Declaration of Philadelphia) stated that "Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere", and thereby gave the ILO an explicit mandate to help fight poverty in the world. The ILO's various means of action have been dedicated to the promotion of a broad-based, employment-oriented development strategy, which is seen as the most appropriate policy to combat poverty and to create the conditions for accelerated economic growth on the basis of social justice and human dignity. The ILO's current activities in this field emphasize assistance to member States designed to mitigate the negative social effects of adjustment policies on the most disadvantaged populations and to integrate social objectives into these policies. Top priority is given to policies to create productive income-generating employment and to improve the liveli-

**Incidence of poverty**  
Percentage of population below constant (1985) US\$ 370



The ILO's concern with poverty dates back to at least 1944 when the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization (Declaration of Philadelphia) stated that "Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere"



Jacques Maillard

hood of those excluded from the process of development.

While the ILO's follow-up to the Copenhagen Social Summit is primarily concerned with the employment dimension, the ILO's activities continue to reflect a strong commitment to poverty alleviation. The Social Summit laid great emphasis on the need to strengthen the

capacity of international agencies and countries to monitor progress in the fight against poverty. As a step in this direction, and as one of its contributions marking the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, the ILO has published a monograph presenting data on poverty and income distribution. The summary description of the trends in poverty

presented above is based on data compiled in the ILO monograph. □

\*Statistics on poverty and income distribution: An ILO compendium of data. An ILO contribution to the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, ILO Geneva, 1996. ISBN 92-2-109505-3.

## News Section...News Section...News Section...News Section



**At least 15 million children at work in Latin America**

### **MOST INTOLERABLE FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR TARGETED AT THE CARTAGENA MEETING**

With child labour rising in Latin America, government ministers and officials from 20 Latin-American countries met in Cartagena on 8 to 9 May to reaffirm the region's political commitment to combating and eliminating the exploitation of millions of child workers.

Organized by the Government of

Colombia in close collaboration with the ILO, the First Latin-American Meeting on Child Labour brought together international experts as well as trade union and employers' representatives, in an attempt to increase public awareness of the tragedies being suffered by millions of Latin-American children who – be it labouring in fields from dawn till dusk, firing bricks in blazing kilns, digging up stones in quarries or engaging in prostitution on the streets of the big cities – live and work in wretched conditions.

A report prepared by the ILO for the Cartagena Meeting estimated that no less than 15 million children work in Latin America, with approximately half of these child workers between the ages of six and 14 years old. In numerical terms – said ILO Director-General Michel Hansenne – these figures might appear

relatively low in comparison to the 250 million children the ILO believes work throughout the world. The figures become more alarming however when translated into the fact that one in every five Latin-American children is a child worker.

The Cartagena Meeting on child labour was held at a time when the region's economies are experiencing a phase of development characterized by scant employment creation in the modern sector, the growth of informal work, the dwindling role of the State as employer, the stagnation of real wages and persistent poverty in the majority of countries. At the same time, the report noted, the number and proportion of children starting work at an early age is on an upward trend.

Available statistics show that between 20 and 25 per cent of children between



P. Lissac/CIRIC

## LABELLING INITIATIVES FIGHTING CHILD LABOUR

Consumer and industry groups have joined in the struggle against child labour. One of their approaches which has increasingly gained popularity in the last five years is that of labelling products with a view to assure consumers that the goods they purchase have not been produced by children or that the producers have carried out activities to benefit child workers.

Labelling has proved to be a controversial issue. It has so far been difficult to judge the impact of the existing schemes, of which most focus on the production of hand-knotted carpets. A recent ILO study on the subject pointed to the inherent problems of monitoring and inspection, the frequent lack of transparency for the consumer and the unsure fate of the children whose labour is labelled. Under certain circumstances, labelling may have a positive impact, but more in-depth studies will have to be carried out to identify the factors which can bring about success and accountability. Yet, whatever the results, labelling might largely only be applicable in export-oriented industries, a sector in which only a tiny fraction of children work.

the ages of six and 14 are currently working in Latin America, a labour force representing on average just under 5 per cent of the economically active population in the region. This proportion indicates the ILO report is relatively close to the rate of open unemployment, which suggests that child labour is, to a greater or lesser extent, acting as a labour force reserve.

The majority of children who work do so in conditions that are clearly dangerous for their safety, health and emotional stability; they are subjected to physical and moral indignities and to exhausting working hours stretching far beyond the limits set by legislation.

According to the report, almost 60 per cent of the child labour force is concentrated in the agricultural sector. Children from rural areas, and girls in particular, usually begin working between the ages of five and seven.

Child labour has been gradually spreading through towns and cities as a result of urbanization. Here, children work in microenterprises, informal sector workshops, street markets or in the provision of petty services. Hundreds of thousands of girls, approximately 10 per cent of the child labour force according to the report work long days as domestic workers in an environment where beatings, insults and sexual harassment are all too common.

However, the ILO report also noted that not all poor children work and not all those who work are poor. Many destitute families continue to opt for education and will only see their children working as a last resort, it said. Such families have a fundamental influence on the level of development of the education system, the proportion of potentially active adults, and access, or

otherwise, to social services which enable adults with family responsibilities to work without having to rely on the help of their children.

## ILO action

In addition to calling for the repudiation of intolerable forms of child labour and the promotion of economic growth and social investment, the Cartagena meeting urged the creation of national committees to implement action plans revolving around social awareness, revision of legislation, strengthening of labour inspection systems, reinforcement of educational policies, and assistance to families in their productive activities.

Speaking at the conference, Ali Taqi, Assistant Director-General of the ILO, stated "there are two fundamental reasons why the ILO is so determined to eradicate child labour completely. First, child labour prevents the normal physical and intellectual development of children, deprives them of education and normal schooling, and endangers their physical and moral integrity. Second, it not only entails risks for the individual but affects society as a whole. Poverty may well be the principal cause of child labour, but it is also a consequence of it."

The meeting is part of an international offensive against the exploitation of working children. The most recent inroads were made at the Amsterdam Conference in February this year, and action will be further intensified at the coming Oslo Conference scheduled for 27 to 30 October 1997.

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION IN RUSSIA

In 1996 alone, gross domestic product (GDP) of the Russian Federation decreased by 6 per cent and industrial production by 5 per cent. In an effort to address these worrying trends, the ILO helped organize a "National Conference on Enterprise Development and Job Creation" in Moscow on 13 to 14 May 1997. Held at the request of the Russian Government, the tripartite conference was the first national follow-up to the ILO Enterprise Forum held in Geneva last November.



The two-day Conference was prepared by the ILO's Entrepreneurship and Management Development Branch and gathered more than 70 high-level representatives from the Russian Government, organizations of employers and workers, and development foundations, educational and research institutions, the ILO and other international organizations.

In a speech to the Conference, Mr. Heribert Scharrenbroich, Assistant Director-General for ILO Activities in Europe, recalled that "enterprise development and job creation are the cornerstones of the Russian Federation's social and economic progress." He acknowledged that great strides had been made in the country, and "by inviting the ILO to organize this event, you recognize also that much work has to be done."

According to a report to the Conference by the Deputy Russian Minister of Labour and Social Development, Mr. Evgeniy D. Katulskiy, Russia's economy was in deep depression between 1991 and 1996 – despite some achievements in the area of economic reform.

"Only in 1996, GDP decreased by 6 per cent and industrial production by 5 per cent," the report said. "The inflation rate remains rather high and the issues of structural adjustment of the economy remain largely unsolved."

Enterprise profitability in industry, construction and transport is declining. For example, in 1996 profits earned amounted to slightly more than half – or 55 per cent – of profit levels recorded during the previous year. The proportion of loss-making enterprises in the main branches of the economy rose as high as 43 per cent.

According to the report, the situation in the labour market remained difficult in 1996. The number of persons employed was still declining, although at a slower rate – in 1996 employment decreased by 1 per cent compared with a 2 per cent decrease logged in 1995. Added the report: "The problem of unpaid or partly paid leave remains a significant one... The necessity to find additional income forces part of the population to resort to multiple-job practices or work under contract in the informal sector."

## Recommendations

The Conference established a list of recommendations submitted to all major Russian decision-making bodies, including Parliament, relevant Ministries and the social partners:

☛ The government programme of economic restructuring should incorporate

a range of social policy reforms to mitigate the negative effects on employment and human well-being of certain measures taken to improve overall economic

performance and raise productivity. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of social protection for workers and their families, including the unemployed and low-income workers.

## RUSSIAN WAGE ARREARS REACH ASTRONOMICAL PROPORTIONS

*As the Russian economy continues to shrink, wage arrears are accumulating rapidly: only one-third of the Russian working population receive wages in full and on time. This situation is without parallel in history and is a major concern to Russian trade unions and their members. Meanwhile, enterprises across the country are resorting increasingly to barter trade in lieu of wages, while qualified workers are turning to Western companies to supplement their earnings.*

*According to a recent report, prepared by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities, in cooperation with the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), wage arrears of companies in Russia at the beginning of 1997 amounted to 39 trillion roubles – more than double the figure for February of last year. Meanwhile, the total amount of wage arrears, including wages paid by both companies and governments, totalled 50 trillion roubles, representing more than a month of the total wage bill of all workers in Russia.*

*Arrears as a percentage of GDP have increased more rapidly since the beginning of 1996, and at the end of the year, arrears by companies, excluding those to banks, accounted for 23 percent of the GDP of the last 12 months.*

*Also in 1996, companies started to postpone their payments to the federal and regional budgets, pension funds and to wage earners. Only 17 per cent of corporate and other taxpayers comply with their tax obligations fully and on time. Seventy-two companies account for more than 40 per cent of all tax arrears, but the problem is spread throughout the economy.*

*The federal budget deficit increased by 0.6 per cent of GDP in February from January 1997, while the deficit of the consolidated budget rose from 3.3 per cent of GDP in*

*1995, to 4.2 per cent in 1996. But according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the deficit is in fact much greater and stood at 7 per cent of GDP in 1996.*

*As a consequence, government wage arrears have accumulated, particularly in the education and health sectors, and the state owes pensioners 7.7 billion US dollars and troops another 1.2 billion in back pay.*

*For companies, wage arrears are greatest in industry and construction, with industry accounting for 55 per cent and construction for 17 per cent of all company wage arrears. Their share of the economy is much smaller. Industry accounts for only 26 per cent of GDP and construction for 14 per cent. A total of 50,939 companies were recorded as having wage arrears at the beginning of the year, or about 17,000 more than the previous year.*

*The report says that the reason for the wage arrears can be attributed to attempts at stabilization by engaging in barter transactions and thereby allowing payment arrears to accumulate.*

*"Barter transactions offer buyers a way to finance their purchases and sellers a way to avoid production cuts," the report says.*

*Enterprises across Russia are now dealing in barter with such goods as candy, cement, coats, vodka and whatever else is available. And in turning to Western companies, such qualified workers as neurosurgeons are also working as night watchmen.*

*Instead of using money for paying debts, companies are accumulating US dollars at home and abroad and "capital flight" has become a permanent phenomenon.*

*Meanwhile, Russian Finance Ministry officials are promising a tax reform package to be presented and adopted by parliament this year and to be enacted in 1998.*

☛ The Government should improve, in consultation with the social partners, the overall efficiency of the privatization process itself by improving the legal and institutional framework.

☛ Appropriate measures by the State are needed to ensure better protection of the rights of shareholders and investors to facilitate enterprise creation and development.

☛ The responsibility of enterprise management for assisting retrenched workers with redeployment should be recognized and increased.

☛ The crucial importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for revival and development of the Russian economy calls for an enabling environment. SMEs in Russia encounter many obstacles; among others, a rigid legislative framework, a heavy tax burden and complex taxation system, a lack of capital and qualified personnel as well as difficulties in obtaining credits.

☛ Management development institutions and vocational education and training have to play an important role in economic restructuring. A shortage of highly qualified personnel has emerged. In some branches of the economy between 20 and 30 per cent of managers do not possess certificates of higher education. Many enterprises do not invest in training.

At the end of the Conference, a number of participants requested that the ILO organize similar meetings on other national priority issues in the near future.

*Making work and workers healthier*

## MEETING OF EXPERTS TO REDEFINE PURPOSE OF WORKERS' HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

Some fifty years ago, the justification for medical examinations was clear: there were diseases caused by work and they had to be found, treated and compensated. Since then, many things have changed: more sophisticated means of investigation and a new emphasis on prevention as well as on human and workers' rights are redefining the purpose of health surveillance. The ILO convened a Meeting of Experts on Workers' Health Surveillance in Geneva from 2 to 9 September 1997,

## to examine new ways of making sure work and workers are healthier.

The meeting of some 18 experts from 16 countries reviewed current practice and the role of workers' health surveillance worldwide, and prepare new guidelines on the technical and ethical aspects of such surveillance.

The health of the worker is a precious asset to the cost-effectiveness of running a business. By reducing sickness, absenteeism and maintaining a healthy workforce, enterprises can reduce their operating costs by preventing damage to machinery, cutting back on waste of materials and resources, and improving workforce morale, thus raising productivity. The surveillance of workers' health is relevant not only to the prevention of work-related injuries, but also to the protection and promotion of health, public health and environmental health.

The experts will also evaluate current practices in workers' health surveillance with respect to technical, ethical and social considerations. Collecting information on individuals through pre-employment and periodical medical examinations may infringe their privacy and individual rights. The meeting will set up guidelines on the collection, processing and communication of health-related data along the general principles established in the *International Code of Ethics for occupational health professionals* adopted in November 1991 by the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) and the *ILO Code of Practice on the protection of workers' personal data* adopted by the Meeting of Experts on Workers' Privacy in October 1996.

Over the years, the scope of medical surveillance has been progressively expanded in many countries. A similar trend can be seen at the international level. Since the adoption of the Protection of Workers' Health Recommendation, 1953 (No. 97), a number of ILO Conventions and Recommendations have prescribed medical surveillance for fishermen (1959), ionizing radiation (1960), underground work (1965), the transport of loads (1967), benzene (1971), carcinogens (1974), the working environment (1977), nurses (1977), asbestos (1986), chemicals (1990) and mines (1995). The ILO Code of Practice on recording and notification of occupational diseases and accidents provides that the competent authority should establish and periodically review a list of prescribed occupational diseases.



E. Messel/ILO

**Looking for opportunities.**

## ILO Provides Input

## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES HELD

WASHINGTON – Some 600 participants from some 80 countries attended the International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities, held June 15 to 20, near Washington, DC. The Forum was the highest level event held so far for women with disabilities as a follow-up to the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was organised by the World Institute of Disability, Rehabilitation International and Mobility International USA with the participation of representatives of the ILO and other United Nations organizations.

During its five days, women activists and leaders discussed strategies to overcome discrimination against women with disabilities, in all societies. More than 50 workshops covered topics ranging from education, business planning, the media, and grassroots organizing to using the Internet and building wheelchairs. The Forum issued a final statement outlining specific actions to be taken at community, national and international levels to improve the situation of disabled women and girls in critical areas such as education, health services, employment and access to family and community life, as well as to decision-making positions in society.

The final statement urges "decision-makers to include the education and skills development of girls and women with disabilities as an integral part of the educational system", and says "local cultures should be allowed to provide

## WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

☛ There are an estimated 300 million girls and women in the world, with disabilities

☛ Poverty and disability among women and girls are closely linked

☛ Access to education to girls and women with disabilities is denied in most cases

☛ Unemployment rates of women with disabilities are higher worldwide than those of men with disabilities and able-bodied women

☛ In the United Kingdom, 8 per cent of women with disabilities are engaged in managerial work as compared to 15 per cent of men with disabilities

☛ Only 3 per cent of disabled women are registered in the labour force in Ghana (1996), 0.3 per cent in India (1991) and 19 per cent in the Philippines (1990)

☛ Most working women with disabilities are found in the informal sector;

☛ The work women with disabilities do in the formal sector is often on a part-time basis, is low paid, low-status and is done in poor working conditions

☛ Fewer women than men are referred to vocational training and they represent a minority in most rehabilitation programmes

☛ Women with disabilities often lead isolated lives as they cannot leave their homes.

The ILO vocational rehabilitation programme puts emphasis on "mainstreaming" or fully integrating the needs of women with disabilities into its overall pro-

gramme. Gender issues are hence integrated into all programmes when relevant. For example, in the ILO/UNDCP project on "Mobilizing enterprises and workers to prevent substance abuse in Central and Eastern Europe" women-specific training modules on alcohol and drug abuse prevention will be developed. In another ILO project which is being implemented with the Namibian government, disabled women are setting up their own self-help and advocacy groups, and the project ensures that equal numbers of women with disabilities take part in all training activities open for men and women.

However, the ILO realizes that mainstreaming alone may not be feasible in all cases. Women-specific activities are requested by many groups of women with disabilities in developing countries, where they are faced with glaring discrimination by their families and the community. It is also often wrongly assumed that these girls and women do not need education and they should not work. Consequently, the ILO is currently preparing a programme specifically in the field of promoting the rights of women with disabilities to have access to skills training, leadership training and employment opportunities at all levels.



E. Messel/ILO

**In a blind couple, she works, he reads: Can traditional roles be overcome?**

opportunities for girls and women with disabilities to be recognized as full participants in meaningful social and economic roles".

On the employment side, the Forum statement emphasized that disabled women should be able to play a more active role in the labour force and have easier access to bank credit. The United Nations and the ILO were urged to take immediate action to publicize existing Conventions through materials which are easy-to-read and in local languages, and to organize,

along with NGOs representing persons with disabilities, training seminars for girls and women on methods of implementing policies and taking up decision-making positions.

The ILO's Vocational Rehabilitation Programme sponsored the participation of 25 women with disabilities who hold decision-making positions, and provided input to the Forum's main sessions and working groups dealing with skills training, employment and the use of the Internet. Moreover, a number of skills training

needs leading to (self-)employment were identified and both the Vocational Rehabilitation Branch in Geneva and the ILO Training Centre in Turin plan to initiate post-Forum activities in these areas.

For more details on the Forum, see: <http://www.prodworks.com/ilf>

(News Section *cont'd* on p. 39, col. 3)



## New perspectives on Internet use at the ILO

# Can the Internet change how organizations work?

*With the generalization of the use of information and communication technologies, much has been said about their impact on organizational structures and ways of working. At the ILO, choices made in setting up and running the Organization's Internet site may well have some impact on future ways of working within the Office. In this article, Internet analyst Alan McCluskey, examines the ILO's current experience with using the World Wide Web.*

Prior to launching the ILO Web site in March 1996, a small task force drew up outlines of the site's overall policy and structure, in which the Internet was seen as a management tool both for policy and communication. The creation in March 1997 of an Intranet (an internal ILO Web site) has helped considerably in bringing home the importance of the Internet to those still hesitant about its use. Statistics show that use of the ILO Intranet by staff at Headquarters more than doubled in its

first two months with over 230,000 "hits" in April 1997.

An important policy option in setting up the ILO Web site was to decentralize creation and maintenance of content. Each department or unit has its own Web editor, generally appointed from amongst staff with some knowledge of the Internet. Content guidelines were drawn up to ensure the internal coherence of the site as a whole, but otherwise each department or unit is entirely responsible for its own content. In opting for a decen-

tralized solution, the ILO has opened the way to a more flexible and responsive information system with production of on-line material moving closer to its source.

### Making key documents available on-line

Wide-scale availability of documents of hitherto limited distribution was another important option related to the use of the ILO Web site. This year has seen the first ever on-line publication of three key sets of ILO documents: the Governing Body documents, the Director General's report and speakers' addresses to the Annual International Labour Conference.

In March 1997, the ILO **Governing Body** documents were made publicly available via the Web, enabling delegates to have immediate access to papers traditionally sent by post. In addition, such documents were published on the Web as they became available without waiting for translations to be made, with a resulting speeding up of the distribution process. The on-line pages of the Governing Body documents are amongst the most popular of all ILO Web pages.

In April 1997, as part of preparations for the annual International Labour Conference, the **Director-General's Report** was made available on the Web in English, French and Spanish. Over the two-month period leading up to the Conference more than 2,500 requests were made for the report and the executive summary. Over 70% of these were for the English version and more than 80% came from ILO field workers and the general public. Demand increased closer to the event with a 25% increase from April to May.

**PRESSE, the Bureau of Public Information of the ILO, announces an addition to its Home Page: A first series of an on-line photo collection**



The screenshot shows the ILO PRESSE Home page. At the top is the ILO logo and the text "INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION". Below this are links for "ILO PRESSE", "OIT PRESSE", and "OIT PRENSA". A row of six small photographs is displayed. Below the photos is a section titled "Photo Corner" with a copyright notice: "ILO photographs are copyright free but appropriate credit must be given to the International Labour Office and the photographer. The photographs should be used in a manner which respects human dignity without causing prejudice to any party." To the right of this is a "Welcome to ILO PRESSE Home page" message. Below the welcome message is a list of links: "Press Releases", "Press Kits", "The Magazine of the ILO: World of Work", "Information Leaflet", "Director-General's Reports", "Speeches", and "PRESS Photo Corner". A "New" icon is next to the "PRESS Photo Corner" link.

Up until two years ago a provisional record of the International Labour Conference proceedings containing all that was said in plenary was made available in printed form to delegates the following day in all three official ILO languages. This gigantic task mobilized some hundred people and was a costly endeavour.

For budgetary reasons, the full proceedings of the 1996 International Labour Conference were only made available after the event. A number of delegates who were often tied up in committees, depended on the provisional record for information about the plenary. As a result there was some dissatisfaction with the change.

Making the speeches available on-line via the Internet was a partial response to those needs. Delegates were informed of the existence of such a service and of the 313 speakers who took the floor in Plenary at the 1997 **International Labour Conference**, 80 provided their speeches on diskette prior to the event for on-line publication. Fifty were in English, 15 in French and 15 in Spanish. Thirty-five were handed in by government members, 20 by employers, 16 by workers and 9 were from other representative organizations.

Delegates attending the Conference were able to use on-site Internet facilities (8 workstations connected to the Internet) to consult Conference documents and generally work using the Internet. According to several ILO officials, these machines were frequently used.

Nearly 80,000 "hits" were made on the ILC Web server during the Conference, representing over 20,000 page requests. More than 50% of these were for speeches, 11% were for addresses to the Conference and over 9% for the daily bulletin (providing details of meeting times and places as well as practical announcements). Subsequently, an on-line database of Conference documents has been created.

On a long-term basis, the availability of ILO official and working documents on the Web may well bring about a re-definition of the use of these documents and the audiences they are designed for. Speeches, for example, which were addressed uniquely to delegates attending the Annual Conference are now available not only to the home constituency of speakers but also to many other people and interest groups worldwide. In making statements available before and during

the event, there is a potential extension of the debate beyond the event and beyond the narrow circle of elected or appointed delegates. What is the status of such a debate and to what extent should the ILO become involved in it? A similar question faces the ITU as it makes papers for TELECOM events widely available and incites people to comment on them.

### Capitalizing on in-house knowledge

The CISDOC database (records on occupational safety and health) and LABORDOC (records of the ILO Library and ILO Documentation Centres) have been available on-line on a subscription basis for more than 15 years via commercial database services such as Questel, Orbit, ESA-IRS and others. With the adoption of Internet use, the question



of making existing ILO databases directly available via the World Wide Web was raised. Currently, ten ILO databases are available free of charge on the Web via the ILIS Referral system. These are:

- ✓ **CATALOG**, a catalogue of ILO sales publications;
- ✓ **ILODOC**, documents and publications of the ILO since 1919;
- ✓ **ILOLEX**, Conventions and Recommendations;
- ✓ **ILOTERM**, ILO terminology used in translation;
- ✓ **ILOUNITS**, addresses and other details of ILO external offices and multidisciplinary teams;
- ✓ **INSTEAD**, records of documents on technological alternatives for development included in **LABORDOC**;
- ✓ **NATLEX**, national labour legislation;

✓ **PROGEVAL**, records of project evaluation reports included in **LABORDOC**;

✓ **SERIALS**, periodicals held in the ILO library;

✓ **THESMAS**, the ILO Thesaurus (English, French, German and Spanish);

✓ **TRIBLEX**, thematic analysis of the case law of the ILO Administrative Tribunal.

### Access: On subscription or free for all?

The question of charging for access to other ILO databases has raised considerable debate within the Office and no final decision has as yet been reached. In the interim, it is expected to provide direct access to CISDOC and LABORDOC via the Web on an annual subscription basis within the next six months.

The importance of making databases available on-line has been recognized by the ILO Governing Body, which has allotted a budget of nearly US\$ 700,000 for the 1998-99 period in an interdepartmental effort to harmonize and update ILO databases, and improve the user interface.

The increasing importance given to the development of knowledge in a complex, fast-changing world underlines the key role that knowledge and learning play in our society both economically and socially. Beyond the task of putting current ILO databases on-line in a suitable form, the move to the Internet raises the larger question of capitalizing on in-house and external know-how.

In many ways, the life-span of data continually shortens as users come to expect and require increasingly frequent updates and improvements. In such circumstances, attention shifts to the creation and communication of knowledge as an on-going, never-ending process essential to satisfactory decision-making. The decentralization of the production of knowledge coupled with the creation of flexible structures enabling the exchange of ideas and information between individuals and groups will prove to be a key asset in rising to the challenge. □

*Alan McCluskey is the Editor of "Connected", an on-line magazine about the social and cultural aspects of information and communication technologies. It can be found at <http://www.connected.org>*

## AROUND THE CONTINENTS

### FIGHTING CHILD LABOUR: FUND-RAISING IN ITALY

A total of 2.8 billion Italian lira or around US\$ 1.66 million was raised through a public fund-raising campaign in Italy for the fight against child labour. The fund will support ILO/IPEC and UNICEF activities against child labour in the garment industry in Bangladesh, as well as on behalf of children in bonded labour in Nepal and working on surgical instrument manufacturing in Pakistan. The event was organized by the Ministry of Labour, employers' organizations and trade unions in Italy together with the Italian National Committee for UNICEF.

*For more information contact the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Mr. Gert A. Gust, IPEC Programme Manager, tel. +4122/799-8181, fax: +4122/799-8771; E-mail: ipec@ilo.org.*

### CHILD LABOUR: "Best Practices" guide taking shape

With the support of the Canadian Government, the ILO/IPEC programme started a project in May 1996, to review country experiences in order to develop concrete and operational guidance on how to initiate a sustained, country-driven action towards the elimination of child labour. The outputs of the first phase of the project will be seven country analyses (Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand and Turkey) and the first version of a Best Practice Guide on sustainable action against child labour.

*For more information contact the ILO/IPEC Programme (see above).*

### PENSION REFORM

From 15 to 18 April 1997, the ILO organised a "Tripartite Regional Consultation with Central and Eastern

### A quarterly review of the International Labour Organization and ILO- related activities and events taking place around the world.

European Countries on the Development of an ILO Approach to the Reform and Development of Pension Systems". A similar meeting took place in Harare the same month while four other meetings on pension reform are still to be held, in Bangkok, Abidjan, Lima and Paris.

*For more information, contact the Social Security Department, Mr C. Gillion (Director), tel. +4122/799-6633, fax: +4122/799-7962, E-mail: secsoc@ilo.org.*

### PROMOTING ILO STANDARDS IN LATIN AMERICA

The countries of Latin America have experienced profound changes in their economies as a result of structural adjustment, particularly in rural areas. Financed by the Government of Norway,



**Latin America: International labour standards can be made more accessible to the rural population through training and workers' education.**

the ILO started a project in January 1996, to improve working and living conditions of rural workers in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Rural

workers' organizations will be able to defend the interests of their members by making international labour standards more accessible to the rural population through training and workers' education.

*For more information, contact the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities, Mrs. E. Goodson, tel. +4122/799-6187; fax: +4122/799-6570; E-mail: actrav@ilo.org.*

### EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

As a follow-up to the World Social Summit in 1995, a UN Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods was established, chaired by the ILO. Among other initiatives, the Task Force organized a number of country reviews to analyse problems in employment and social development. The Country Review "Hungary: Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods" was presented at a high-level tripartite seminar in Budapest on 31 January 1997, and was considered to be not only of benefit to Hungary but also to other countries in the region.

*For more information and to obtain a copy of the country review, contact the ILO's Central and Eastern European Team, Mozsar utca 14, H-1066 Budapest, Hungary. Tel. +361/301-4900; fax: +361/153-3683; E-mail: registry@ilo-ceet.hu.*

### 1996 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE MULTI-BILATERAL PROGRAMME

Although the relative availability of "official development assistance" in 1996 was at its lowest level in nearly half a century, funding for the ILO's technical cooperation activities and approval of new projects has continued to increase. The ILO's multi-bilateral programme now accounts for about

**48 per cent of its total technical co-operation expenditure, with the four largest donors – Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway – con-**



**tributing 80 per cent of programme funds. Among the beneficiaries, African countries benefited most with a 35 per cent share.**

The ILO's technical cooperation programme is mainly funded from resources within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the multi-bilateral donors. The latter consists of voluntary contributions from a number of governments towards the ILO's programme.

These contributions are typically made for specific project activities in one or more countries. In a few cases, such multi-bilateral contributions are available in support of larger ILO programmes. This is the case, for instance, with funding from Germany for the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and from Denmark for the ILO's workers' and employers' activities.

Though the environment for resource mobilization remains difficult – total Official Development Assistance (ODA) was \$41 billion, at its lowest level in forty-five years when compared with the GNP of donors in industrialized countries – the ILO's multi-bilateral programme grew modestly in 1996. It accounted for about 48 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditure compared with 41 per cent in 1995.

### **New projects on increase**

Overall, new project approvals rose slightly in 1996. While there was an encouraging increase of nearly 50 per cent in UNDP approvals, multi-bilateral approvals fell by 7.3 per cent to \$78.8 million in 1996 following the record level attained in 1995. Multi-bilateral approvals accounted for nearly 69 per cent of total approvals.

In 1996, Germany's pledged contribution of US\$ 33.8 million to IPEC represented nearly 43 per cent of the total multi-bilateral approvals. Germany was by far the single largest contributor to the ILO's multi-bilateral programme in terms of approvals. In 1995, Spain was the largest overall contributor to the programme in terms of approved projects.

After Germany, the Netherlands was the second largest contributor to the ILO's multi-bilateral programme with total approvals of \$10.4 million in 1996. The Netherlands, together with Denmark and Norway contributed 36 per cent of total approvals. It is significant to note that the four largest donors contributed virtually 80 per cent of the multi-bilateral programme in 1996, compared with about 65 per cent in 1995.

Of the remaining contributors, Japan's share remained stable at about 4 per cent. Belgium's contribution increased modestly and the United Arab Emirates, a first-time contributor in 1995, continued to support activities in Palestine through the ILO in 1996. Luxembourg and Kuwait were first-time contributors in 1996. Italy and Spain continued their support to the ILO's technical cooperation programme in line with commitments made in the recent past. The USA, Canada, France and Australia, countries generally preferring to work bilaterally and/or to channel support to the UN development efforts through the UNDP, contributed to the ILO's programme in 1996 and to IPEC activities in particular.

### **Programme expenditures**

Since 1991, the programme of the Enterprise and Cooperative Development Department (ENTREPRISE) has been largest in terms of expenditure and this continued to be the case in 1996. It was closely followed by the Working Conditions and Environment Department (TRAVAIL), where IPEC expenditure was significant. The expenditure in these two technical fields accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the multi-bilateral programme. Programmes in the technical fields of the Employment and Training Department (EMPFORM), Development Policies Department (POLDEV), the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the Industrial Relations and Labour Administration Department (RELPROF) together accounted for another 44 per cent of total expenditures.

The multi-bilateral programme was largest in Africa. With an expenditure of US\$ 18.3 million Africa's share was 35 per cent, slightly higher than the previous year. Expenditure also increased in Asia and the Pacific region and in the Arab States. The downward trend in Latin America should be reversed in the near future following the high level of project approvals in 1995. The expenditure on interregional projects continued to increase from US\$ 9.2 million in 1995 to nearly US\$ 11 million in 1996 and amounted to 21 per cent of total expenditure in 1996.

The Associate Expert Programme faced a drop from 118 to 107 professionals in 1996. The Netherlands continued to have the largest programme for young professionals with 44.5 per cent of the total expenditure and 46 associate experts. Germany financed 12 associate experts in 1996 and had the second largest programme, with Denmark a close third.

### **TWELFTH ASIAN REGIONAL MEETING, BANGKOK, 9-11 DECEMBER 1997**

The ILO will hold its Twelfth Asian Regional Meeting in Bangkok on 9-11 December 1997. High-level delegations from over 30 member States in Asia and the Pacific, and in the Arab States of West Asia, including Ministers of Labour, are expected to attend.

The Meeting, organized by the Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific, is the first to be held since 1991. It will provide a forum for delegations from governments, and employers' and workers' organizations to express their views on the ILO's activities in the region, and their priority needs for ILO services, as well as the ILO's future strategy. This is particularly important in light of the major changes in the ILO's structure and methods of work since 1993.

The *Report of the Director-General* will form the basis of the discussion in the Meeting. It covers major regional developments in the face of the challenges raised by globalization and liberalization in the region, and the ILO's response to those challenges. Among the themes covered are employment promotion and poverty alleviation, women workers, migrant workers, the informal sector, child labour, human resources development, industrial relations and tripartism, workers' protection (working conditions, occupational safety and health, and social security), and labour administration. Emphasis is placed throughout on the role of the social partners in economic and social policy-making, and on fundamental international labour standards as a guide to the actions of member States. The conclusions to the *Report* and points for discussion will guide delegates in formulating the conclusions to the Meeting.

The *Report*, which will be distributed to all participants three months before the Meeting, is being published in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Russian. It will also be available on the ILO's internet site ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)) in English and French.

*For more information, contact Rosemary Beattie, Public Information Officer, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 11th Floor, United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, P.O. Box 2-349, Bangkok 10200, Thailand. Tel.: +632/288-2482; fax: +632/280-1735; E-mail: [beattierjm@ilobkk.or.th](mailto:beattierjm@ilobkk.or.th).*

# Working World

## UNEMPLOYMENT

● A survey of 2,000 French citizens on their attitudes toward unemployment, the unemployed and unemployment benefits shows that unemployment leads to a breakdown in social relations and a feeling of pessimism about the future of society. Twenty-one per cent of people who are or who have been unemployed feel that "society has abandoned them" as opposed to 9 per cent of employed persons. (Source: UNEDIC)

## A quarterly review of trends and developments in the world of work

### LABOUR AGREEMENTS

● In **France** the annual appraisal of collective bargaining (*Bilan annuel de la négociation collective*), published by the Ministry of Labour, reveals an increase in

the number of industry-wide agreements (1,030 – up 6.5 per cent) and enterprise-level agreements (9,274 – up 8 per cent). For the first time, working time arrangements are the primary focus of agreements, ahead of salaries.

● The two-week strike in the UPS parcel service in the **United States**, and the agreement that marked the end of it, providing for the establishment of 10,000 full-time jobs, provides two valuable lessons. It expresses the rejection by wage earners of the spread of precarious and part-time employment and it could signal a revival of the trade union movement in the United States. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde*, *Libération*)

● An agreement covering 95,000 wage earners in **Germany** was signed between the management of Volkswagen and the trade union IG Metall, making provision for both salary increases and early and phased retirement. These retirement provisions would affect 10,000 workers over five years, and the enterprise would recruit the 1,200 apprentices it trains each year. (Source: *IBIS*)

● The Government has put an end to half a century of

monopoly by the trade union confederation in **Argentina** by registering the Congress of Argentine Workers (CTA), which came into being following a rift in the General Confederation of Labour (CGT). This recognition is in fact the result of a complaint submitted to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association. Last August the CTA, with some CGT participation, organized a 24-hour general strike that partly paralyzed the country, in protest against the Government's economic and social policy. The CGT is involved in negotiations with the Government on the content of employment flexibility reforms.

● A return to collective bargaining has been seen in the Andean region of Latin America. Discussions between governments, trade unions and employers are being held in **Colombia** and **Ecuador**. In **Venezuela** they have shown a measure of success; a tripartite agreement was signed on wage-scale reform, with implications for the calculation of social contributions and termination indemnities. Discussions are still continuing about the details of implementation; the ILO, responsible for monitoring the agreement, is providing assistance in this connection.

### SOCIAL SECURITY AND PENSIONS

● Last July the **Hungarian** Parliament adopted a law for the partial privatization of the



Jacques Maillard

In France, 21 per cent of people who are or who have been unemployed feel that "society has abandoned them" as opposed to 9 per cent of employed persons.

social security system. As from 1 January 1998, one quarter of contributions will be placed in private pension funds. (Source: IBIS)

- In **Kazakhstan** from 1998 onwards, the public pay-as-you-go pension scheme will be replaced by a funded private pension system. One-fifth of the social security contributions made by wage earners will be deposited into these private pension funds. (Source: IBIS)

- A draft law before the Parliament of **Lithuania** makes provision for the establishment and regulation of optional private pension funds. A joint supervisory body, in which workers' and employers' representatives would participate, would be set up to appoint the fund managers. Several enterprises have expressed interest and it is thought that initially 10 per cent of the population, those in the highest income bracket, would be able to join it. (Source: IBIS)

- The association of Dutch actuaries has carried out a study which shows that the average increase in life expectancy seen in the **Netherlands** in the past five years is likely to lead to a 2.3 per cent increase in the cost of the public pension scheme.

## MILESTONES

- In the **United States**, according to a study by the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, in 1996, 1.1 million enterprises were owned by women belonging to black, Asian and Latin-American minorities. This figure represents a 153 per cent increase as compared with 1987, three times that of the total number of enterprises throughout the country. (Source: *Wall Street Journal Europe*)

- In **China**, according to the Chinese federation for the disabled, the 1991 Act on the protection of disabled persons has shown very positive re-

sults. The setting up of 1,280 vocational guidance offices and 445 special vocational training centres have enabled many disabled persons to find employment. Today the authorities believe 70 per cent of the 60 million Chinese persons suffering from a disability to be in stable employment. (Source: *Comtex*)

- A survey of 1,600 adults in **Ukraine** conducted by the Ukrainian market-economy education programme, shows that 60 per cent of those surveyed consider the pace of economic reform to be too slow. (Source: *Today's News*)

- While the various forms of non-traditional employment

are often advantageous for enterprises, when it comes to unskilled work they are proving increasingly costly, with high-level "wage earners" being recruited as consultants or independent workers. In the **United States**, the remuneration of such workers has risen by 9 per cent this year in leading sectors. This category of worker is also often more mobile and has a higher turnover rate than employers would ideally like. (Source: *Computer World and International Labour Review*)

- As the **United Kingdom** will no longer be opting out of the protocol on social policy annexed to the Maastricht Treaty, this text has now been incorporated into the Treaty

as its social chapter. This means that from now on the decisions taken in accordance with this chapter will apply to all European Union member States. This will be the case, for example, for directives resulting from agreements concluded by the social partners, such as the directive on the European Works Council. A new agreement on part-time work has in fact just been signed, which will become a directive following adoption by the Council of Ministers. Its objective is to promote the development of part-time work and to prohibit all discrimination against the workers involved.



Jacques Maillard

- According to Germany's Minister of Science and Research, **Jürgen Rüttgers**, biotechnology may create 70,000 new jobs in his country by the year 2000. The Minister addressed the newly founded German Industrial Federation for Biotechnology (DIB), representing some 65 enterprises from the branches concerned, including major representatives of the German chemical and pharmaceutical industry, like Bayer, BASF, Hoechst and Schering. The German government now intends to simplify licensing procedures, but conditions of research were already comparable to those in the United States, the President of the Federation of the German Chemical Industry (VCI), **Jürgen Strube** said. The value of the biopharmaceutical market in Germany almost doubled from 1.1 billion DM in 1993 to 2.1 billion DM this year.



# Media focus: The ILO in the press

## EL PAIS

DIARIO INDEPENDIENTE DE LA MAÑANA

Estados en desarrollo creen que se trata de un intento de proteccionismo

**La OIT quiere una “etiqueta social” para los países que respeten las normas laborales**

L.V., Ginebra

El director de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT), Michel Hansenne, volvió a lanzar ayer, durante la sesión de apertura de la 85 conferencia de la organización, la idea de una “etiqueta social mundial” para acreditar qué países respetan los derechos humanos y laborales de los trabajadores. La etiqueta, según la propuesta del ex ministro de Trabajo de Bélgica, tendría “únicamente un carácter informativo.

Este procedimiento es rechazado por los países menos desarrollados, que lo consideran una argucia de las potencias industriales para proteger sus mercados.

Hansenne recordó a los 3.000 delegados de 174 Estados miembros del organismo de las Naciones Unidas para las cuestiones laborales que esta iniciativa de la OIT tiene dos antecedentes: la cumbre mundial sobre desarrollo social, que se celebró en Copenhague en 1995, y la conferencia de ministros de Comercio que se llevó a cabo en 1996.

Agregó que la reunión de la Organización Mundial de Comercio de Singapur, en diciembre pasado, renovó el compromiso de los países miembros de observar las normas laborales

fundamentales internacionalmente reconocidas.

## LE FIGARO

premier quotidien national français

*Conférence internationale du travail*

**OIT: l'affrontement Nord-Sud a été évité**

*L'Organisation internationale du Travail va tenter de rédiger une nouvelle déclaration qui l'aidera à remplir le nouveau rôle qu'elle doit jouer dans le processus de mondialisation du commerce*

L'affrontement Nord-Sud a été évité lors de la 85<sup>e</sup> Conférence internationale du Travail qui s'est tenue à Genève du 3 au 19 juin. Les débats prenaient cette année un relief particulier, dans la mesure où le rôle de l'Organisation internationale du Travail (OIT) avait été réaffirmé à Singapour lors de la première conférence ministérielle de l'Organisation mondiale du Commerce (OMC) en décembre 1996. Tous les pays s'étaient alors accordés pour considérer que la mondialisation de l'économie portait en elle les fruits du développement social.

Sous la pression du libéralisme ambiant, il avait été admis que l'OMC ne pouvait jouer aucun rôle dans ce domaine, chasse gardée de l'OIT. En revanche, il avait été «acté» que les deux organisations devaient mener une collaboration fructueuse.

Une conclusion dont il n'était pas difficile de mesurer l'hypocrisie dans la mesure où de nombreux pays tablaient et tablent encore sur l'incapacité de l'OIT à faire appliquer les normes fondamentales du droit du travail:

interdiction du travail des enfants, du travail forcé, non-discrimination et liberté d'association et donc de négociation.

## El Watan

— Le Quotidien Indépendant —

24.7.97

L'aide internationale pour la Palestine, malgré des contraintes financières dues à des retards dans les engagements promis par les donateurs, est réelle et palpable. Cette action d'envergure est perceptible dans une multitude de projets en chantier, où le rôle des experts des Nations unies ou de pays bailleurs de fonds est important.

A l'image du Centre de formation et d'aide aux petits entrepreneurs palestiniens, piloté par le très dynamique Abu Shaban Saïd à Ghaza. Financé par le Koweït, à hauteur de 500.000 dollars, la conception est assurée par le bureau du BIT en Palestine, dirigé par un “vieux routier” de la coopération internationale, l'italien Ugo Trojano, assisté depuis peu par un expert associé, Maurizio Bussi, installé en permanence à Ghaza.

A eux deux pour toute la Cisjordanie et Ghaza, ces fonctionnaires du BIT abattent un énorme travail, salué par tous les responsables palestiniens que nous avons rencontrés.

Pour peu que les accords de paix se débloquent rapidement, le paysage social et économique palestinien pourrait connaître des changements considérables.

# Le Monde

## Le Bureau international du travail cherche à adapter à la mondialisation de l'économie

*Réunie à Genève, il tente de proposer de nouvelles normes sociales*

CREE EN 1919, le Bureau international du travail (BIT) va-t-il être capable de s'adapter à la mondialisation de l'économie? Telle est, entre les lignes, la question que pose le directeur général de cette institution, Michel Hansenne, aux 3 000 délégués venus de 174 pays à l'occasion de la 85<sup>e</sup> session de la Conférence internationale du travail, qui se tient à Genève du 3 au 19 juin.

Sans être en crise, le BIT s'interroge: faute de consensus, la clause sociale censée accompagner la libéralisation des échanges commerciaux est enterrée. Pis: certains adhérents de l'Organisation internationale du Travail (OIT) bafouent ouvertement certaines conventions dites «fondamentales» de l'organisation sans qu'aucune sanction ne soit prise à leur encontre.

En décembre 1996, les ministres présents à la conférence de l'Organisation mondiale du Commerce (OMC), réunie à Singapour, ont eu une attitude ambiguë. Ils ont refusé de sanctionner les pays qui ne respectent pas les normes sociales fondamentales mais ils ont reconnu que «l'OIT est l'organe compétent pour établir ces normes et s'en occuper».

Saisissant la balle au bond, Michel Hansenne propose aux 174 Etats membres de «revitaliser le système de normes internationales du travail», en adoptant trois réformes. La première consiste à rendre obligatoire le respect des droits fondamentaux de l'homme au travail, tels qu'ils sont définis dans les sept conventions fondamentales de l'OIT: liberté syndicale et négociation collective (conventions n<sup>os</sup> 87 et 98), travail forcé (n<sup>os</sup> 29 et 105), non-discrimination (n<sup>os</sup> 100 et 111), âge minimum (n<sup>o</sup> 138). Si cette réforme est acceptée, la simple adhésion à l'OIT signifierait l'acceptation de ces normes.

## FINANCIAL TIMES

### ILO to boost its role in setting standards

June 20, 1997

By Frances Williams  
in Geneva

Mr. Michel Hansenne, director-general of the International Labour Organisation, intends to push ahead with plans to strengthen the agency's standard-setting role, despite vigorous opposition from some developing countries.

However, proposals for a social label certifying countries which respect core labour standards seem likely to be dropped in their present form. They produced a highly negative reaction from poor nations and only a tepid response from richer ones.

Mr. Hansenne, summing up the labour standards debate at the United Nations agency's annual conference which ended yesterday, said it had revealed a "fairly broad consensus" in favour of a solemn pledge by ILO members at next year's conference to respect basic worker rights. This would be accompanied by a strengthened supervisory mechanism to monitor compliance.

Though a number of important developing countries – including China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico, Colombia, Egypt and Iran – disagreed with the idea, ILO officials said they were a minority.

The proposal for a declaration is said to have wide support among unions and employers (which are also ILO members

under its tripartite structure) as well as among industrialised nations and some developing countries such as Chile, the Philippines and Argentina.

## Neue Zürcher Zeitung

### Modernisierungspläne der IAO

*Abschluss der 85. Session der Weltarbeitskonferenz*

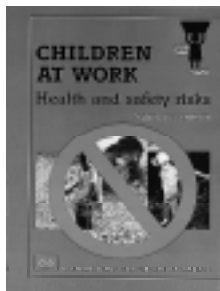
Ww. Genf, 19. Juni

Die über 2000 Delegierten aus Regierungs-, Arbeitgeber- und Gewerkschaftskreisen aus 174 Mitgliedsländern haben am Donnerstag im Genfer Völkerbundpalast die 85. Session der Internationalen Arbeitsorganisation (ILO – International Labour Organization) ohne Überraschungen abgeschlossen. Die gesteckten Ziele wurden im wesentlichen erreicht. Der vor einigen Jahren eingeleitete Reformprozeß der ILO und ihres Sekretariats, des Internationalen Arbeitsamtes (ILO – International Labour Office), wird etwas fokussierter weitergeführt. Die Leitlinien, die aus den Diskussionen an der Weltarbeitskonferenz genannten Tagung herauszufiltern sind, enthalten freilich auch Warnungen vor allzuviel sozial- und beschäftigungspolitischem Aktivismus auf multilateraler Ebene. ILO-Generaldirektor *Michel Hansenne* wird viel Finger-spitzengefühl zeigen müssen, wenn er in den nächsten zwölf Monaten die breit gefächerten politischen Vorgaben in eine kohärent modernisierte und allseitig annehmbare ILO-Arbeitsbasis zusammenschweißen will.

## In print

■ **Children at work: Health and safety risks**, by Valentina Forastieri, Geneva, 1997. ISBN 92-2-109520-7. Swiss francs 25; US\$ 22.50; UK£13.50.

The purpose of this book is to propose an approach to the protection of children through



the development of a programme on occupational safety and health specially addressed to working children, within the framework of a national policy aimed at the elimination of child labour. It includes procedures to identify hazardous working conditions, and provides guidance for the development of improved methods and instruments to assess and protect the health of working children. It supplies basic information and guidance for the general reader,

as well as reference material on possible child-related occupational diseases for physicians and others.

■ **Women in the 1980-95 period: Constraints and opportunities**, *Bibliographical Series*, No. 18, by Maryse Gaudier. ISBN 92-9014-570-6. Swiss francs 22.50; US\$ 20.25; UK£12.15. Bilingual English/French.

This bibliography brings together a selection of materials which reviews the situation of women around the world and examines their responses to the challenges which are confronting them. The analysis of their constraints and opportunities

during the 1980-95 period leads to the identification of the major principles on which a global, but more coherent and equitable society could be constructed. Given that they have the profile of actors of the future, women must play a major role in this construction.

■ **Work organization and ergonomics**, edited by Vittorio Di Martino and Nigel Corlett, forthcoming ISBN 92-2-109518-5.

This book shows how to use ergonomics and work organization to improve working conditions, increase productivity, and enhance quality and performance. It draws together some of the basic changes being

applied by enterprises worldwide, and explains briefly what they are and how others can benefit from them. It looks at practical aspects, where knowledge from research and applications of ergonomics and work organization have been used to match the work environment to the needs and characteristics of workers and processes, removing obstacles to the workers' ability to work effectively and efficiently to produce high-quality output, and creating human-oriented work organizations and ergonomically sound environments. This will lead to major gains for workers and employers. It is aimed at managers, supervisors, workers' representatives, engineers, trainers and consultants, particularly those engaged in processes of transformation and innovation.

■ **October Inquiry results, 1995-1996**, forthcoming in 1997. ISBN 92-2-007353-6. Swiss francs 35; US\$31.50; £18.95. Trilingual English, French and Spanish.

Presents the latest results of the ILO October Inquiry, a worldwide survey of wages and hours of work relating to 159 occupations in 49 industry groups and of retail prices of 93 food items, conducted with reference

## International Labour Review

■ Volume 136 (1997), No. 2 (Summer). ISSN 0020-7780. Swiss francs 80, US\$ 72, UK£ 44 for a one-year subscription.

Fashionable arguments of cultural relativism notwithstanding, there are some universal standards by which the present situation in very many countries, rich and poor, must be judged intolerable. Far too many people have fallen "below the line" in countries of the West, East and South, and articles in this issue of the *International Labour Review* confront some of the fundamental "bads" – mass unemployment, denial of basic labour rights and child labour.

Not all is well on either side of the north Atlantic, and complacency is unwarranted. As Amartya Sen points out, inequality goes well beyond the question of income, and the mass unemployment now found in major European countries contributes to growing inequality in many spheres. Health and well-being, political voice and race relations all tend to deteriorate; able-bodied older workers are forced to retire from productive work prematurely. The heavy pen-

alties borne by the unemployed also cause major social ills that should not be tolerated. (Sen, "Inequality, unemployment and contemporary Europe").

Peoples' concern over the fate of those deprived of basic rights is arguably as great now as it was in 1919 when the ILO began its work of creating a body of international labour law to protect those basic rights. Yet, in this era of globalized financial flows and fierce competition, the role and value of labour standards are being questioned. Cultural differences are sometimes used as an added excuse for giving low priority to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and nondiscrimination. Eddy Lee outlines the contending positions. He exposes the popular and often misguided arguments that interfere with the design of relevant policy and points to the implicit consensus on core labour standards. (Lee, "Globalization and labour standards: A review of issues").

One of the immemorial battles of workers is against the introduction of new technology, perceived as job destroying. Yet the gains which workers have been able to reap –

collectively and individually – are the obvious result of technological innovations. Samanta Padalino and Marco Vivarelli counter the technology pessimists, both theoretically and empirically. While their arguments and evidence may not be sufficient to convince all anxious workers, they show that the employment intensity of economic growth has not diminished in the major industrialized countries. People should not be misled by partial information on short term developments in a few industries; the reality is different – and more promising. (Padalino and Vivarelli, "The employment intensity of economic growth in the G-7 countries").

Child labour is an acknowledged scourge, an intolerable bad, but there are many views on what are the best means of countering it. One type of instrument that is being increasingly used is the social label, which is discussed in this issue by Janet Hilowitz. A few labels now notify the consumer that the product he or she is buying was made without child labour. (Hilowitz, "Social labelling to combat child labour: Some considerations").

The ILO has been seized with the issue of child labour since its inception. The substantial "perspective" in this issue, prepared by one of the *Review* editors, is a useful overview that explains the major ILO initiatives to combat child labour. A substantial body of international and national law has been developed and will shortly be extended, and the ILO has coordinated the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour since 1992.

This issue of the *Review* is completed by an extended books section, with reviews and notes on books concerning forms of international cooperation, new patterns of collective labour law in central Europe, social exclusion in the United Kingdom, fairness in international law, the future of work, the informal sector, social dialogue in the European Union, and industrial relations as well as new ILO reports for the International Labour Conference. Of particular interest to some readers will be a new book on the ILO's first Director, Albert Thomas.



to the month of October each year.

■ **International migration statistics: Guidelines for improvement of data collection systems**, by R.E. Bilsborrow, Graeme Hugo, A.S. Oberai and Hania Zlotnik, 1997. ISBN 92-2-109517-7. Swiss francs 75; US\$ 67.50; UK£40.50.

The first comprehensive publication on this topic, this book aims at strengthening the capacity of countries to generate relevant and more meaningful data on international migration, which would assist in the formulation and analysis of migration policy. Topics include the international comparability of migration data, the potential and weaknesses of existing data collection systems and the development of meaningful surveys.

■ **Protection of workers' personal data: An ILO Code of Practice**, 1997. ISBN 92-2-110329-3. Swiss francs 15.

Employers collect personal data on job applicants and workers for a number of purposes, and new ways of collecting and processing such data entail some new risks for workers. While various national laws and international standards have established binding procedures for processing personal data, there is a need to develop data protection provisions which specifically address workers' personal data in order to safeguard their dignity, protect their privacy and guarantee their fundamental right to determine for what purpose and under what conditions this data is being used.

This book provides guidance on the protection of such data, covering general principles and specific provisions regarding data collection, security, storage, use and communication. This Code will be invaluable for the development of legislation, regulations, collective agreements, work rules, policies and practical measures at the enterprise level.

#### Recent Reprints

■ **Inspection of labour conditions on board ship: Guidelines for procedure**. ILO Geneva



(2nd impression) 1997. ISBN 92-107096-4. Swiss francs 17.50.

Accidents involving ships often result in deaths, loss of ships and damage to the marine environment, and they are a fact of modern times. Such accidents can be traced in part to the growth and changing nature of sea-borne commerce. Equally significant, however, are the changes in labour conditions for seafarers and the problem of substandard ships.

These guidelines will assist those concerned with labour and social conditions on board ship, to help ensure that the relevant international labour standards are complied with, and to minimize the risk of accidents caused by not fulfilling these standards.

■ **Safety and health in dock work**. ILO Geneva, (5th impression) 1997. ISBN 92-2-101593-9. Swiss francs 27.50.

The new and enlarged edition of this Code of Practice takes account of the many significant developments that have affected the nature of dock work during the two decades since the first edition was published (among them the introduction of freight containers, the "Ro-Ro" system, and the sophisticated lifting and loading equipment in the new ocean terminals), whilst still observing the guiding principles of the original edition. It therefore serves as a corpus of advice for use both in docks where conventional methods are employed and in those where



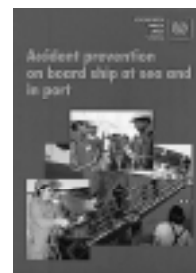
technological improvements have been introduced, and provides valuable guidance for all bodies and persons concerned with safety and health in dock work.

■ **Accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port**. ILO Geneva, 1997. ISBN 92-2-109450-2. Swiss francs 27.50.

The safety aspects of work on board ship are a major concern for shipowners and seafarers alike.

This Code of Practice covers the special risks connected to the carriage of bulk cargoes such as oil, gas and chemicals and the hazards relating to roll-on/roll-off vessels, ferries and container ships. It also deals with the perennial problems of anchoring, mooring, access to the ship, use of hoisting devices, general cargo working, maintenance and so on, taking account of the growth and changing nature of sea-borne commerce in recent years.

The Code is drawn up by



an international group of experts for all those concerned with safety and health on board ship.

## ...News Section...News Section...

(...continued from p. 29)

### ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IN ASIA

Representatives of fourteen international trade union organizations met in Bangkok in July to discuss the role of trade unions in the fight against child labour in Asia. The meeting was organized by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) to promote trade union involvement in activities for eliminating child labour in Asian countries, and involved field staff of IPEC and ACTRAV.

After intensive discussions the participants agreed that child labour is not only a major social issue but it is also an important issue which directly affects trade union organizations and their members. All unions should have a policy and an action plan on child labour and international trade union organizations should help their member unions at the national level to develop such policies and plans. Awareness raising activity among the workers would be the first step for any union but more direct action to help eliminate

child labour should also be undertaken.

In addition to policy formulation and a general awareness campaign, a number of trade unions in different industries are already carrying out activities dealing with working children. The International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) is working to reduce child labour at brick kilns in India through education, and the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) is implementing a project to help children in the textile industry in several countries in Asia. All the IPEC countries represented at the meeting reported a number of other activities implemented by local unions.

New possibilities for the larger involvement of trade unions in this field were also discussed, including a campaign against child labour in tourism industry, union activity dealing with child labour in tea plantations and awareness raising among teachers through their unions. ACTRAV and IPEC will follow up this meeting with individual consultations with the participating organizations as well as discussions at the national level.

ILO publications on sale can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or directly from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Tel: +4122/799-7301; fax: +4122/799-6938; <http://www.ilo.org>. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address. The ILO Publications Center in the US can be contacted at tel: +301/638-3152; fax: +301/843-0159; E-mail: [ILOPubs@Tasco.com](mailto:ILOPubs@Tasco.com); Web site: <http://www.un.org/depts/ilowbo>.



# About Enterprise

The ILO Enterprise and Cooperative Development Department (ENTREPRISE) helps member States – particularly developing countries and countries in transition – strengthen their capacity to design, promote and implement enterprise and cooperative development policies and programmes.

To achieve this, ENTREPRISE provides policy advice and technical support to a wide range of

institutions, both public and private. The Department is composed of the Entrepreneurship and Management Development Branch (ENT/MAN) and the Cooperative Branch (COOP).

ENTREPRISE activities aim in particular at the creation of productive and sustainable jobs in enterprises and cooperatives. At the policy level, the Department

promotes a legal and regulatory framework facilitating the creation and growth of enterprises. In

addition, it promotes and supports programmes in such areas as micro- and small enterprise development, entrepreneurship training, productivity improvement, managerial capacity building, enterprise restructuring, privatization and *enterprise finance*.

ENTREPRISE also promotes democratically and efficiently managed *cooperatives* as a viable option to create employment and stimulate equitable economic growth, particularly in the context of privatization and adjustment processes. To give added impetus to its work in the area of small enterprise development, ENTREPRISE is launching the ILO's *International Small Enterprise Programme* (ISEP). This programme aims at the generation of quality jobs in small enterprise through networking at the national, regional and international levels and promotes the use of existing ILO materials such as *Start and Improve your Business* (SIYB).

For further information contact:

The Enterprise and Cooperative Development Department (ENTREPRISE)  
E-Mail address: ENTREPRISE@ilo.org  
Tel. +4122/799-8427 (Secretariat)  
Facsimile No. +4122/799-7691.

