

An ITF resource book  
for trade unionists  
in the transport sector



# How to use this resource book

The 39th ITF Congress held in 1998 in New Delhi, India, launched a debate on how to transform the attitudes, approach and organisational culture of transport unions across the world to meet the challenge of the international economy. Similar discussions and debates are being conducted throughout the international trade union movement.

The “Mobilising Solidarity” programme which was adopted at that congress is being debated and expanded under the theme of “Globalising Solidarity” at the 40th ITF Congress in Vancouver, Canada, in August 2002.

The ITF recognises that in many unions involvement in international questions is still limited, mostly concentrated in the hands of union officers who regularly attend international meetings. It is, however, essential that in today’s world of “globalisation” representatives and members of all transport unions develop an international perspective on their industry and union organisation.

The key to this is education. The global transport economy, however, demands a new approach to education – not just for building local or national organising capacity, but to develop the trade union movement’s ability to think and act globally.

This resource book is part of the ITF’s effort to support education for globalising solidarity. It is for:

- **Worker activists in the transport sectors**
- **Trade union educators and education committees in ITF affiliates**
- **Office bearers, board members and national/regional committee members of ITF affiliates.**

It is primarily intended to be an educational tool, either for informal personal study or as a basis for more formal trade union education activity. It does not presume that the reader has any previous experience of international trade union work, but it does assume a basic knowledge and experience of trade unionism itself.

We draw on the experiences of transport unions and transport workers in different countries. These international examples can be used to raise awareness and stimulate new and critical thinking amongst members in your own union.

At the end of each section, there are examples of education activities that can be used or adapted for trade union courses. You might have a course on globalisation or want to use the exercises in general courses on bargaining, the economy, etc. Pick and choose from those sections which best meet your needs.

You might not have the time or resources to run education programmes. Identify information in this resource book which is useful to fellow union members. Publish it in your union newsletter or circular. The book is deliberately designed so that sections can be easily photocopied. The ITF will not enforce any copyright for reproduction of this material for educational purposes.

If your union has a website, put sections of the resource book on it, or create a link to the ITF website at [www.itf.org.uk](http://www.itf.org.uk)

This resource book is an important part of the ITF’s “Mobilising Solidarity” strategy. It is one of a set of three. The other two books are: “*Women Transporting the World*” and “*Workers’ Rights are Human Rights*”.



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# Introduction

The globalisation of the world economy has only been made possible by dramatic changes in the technology and organisation of international transport. It relies on global communications, low cost shipping, cheaper air travel, and containerisation. It demands new high speed road and rail networks geared to regional and global transport hubs. It requires global port operators, multinational transport companies and international airline alliances.

Global trends have profound local effects. There are few transport workers who have not already directly felt the consequences of these dramatic changes. The globalisation of the world economy requires the movement of goods and people at ever greater volume, at ever lower cost. Yet the constant pressure for lower costs of this “economic modernisation” has led to indecent work standards, from the appalling conditions at sea encouraged by the flag of convenience system to the inhuman and dangerous hours worked by thousands of truck drivers. It has increased work intensity and eroded working conditions for all transport workers. It has often led to lower standards of safety and security for employees and the general public.

The global economy has developed faster than anyone could have anticipated. Certainly it has developed faster than national trade union structures or attitudes. Transport unions in the ITF work together to support each other in co-ordinating effective responses to the changes which have an impact on workers.

A key element in any response is trade union education. In a strategy document adopted at the ITF's 39th Congress in New Delhi in 1998 called “Mobilising Solidarity” the ITF and its affiliates agreed that “international solidarity, economic globalisation, regional economic integration, and the role of the ITF and other international institutions must be included in basic trade union education courses”. The central aim of the strategy has been to improve understanding and

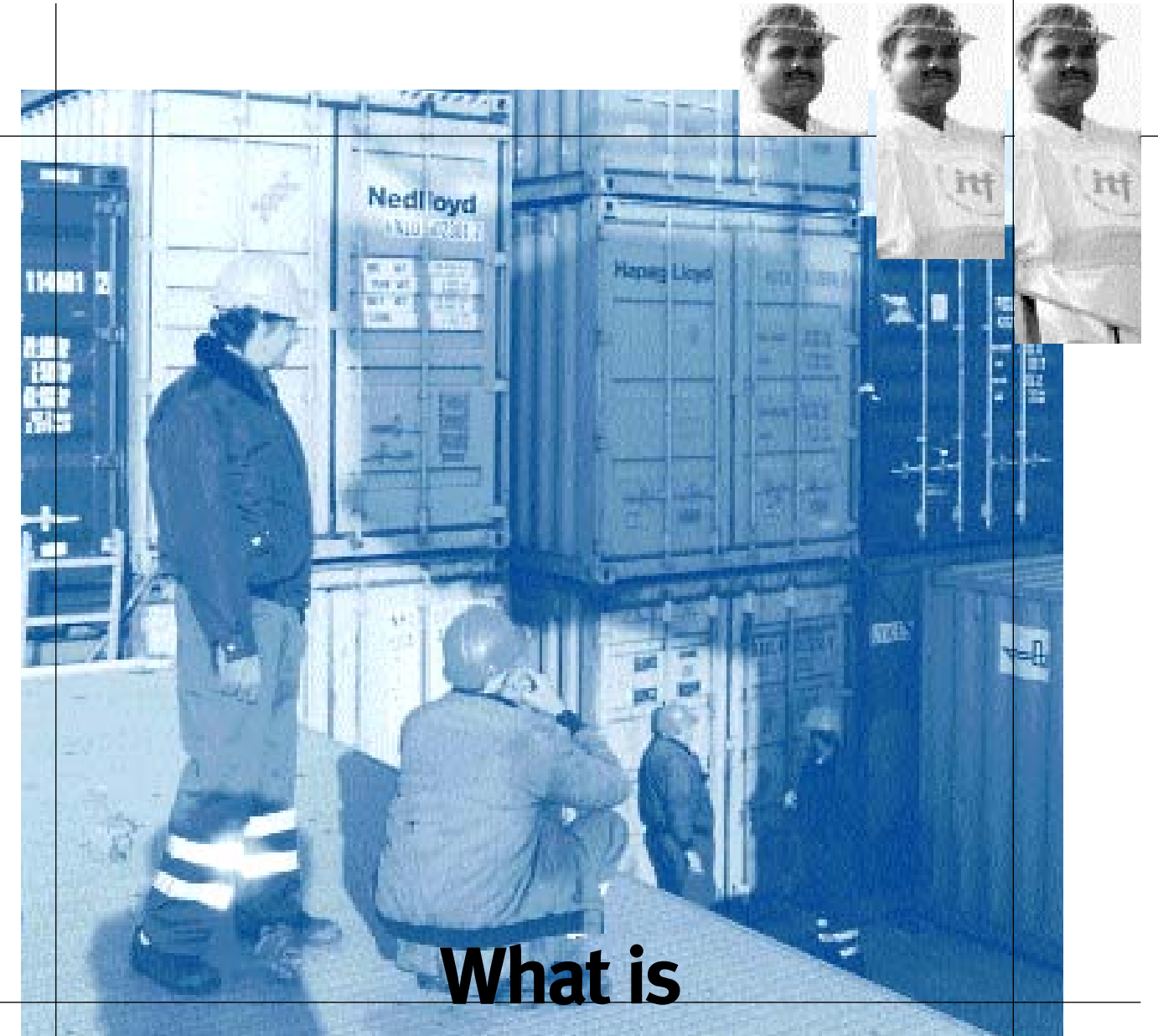
communications between transport workers around the globe and to “flatten” the traditional “communications pyramid” of the trade union movement.

The continuing development of globalisation means that “Globalising Solidarity” between ITF-affiliated unions is ever more important. How to strengthen that global solidarity will be the main theme of the 40th Congress in August 2002.

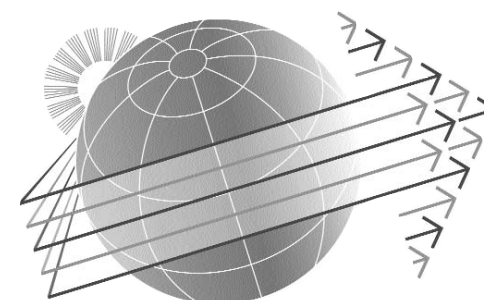
This handbook is a part of the process. It aims to help unions and workers discuss and understand the way in which globalisation affects their lives, their jobs and how they need to organise themselves. It's a resource which can be used in many different ways. As a whole or in small parts, for reference, or for debate and discussion, or as material to support a range of education activities. This handbook is not just about information, it is about ways of working and organising. We want to see it get the widest possible distribution amongst officials, activists and members of ITF unions.

This handbook does not provide a magic formula for “defeating” globalisation. It is designed to help union members to build on existing experience of transport workers within the ITF family which shows that good union organisation combined with international (or global) solidarity can change the course of what may otherwise seem to be unstoppable global forces. If it plays some role in building the confidence and organisation of transport workers it will have done its job.

**David Cockroft**  
ITF General Secretary



## What is globalisation?





## What is globalisation?

Over the last decade, the word “globalisation” has entered the political vocabulary of almost every language in the world.

Massive street demonstrations since 1999 have provided a vivid symbol of global resistance to globalisation itself.

For most people around the world, however, it is not clear what globalisation means or what can be done about it. There are many different perspectives and understandings on globalisation. Some of these are illustrated in the quotes below.

The international trade union movement worldwide has its own internal debates and discussions on what should be done. But it recognises that, for millions of people, globalisation interprets into unemployment and poverty, rising inequalities between rich and poor, environmental degradation, collapsing public services and disempowerment.

Many workers have been forced to become migrants. In the host country, they often are confronted with racism and xenophobia. Their growing poverty meets employers’ needs for a highly mobile and flexible workforce.

“Globalisation is a fact of life. But I believe we have underestimated its fragility. The problem is this. The spread of markets outpaces the ability of societies and their political systems to adjust to them, let alone to guide the course they take. History teaches us that such an imbalance between the economic, social and political realms can never be sustained for very long.”

*Kofi Annan,  
UN Secretary-General,  
February 1999*

“The focus of our efforts (on the global economy) is not to try and reform the multilateral agencies, but to deepen the crisis of legitimacy of the whole system... I am talking about disabling not just the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank, but the transnational corporation itself. And I am not talking about a process of re-regulating the TNCs but of eventually disabling or dismantling them as fundamental hazards to people, society, the environment, to everything we hold dear.”

*Walden Bello,  
Transnational Institute,  
September 2000*

“Outbreaks of anti-capitalist sentiment are meeting next to no intellectual resistance from official quarters. Governments are apologising for globalisation and promising to civilise it. Instead, if they had any regard for the plight of the poor, they would be accelerating it, celebrating it, exulting in it – and if all that were too much for the public they would at least be trying to explain it.”

*Economist leader article, UK,  
September 2000*

“Throughout the developing world unemployment and poverty grow remorselessly. And throughout the industrialised world working people face a new insecurity as thousands lose their jobs every day. Brother, Sisters, globalisation is not working for the common people. Certainly not in developing countries, nor in transition countries and no, not even in developed countries.”

*Bill Jordan, ICFTU General Secretary,  
April 2000*

“Globalisation isn’t going to disappear. But neither is it uncontrollable. Democracy continues to be the best way to raise living standards and guarantee human rights. But locally as well as nationally democracy means more than electing people and leaving them to take the decisions. It means establishing international rules which are fair and transparent and developing democratic control through a network of ‘civil society’ organisations which can exert countervailing pressure to that of big business.”

*David Cockcroft, ITF General Secretary,  
January 2000*

## Where did globalisation start?

Some would argue that the process of globalisation started with the traders of the ancient world. Others point to the colonialism and imperialism of previous centuries.

In the modern context, globalisation has its roots in:

- The rise of transnational or multinational companies.
- The collapse of the former Soviet Union and its communist allies, the move of China towards a market economy, and the creation of the first truly global market.
- The development of new technologies, particularly in transport, information technology and communications.

- The deregulation of capital markets, making it easier to buy and sell across international borders.
- The development of worldwide inter-governmental trade and finance organisations (International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organisation).
- The emergence and subsequent dominance in the 1980s and 1990s of a set of conservative economic policies, known as neo-liberalism, which underpinned the thinking behind many governments and international agencies.



Photo: Mark Baker/Reuters/Popper

# Features of globalisation

Globalisation is often referred to as if it is a law of nature and therefore impossible to challenge. The reality of course is that globalisation comes from a set of ideas and principles thought up by economists. These ideas are often referred to as neo-liberal.

Among other things, these ideas promote private enterprise as always being more efficient at delivering goods and services than the public sector, and markets as always being better at meeting needs than planning. In recent years there has been a shift by many governments away from full adherence to these policies. Nevertheless they are still the dominant influence in world economic policy-making. The neo-liberal agenda is based on the following ideas:

- **The market rules**  
This means reduced state involvement in the economy. The state is only responsible for establishing conditions for production and for the supply of infrastructure.
- **Privatisation**  
The state sells some, all or parts of its enterprises through privatisation programmes.
- **Deregulation**  
Fewer laws regulate the economy. Fewer price controls and subsidies.
- **Cuts in the public sector**  
Less money is available for education, health, transport and social security. It also often means job losses in these sectors.
- **Trade liberalisation**  
Trade barriers are lowered on goods and services, rules are relaxed on foreign investment, and domestic industries are no longer protected from outside competition.
- **Competition**  
Private firms compete for a share of the market. This competition is intensified when firms also have to compete with foreign corporations. This intensifies the pressure to lower costs, especially labour costs.
- **Outward orientation**  
The economy is organised to export goods to be sold on the world market.
- **Flexibility**  
The workplace is organised flexibly to suit the needs of the market. Restructuring, rationalisation, down-sizing and right-sizing are words associated with flexibility. Workers recognise that these are often just new words for redundancies and job insecurity.

### More information

“A Trade Union Guide to Globalisation”, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), December 2001.

Also available on the ICFTU website at: [www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation](http://www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation)

## The IMF, World Bank and Structural Adjustment Programmes

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were set up in 1944 to provide global economic stability after the Second World War. They are global institutions supporting a free trade model of economic development. Countries have voting rights in proportion to the contributions they pay. Both the IMF and World Bank are dominated by the industrialised countries.

Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) are among the policies set as conditions by the World Bank and IMF for developing countries when they seek financial aid. SAPs aim to restructure a country’s economy to enable it to repay its debt. SAP policies include:

- **Trade liberalisation, which means removing measures which protect local industries.**
- **Investment liberalisation, so that transnational companies are encouraged to invest in a country.**
- **Spending cuts, which mean that governments cut spending on transport, health, education, housing, pensions and other public services.**
- **Cuts in government subsidies, for example, on basic foods.**
- **The production of goods for export, rather than for the domestic market.**
- **Devaluation of the currency so that exports are cheaper and more competitive on the international market.**

In the face of sustained worldwide criticism and protest in the 1990s, IMF and World Bank policies have shifted towards poverty-reduction, environmental protection and social reform. They were also forced to undertake radical internal reform. Structural Adjustment Programmes are now littered with concepts of partnership, consultation and support for civil society. But, in reality, the underlying political and economic theories remain the same.

## What is the World Trade Organisation (WTO)?

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is an international organisation of more than 140 member countries. It is a forum for negotiating international trade agreements. It is also a monitoring and regulating body for enforcing agreements.

The WTO was created in 1995 as a part of the “Uruguay Round” of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It is dominated by the industrialised countries including Japan, the United States, European countries and Canada. Developing countries have found it difficult to participate fully in all the WTO’s activities and procedures, including settlement of disputes.

Prior to the Uruguay Round, GATT focused on promoting free world trade by pressuring countries to reduce tariffs. With the creation of the WTO, so-called “non-tariff barriers to trade” have also been targeted. These include, for example, national or local legislation aimed at limiting any trade that might have a negative impact on local economic development, labour, the ecology, or have social or cultural implications. If national or local laws impede trade – say, an environmental health law or a labour law – then the WTO makes a ruling and its decisions are binding. The WTO can take trade sanctions against any countries which refuse to comply with WTO rulings. Most laws designed to protect the environment or public health that have been challenged at the WTO have been ruled illegal.

A major criticism of the WTO is its lack of transparency and lack of consultation with any non-governmental stakeholders including trade unions.



## Key questions for discussion

- ☐ Think about your own workplace or employer. What do you think have been the main changes over the last ten years caused by globalisation? How has this affected your ability to organise and negotiate successfully?
- ☐ Are trade unions part of the “anti-globalisation movement”? What are the main opportunities for partnership between unions and others such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this movement? What are the main debates between the different organisations?

### Activity: Attitudes to globalisation

Take five or six short quotations about globalisation from a variety of perspectives (trade union, business, NGOs, governments, etc). Use those given in this section, or supplement them with other ones, for example from your own country/region.

Without revealing the names of the writers or their organisations, photocopy the quotations, and distribute to small groups of 4-6 participants.

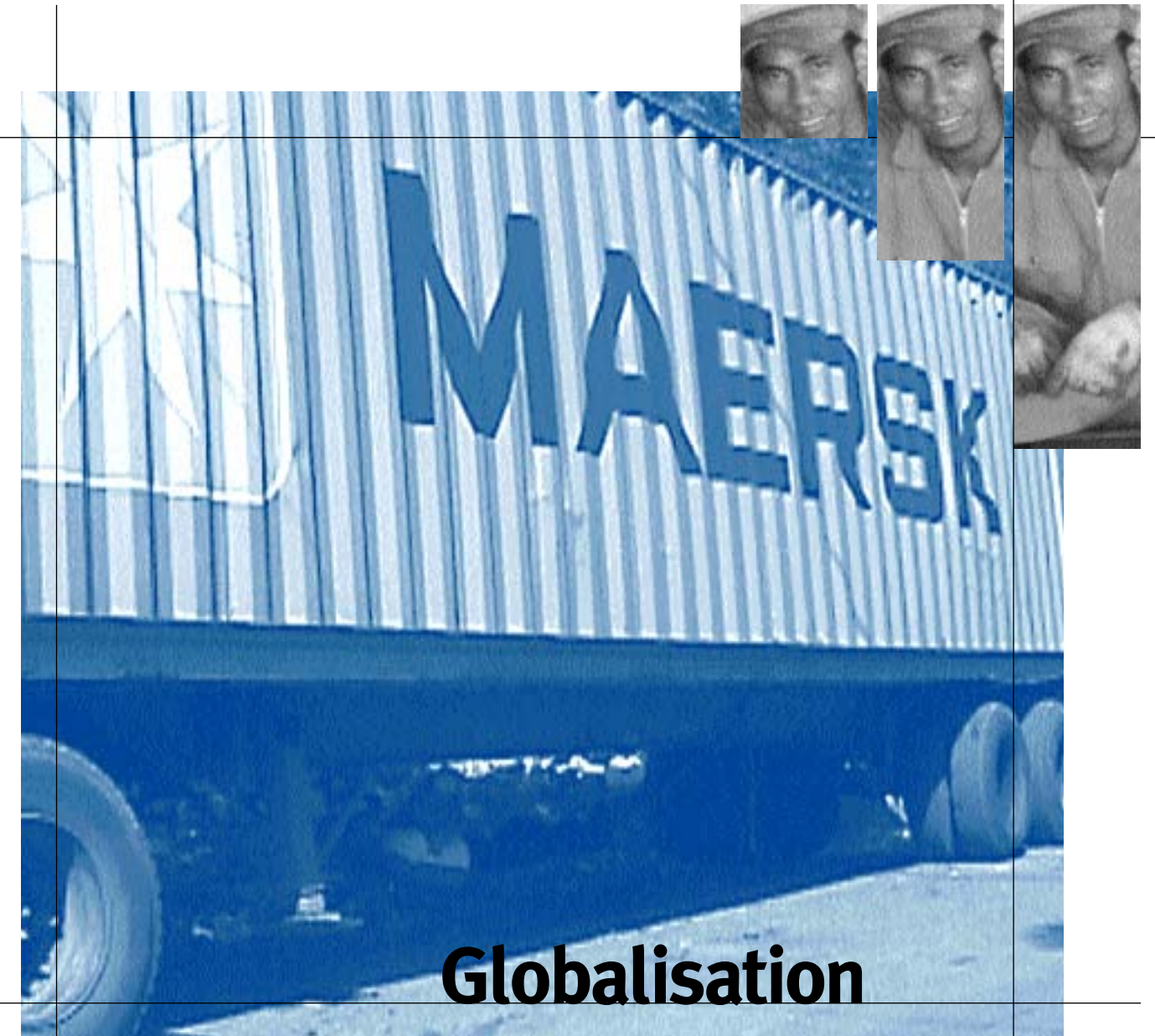
Ask each group to:

1. Read and discuss the quotations, each in turn. Note those ideas that you agree or disagree with.
2. Identify the opinion(s) which matches your own views most closely.
3. Nominate a member of the group to report back to the plenary discussion.

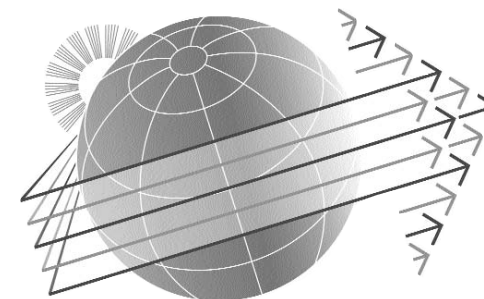
After each group has reported to plenary, have a general discussion.

Then show the participants the list, in random order, of the authors of the quotations. Ask them to speculate on which person is responsible for which quotation. After discussion, reveal who actually said what.

Notes:



## Globalisation in the transport sector



**“Public sector activities are supposedly vulnerable to pressures which increase labour costs. Hence the resolve to eliminate the activity of the state in all possible areas. In the transport sphere, this means turning buses, coaches, trams, trains, boats and planes into markets for profit.”**

*Graham Stevenson, National Organiser – Transport, Transport and General Workers' Union, UK*

**T**ransport workers today face an increasingly global market. Workers know the terminology: globalisation, deregulation, privatisation, liberalisation, flexibility. They know the results too.

The global market affects workers in every industry, not just transport. Yet transport is special. The globalisation of the world economy has only been made possible by dramatic changes in the technology and organisation of international transport. It relies on telecommunications, low cost shipping, cheaper air travel, and containerisation. It demands new high speed road and rail networks geared to regional and global transport hubs. It requires global port operators, multinational transport companies and international airline alliances.

The globalisation of the world economy requires the movement of goods and people at ever greater volume, at ever lower cost. Yet the constant pressure for lower costs of this “economic modernisation” has led to indecent work standards. The flag of convenience system makes it easier for shipowners to get away with low standards. Thousands of truck drivers work inhuman and dangerous hours. Globalisation has increased work intensity and eroded working conditions for all transport workers.

**“Transport is the cement that integrates and binds production, trade and consumption in any society. Depending on its availability, its cost, its safety, its convenience and efficiency it has the power to improve or not, the movement of people, goods and information.”**

*Jane Barrett, Policy and Research Officer, South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union*

The transport industry has changed profoundly in the past two decades:

- Private ownership and/or management of transport undertakings, even in public passenger transport, is widespread. Previously in most countries, most forms of passenger transport were owned by the state. Now state ownership has largely been replaced by full or partial privatisation.
- The transport industry has experienced continuing deregulation. National authorities which oversee transport services are frequently under-resourced and starved of the capacity to police effectively an increasingly complex system of ownership and operation.
- Many governments have removed national controls and restrictions on who can enter the industry nationally. Liberalisation has opened the transport market to competition.
- Governments, often under pressure from international financial institutions, search for ways of reducing public deficits. This adds to the pressure to privatise public services, including transport.
- Where public ownership has survived, it has usually done so by adopting commercial management methods with greater independence from political control. This is referred to as commercialisation. Employment conditions are increasingly pressured down towards those of competing private sector companies.
- Many transport operators are becoming global companies. Transport markets are increasingly opening up to competing foreign corporations. In this environment of ferocious international competition companies are increasing their demands on labour, squeezing workers' jobs and conditions.

- Some governments have assisted the process of globalisation through attacking and undermining workers' rights, and passing increasingly restrictive and repressive labour laws.

## Pakistan railways and the World Bank

The government of Pakistan accepted loans of over US\$105 million from the World Bank along with guidelines requiring it to:

- Phase out government subsidies to the railways.
- Increase rail fares.
- Close down unprofitable departments, lines and stations.
- Reduce the number of employees.
- Privatisise the railways.

Uncertain about their future, over 35,000 workers “retired” between 1990 and 1998. There was no recruitment to fill the vacancies.

## Deregulation = Danger

Deregulation and a weakening of the mechanisms for enforcement mean that, even where regulations exist, they may not be properly enforced. In the European Union there are rules governing road transport. But a lack of enforcement may have been a factor behind a disaster on 24 October 2001 after two trucks collided head-on deep inside the ten-mile St Gotthard road tunnel between Switzerland and Italy.

According to the truck owners' body, the International Road Transport Union (IRU), one of the companies involved was flouting many European rules. Set up in Belgium less than two months previously, Gul Transports had “no right to put a single truck on the road, either in Belgium or elsewhere”. The Turkish driver of the truck had only a three-month tourist visa for Belgium and was therefore employed illegally. The ITF is seeing a growth in such sub-standard and dangerous trucking operations in many parts of the world (see page 26).



# The impact on workers and unions

**“The government has no-one to blame but themselves for falling productivity on the waterfront. Thousands of wharfies made redundant, massive casualisation of the workforce, on-going sackings of union delegates and the so-called right for management to manage.”**

*Assistant National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia*

Global changes in the industry have resulted in a growing insecurity of employment. There have been massive job losses in traditionally well-organised sectors of transport, especially railways, national flag shipping, airline flag carriers, and ports. Job growth elsewhere, such as road transport, has been mainly in low cost, non-organised sectors.

Casual, part-time and temporary work makes up an ever-increasing proportion of the transport workforce. More women and young people, often with no background in trade unionism, are joining the workforce. Less stable forms of employment increase insecurity and the risk associated with trade union membership.

New forms of international labour flexibility, such as cross-border employment, have had a negative impact on working conditions, basic worker rights and trade union organisation. Deregulation, privatisation and the sub-contracting out of services from transport undertakings have created a new network of small and medium sized companies. They still provide transport-related services but frequently outside the standards of transport industry collective agreements.

So transport unions around the world face a dramatically different economic, political and bargaining environment. Many unions have come under attack. Others even find their existence under threat. With few exceptions, unions have lost members and income, and have been forced to cut costs and streamline activities.

All unions, even those which have avoided large-scale membership cuts, are facing big changes. Large public sector employers are being privatised and fragmented. National agreements are being replaced with company

level bargaining. Unions are adopting aggressive organising campaigns simply to maintain membership.

The distinction between employees and the self-employed is becoming less clear. In order to avoid social costs, collective agreements or trade unions, some transport companies are creating networks of “self-employed” sub-contractors or owner-operators. In reality, many of these small operators are totally dependent on one larger company for their livelihoods. However, such people are often not open to trade union organisation.

New and different jobs are being created as a result of technological change and industry restructuring. Traditional transport jobs, such as operating vehicles, may now account for only a small proportion of total employment in some transport enterprises. Other types of jobs in warehousing, distribution, ticketing and reservations, as well as in clerical work, administration and financial management are increasingly integrated into the different transport modes. This trend has been pushed further forward by the development of transnational logistics companies.

The process of change in the transport industry shows no sign of slowing down. If anything, it is accelerating. ITF affiliates need to learn from the experiences of workers in other industrial sectors. How do they respond to and influence government policy? How do they try to ensure that any change minimises the social damage to workers and their families? How do they try to protect the survival of strong, effective and democratic trade unions?

**“Privatisation hasn’t started in Croatia yet but we are starting to prepare and the government has made the position clear. At the moment, 1,700 people run the risk of being made redundant and a lot of people are being pushed into early retirement. Many jobs which were being carried out by two, three, sometimes four people are now being done by just one person.”**

*Presidency member of the Railway Workers’ Trade Union of Croatia*

## The growth of the informal economy

In developing countries and increasingly in Central and Eastern Europe, large proportions of the economically active population work in informal employment. Structural Adjustment Programmes, trade liberalisation and globalisation have all resulted in job losses for workers, forcing many into informal employment. These workers have less job security and no legal protection.

An International Labour Organisation (ILO) study shows how young people, unemployed graduates and workers made redundant from public and private enterprises are taking up informal work in order to survive. Some of them have entered the transport sector. Informal transport services have sprung up in many developing countries.

In the West African country of Benin, as in many other places, taxi-bike transport has developed. “The practice has made a name for itself as a low cost, highly efficient form of transport. No-one can claim to be unaware of the existence and activities of these taxi-bikes, which have taken the place of conventional taxis for suburban trips and to outlying areas where access is difficult,” according to the ILO.

The government of Benin at first tried to prevent this form of passenger transport. It realised, though, that the people need cheap transport and it is a source of employment in an ongoing economic crisis. Three taxi-bike unions have been formed. They are seeking full recognition for their contribution to urban transport.

*Information from “World of Work”, No.28, ILO, 1999*

## Globalisation and migrant workers

The ever widening gap between rich and poor under neo-liberal globalisation is also leading to mass migration from poor countries. More and more economic migrants are seeking access to Europe, North America and Australia. There, they are often treated very badly by immigration authorities and by employers in a hidden economy. The rights of migrant workers, and union campaigns against discrimination and to organise migrant workers, are discussed in the ITF resource book *“Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”*.



# Globalisation – the cost to the seafarer

**“I thought I’d seen it all, but I have never seen living conditions as bad as these. Until we arrived the crew were sleeping six to a six foot by ten foot room, into which three bunks were crammed. There was one working toilet for 100 men and women and two showers for the lot of them.”**

*Jim Given, ITF Cruise Ship Campaign Director, after inspecting a Cyprus-flagged cruise ship*

Over the centuries, the life of seafarers has been one of hardship and danger. They have been drugged and kidnapped to force them to work on board. They have been beaten, raped or murdered if they have complained. They have been abandoned in ports far from home without food or money. Even today the ITF Special Seafarers’ Department assists thousands of seafarers each year who are facing such abuse.

In early 2001 the International Commission on Shipping (ICONS), an independent commission of experts set up to inquire into ship safety, released a hard-hitting report entitled “Ships, Slaves and Competition”. It said that on 10-15 per cent of the world’s ships crews are working in unsafe conditions for little or no pay and are subject to starvation diets, rape and beatings. Effectively, thousands of seafarers live and work in conditions of slavery.

The majority of seafarers are from poor countries, particularly the Philippines, Indonesia, China, Turkey, Russia, India, Ukraine and Burma. In fact, there is a surplus of nearly a quarter of a million ratings available worldwide, many of them not well trained. Not surprisingly, employment for ratings from the higher-waged industrialised countries has declined. Meanwhile, there is a growing and worrying shortage of officers.

## Flags of convenience

One of the major factors that has allowed such appalling conditions to continue into the 21st century has been the flag of convenience system. A flag of convenience (FOC) ship is one flying the flag of a country other than that of its ownership – say a Greek-owned ship registered in Panama. Flags of convenience, which particularly developed after the Second World War, were an early form of deregulation which many other industries have since copied.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) says that there should be a genuine link between the owner of a ship and the flag it flies (that is, the national register to which it belongs). Yet, out of a world fleet of nearly 58,000 vessels (excluding fishing vessels), the ITF calculates that some 18,630 are flying flags of convenience.

Some FOC registers are better than others, but typically a country offering a flag of convenience will be a developing country whose ability to enforce the seaworthiness and even legality of its fleet ranges from limited to non-existent. FOC countries even include landlocked nations with no maritime history, registers operated from thousands of miles away from the flag state, and even countries in a state of internal breakdown.

## The ITF has identified 30 countries as having flags of convenience:

Antigua & Barbuda	Cyprus	Mauritius
Aruba	Equatorial Guinea	Netherlands Antilles
Bahamas	German International Ship Register	Panama
Barbados	Gibraltar	St Vincent & the Grenadines
Belize	Honduras	São Tomé & Príncipe
Bermuda	Lebanon	Sri Lanka
Bolivia	Liberia	Tuvalu
Burma	Luxembourg	Vanuatu
Cambodia	Malta	
Canary Islands	Marshall Islands	
Cayman Islands		
Cook Islands		

Each new flag of convenience has to promote itself by offering the lowest possible fees and the minimum of regulation. Health, safety and environmental protection standards cost money, and the freedom to flout them is one of the main advantages of many FOCs. So is secrecy for the shipowners. Some flags are not even run from their own country. In the case of Liberia, the entire ship register is run by a private company in Virginia in the US. The Cambodian registry is based in Singapore.

One of the attractions of flags of convenience for ship operators is that the system allows them to evade and deny basic human rights. For seafarers this often means very low wages or no wages at all; awful living conditions; long working days with almost no rest; no real training; lack of vital medical provision; and the risk of being abandoned without wages if the ship finally gives up or is detained in a foreign port as too dangerous to put to sea.

Each year, the crews of about 1,500 ships complain to the ITF that their employer is unwilling or unable to pay their wages. In the three-year period from 1998 to 2000, no less than US\$105 million was recovered through the ITF for crews who had not been paid.

**“12 to 15 hour days. Never had six hours continuous sleep. 87-hour week for three months. Regularly made errors in passage planning and execution. Did not dare to sit down on watch.”**

This comment, taken from a survey of 2,500 seafarers, shows how thinly staffed many ships are today. Not only are staffing levels low, but the turn around time in port has been drastically cut, giving seafarers less time to rest and recuperate onshore. Marine accident investigators now look closely at fatigue and working hours among the factors leading up to the loss of a ship.

The ITF Campaign “No Place to Hide” targets flags of convenience and other forms of sub-standard shipping (see page 40).

*From “Globalisation – the Cost to the Seafarer”, ITF, September 2001*

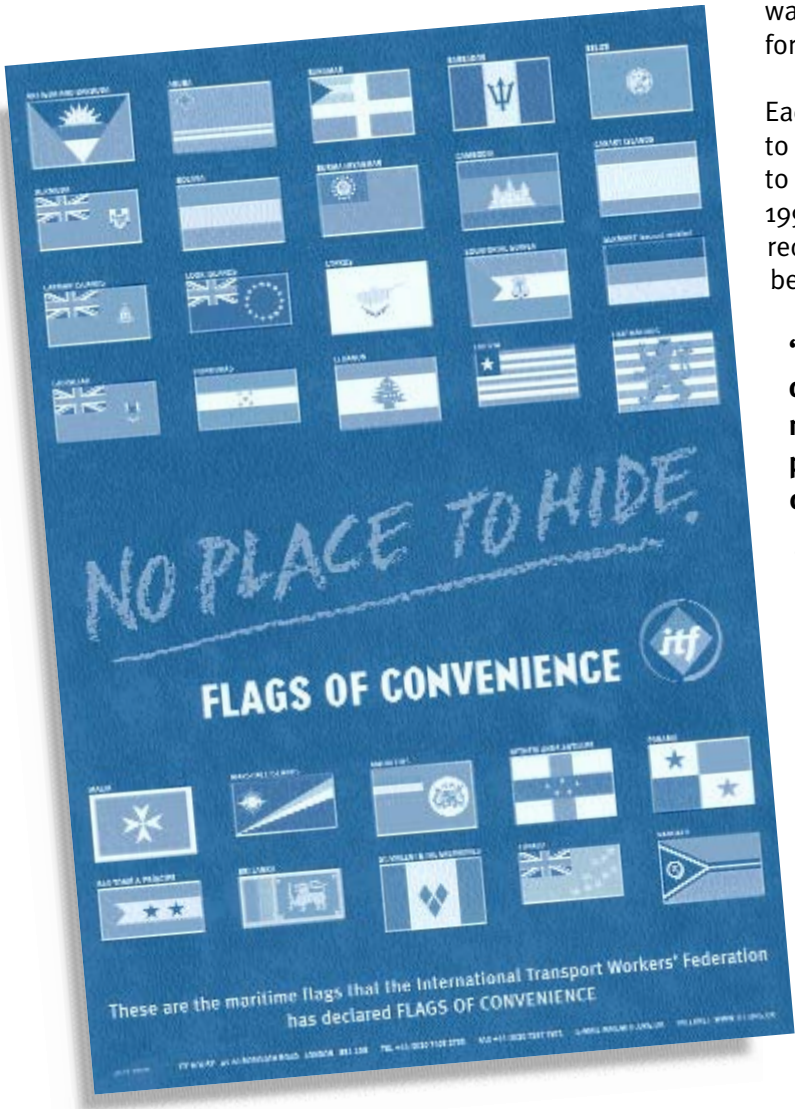


Photo: SIRC



# Restructuring in the world's ports

**“Globalisation in the ports means the clear trend towards the global ownership and management of port terminals.”**

*Kees Marges, ITF Dockers’ Section Secretary*

Dock workers around the world have experienced dramatic changes in their working environment. Restructuring, deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation have taken place in ports worldwide. Thousands of workers have lost jobs. Others are employed on worse terms and conditions.

The globalisation of the ports industry is dominated by the impact of containerisation, which has developed at a remarkable speed in both industrialised countries and the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Before containerisation, cargo was hoisted onto a ship piece-by-piece or on pallets. Goods are now put into containers and handled as a single piece. Containerisation also makes it easier to use intermodal transport, in other words, to move goods from origin to destination by truck, train, ship and aircraft.

International container traffic is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of

companies: specialised global stevedoring companies and, increasingly, shipping lines. The international shipping company, Maersk Sealand, is now one of the biggest terminal operators, with more terminals than PSA and a higher throughput than Eurogate. Other shipping lines involved in terminal operations are P&O Nedlloyd, Evergreen and APL, a subsidiary of Neptune Orient Lines.

## Lowering costs, increasing productivity

These international companies search for low costs and high efficiency. Maersk Sealand makes use of Singapore but also has begun to use a cheaper terminal at Tanjung Pelepas in Malaysia. Shipping companies complained that the Port of Santos in Brazil was too expensive and threatened to move to Argentina.

The threat of shipping companies taking their business to another port has created competition between ports worldwide. Ports have been forced to improve productivity and lower costs, including labour costs. They have undergone massive restructuring. This is often referred to as modernisation. New technology has been introduced to increase the efficiency of shore-side operations. For example, automated guided vehicles (AGVs), automated

stackers and semi-automated cranes are used in many ports. The introduction of new technology is seen as a threat to jobs. It has usually resulted in a substantial decline in port employment.

**“Workers should share in the benefits secured by the introduction of new methods of cargo handling, while permanent or regular employment for dock workers should be encouraged.”**

*ITF Port Worker, 2000*

Ports have been forced to make other substantial changes. In order to accommodate large container

## Strike action closes Chilean ports

Port reform in Chile was imposed on trade unions and their members. Dock workers took action over many months in 1999. They demanded compensation for workers likely to lose their jobs as a result of the privatisation programme. Miguel Osés Lorca, President of COMACH, the Chilean Maritime Confederation explains:

*“The most important aspect of this struggle is that all the casual and contracted port trade union labour joined forces in order to achieve victory. Stoppages and demonstrations led to enormous losses in port operations. We had to fight cases brought against our workers in the military courts. Some 20 people were imprisoned, including one of our workers who lost an eye in a clash inside the docks.*

*Other important aspects of the campaign included providing information to the press to keep workers and the national and international community permanently informed. This was helped by the support and constant pressure exerted by the ITF and its affiliates on the government, the ability of our leaders to call out demonstrators at strategic points, and the work of the dispute committee in preparing strategies for confronting police repression and brutality.”*

Chilean port unions reached an outline agreement with the government for three ports. This deal was then extended to Northern ports, including Iquique, where dockers had been on hunger strike.

*ITF Port Worker, 2000*

ships, they have invested in deeper channels, larger cranes and bigger stacking areas. Some ports are also offering logistical support. For example, the Port of Singapore is now offering warehouses for motor companies to install accessories, and store and inspect vehicles. In Rotterdam and Antwerp, there are port facilities for companies to assemble components.

Through such massive infrastructure development, a number of major ports are staking their claim to become a major regional hub. As certain ports become a major hub, then other ports are increasingly pushed into the role of feeder ports to the hub.

## The effects of privatisation

Many governments have turned to private companies to finance this investment. Port privatisation is often a requirement of IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes. Around 150 countries worldwide have either introduced, or are actively considering, some form of port privatisation. This might be either full or partial privatisation; for example, the private sector takes control of cargo handling operations whilst land and infrastructure remain under public ownership. In Europe, a draft European Union Directive intends to ensure that the shipping companies can provide their own port services and cargo handling in European ports, if they wish. It insists that ports must allow in

competing private port services providers. The pressure will be for companies to bid down safety standards and employee conditions in order to win contracts.

Privatisation has been dominated by the interests of transnational shipping companies and container terminal operators. In order to cut the costs of cargo handling operations and increase productivity, they have attacked workers’ terms and conditions of employment. There are many examples. In Taiwan, private terminal operators forced a 40 per cent cut in dockers’ pay. In Pakistan, private companies have hired their own non-union labour. Casual and contract labour is used extensively. Permanent jobs have been replaced by temporary contracts. In Brazil, port operators demanded a major increase in work intensity. In some instances, private employers have derecognised unions and undermined national agreements.

Privatisation has resulted in massive job losses. In Chile, 1,500 dockers were threatened with job losses when four of the country’s leading ports were privatised. In Panama, 75 per cent of the dockers at Cristóbal and Balboa were dismissed ahead of privatisation in 1997.

Global terminal operators		
Company	Countries of operation	Worldwide throughput (million TEUs )
Hutchison Port Holdings	Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, UK, Bahamas, Panama, Netherlands	19
PSA Corporation	Singapore, Indonesia, China, India, Italy, Yemen, Belgium	17
Eurogate	Germany, Italy, Portugal, Brazil	6.5
P&O Ports	Australia, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, UK, Mozambique, Argentina, Russia, India, USA	4.5
Stevedoring Services of America	USA, Panama, Mexico, Thailand, New Zealand	4
International Container Terminal Services Inc	Philippines, Pakistan, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Mexico	1.8



# Open skies: globalisation strategies in civil aviation

**“Throughout the world, airline management’s demand is for increased labour performance at a lower cost, with workers performing their tasks ever more flexibly and more productively.”**

*Contesting Globalisation: Blyton, Lucio, McGurk and Turnbull, published by Cardiff University and the ITF*

For the past 25 years, the civil aviation industry around the world has experienced continuing deregulation. In other words, there is ever less state involvement in the industry. Previously, the major carriers of most countries were owned by the state. They carried the national flag. Flag carriers had special access to their own domestic market. The state managed who could enter the industry nationally. International aviation traffic was also controlled through bilateral agreements between governments.

Many governments have removed these national controls and restrictions. This is called liberalisation. It means that the airline market has been opened up to competition. Some countries now have more carriers “competing” to operate domestic routes. Routes between countries have also been opened up. These are often referred to as “open skies agreements”. For example, there are open skies agreements between America and most European countries which allow much freer flying between the United States and these countries, and thus allow more airlines to fly more aircraft on those routes.

Liberalisation has put pressure on flag carriers to become more competitive. This has often meant squeezing quality, safety and public service objectives for the sake of short-term profitability. Many flag carriers are now being privatised. Most governments operate strict rules which limit the proportion of foreign ownership of the country’s airlines. A number of countries, such as Argentina and Peru, have changed their rules and allow their national carriers to be owned and controlled by foreign companies. In Europe any EU national (or company) can take ownership of an airline in the European Union.

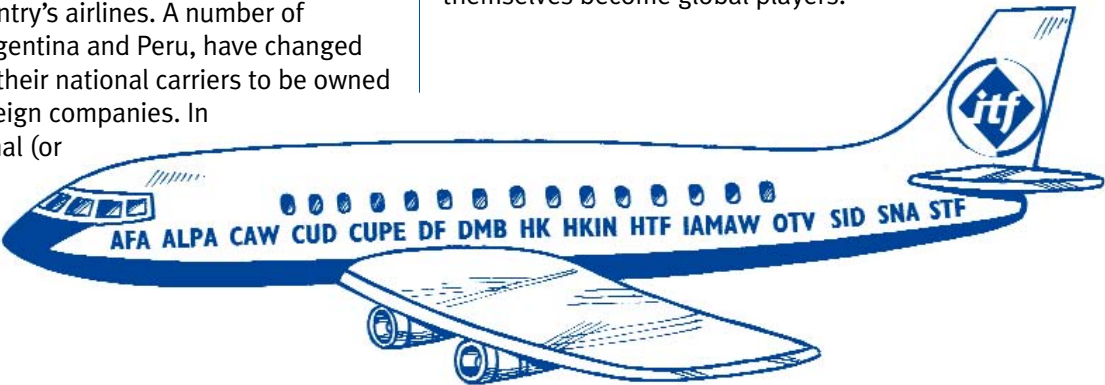
In 2001/2002 when crisis hit the aviation industry as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and a number of national carriers faced bankruptcy, pressure mounted even more to change national ownership laws and to lift restrictions on foreign investment.

Global airline alliances have been formed because of these restrictions on international ownership. These alliances allow partners to secure access to a bigger route network and to pool resources. For example, Oneworld passengers from Britain have access to more destinations in Australia through the Qantas network than can be provided directly by British Airways. Airline alliances also mean that some airlines withdraw from routes where their alliance partners are stronger. This allows work to be redistributed between airlines in favour of lower-cost operations.

In 2000 these alliances accounted for approximately 46 per cent of the world market. The two biggest alliances are Oneworld (focused on British Airways and American Airlines, but including several other airlines) and the Star Alliance (focused on Lufthansa, SAS and United Airlines, but including several other airlines).

In order to compete in the deregulated market, airlines have also undergone major restructuring. The main purpose is to cut costs, especially labour costs.

Many airlines are getting rid of “non-core” activities, such as catering, baggage handling, and aircraft maintenance. These functions are either being sub-contracted out or put into independent subsidiary companies. For example, Lufthansa has its own specialist catering subsidiary called LSG-Sky Chefs which is the world’s biggest airline caterer. Lufthansa Technik is currently a world leader in aircraft maintenance. So these independent subsidiaries themselves become global players.



Airport ground handling staff are also at the centre of global changes in ownership and control. In many countries the airports are being privatised. In addition, in a bid to cut costs, airports and airlines are now racing to sell off or subcontract their terminal and aircraft handling services. It is estimated that by 2010, 50 per cent of ground handling will be in the hands of independent companies. Large transnational ground handling operators are likely to dominate the industry.

## Global companies in ground handling

Supplier	Airports	Countries	Employees
GlobeGround	85	23	17,000
Swissport	115	20	15,000
Servisair	99	11	10,000
Menzies/Ogden	72	22	9,000
WWF	97	12	n/a
Aviapartner	27	4	4,300
Aviance	34	7	n/a



For workers, continued international restructuring is likely to have the following effects:

- Outsourcing and benchmarking will continue to undermine jobs and conditions.
- Job insecurity will increase as a result of takeovers and temporary contracts.
- Airline alliance partners are likely to combine operations in international airports which will result potentially in job losses and changes in conditions.
- Competition for contracts and tougher demands on price and quality from airports and airlines will lead to a downward pressure on jobs and conditions.
- New technology will impact on jobs and training.
- Work will be relocated to lower cost countries leading to social dumping.



## Global companies in airline catering

The airline catering industry has become one of the world’s most concentrated industries. Previously, most airlines provided their own in-flight meals from their own kitchens. This practice has changed dramatically. LSG-Sky Chefs and Gate Gourmet now control more than 60 per cent of the world industry.

These companies have links to airline alliances. For example, LSG-Sky Chefs to the Star Alliance through Lufthansa; and Gate Gourmet to Qualiflyer through Swissair.

For workers, this creates major pressures on working conditions and union organisation, through:

- The removal of catering from the airline industry to the food and catering industry which has generally lower employment standards and weaker union protection
- Worsening conditions created by tendering and benchmarking in catering operations
- New production methods leading to work intensification and/or job losses
- The transfer of working practices from one part of a world operation to other locations.

The two companies employ thousands of workers around the world. The majority are members of unions affiliated to the ITF and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUFA). In September 2001, these unions established ITF-IUFA Trade Union Networks for both LSG-Sky Chefs and Gate Gourmet. These networks will respond to declining terms and conditions in airline catering.

## Implications for safety and security

Airline security has become a major issue since the aircraft hijackings which underpinned the horrific terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001. A major debate ensued about the way in which baggage screeners were hired by private contractors paying minimum wages and offering no job benefits. Most of these companies are non-union.

A report in 2001 by the US General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, found that the average turnover rate of screener operators at airports was 126 per cent. At St Louis it was 416 per cent and at Atlanta 375 per cent.

Bad employment standards and bad security standards went hand-in-hand. One private airport security contractor called Argenbright demonstrated what can happen when companies cut costs by lowering employment standards. It was found to have been:

- **Altering employment histories of job applicants**
- **Falsely certifying to the authorities that the employment history had been verified**
- **Falsely giving passing scores on various mandated tests for employees some of whom had failed and others of whom had never taken the tests**
- **Creating fake high school certificates for employees**
- **Falsely certifying that employees had undergone mandated minimum training programmes.**

In October 2001 proposals were put forward that all airport security jobs should be brought back under employment by the federal government. Objections by some leading members of the Republican party that this would lead to rapid unionisation of these jobs were regarded as irrelevant even by members of their own party. In November 2001, it was agreed that 28,000 airport security jobs should be brought back into the public sector, which is a major victory for the US unions.

The constant pressures on working conditions and the wage bill arising from savage competition have encouraged a reduction in safety training, competence and motivation of aviation workers. Excessive workloads, long hours, inadequate skills, casualisation and greater work intensity are contributory or causative factors in a growing number of aviation incidents.

Aviation unions are calling for a new relationship between employers, governments and workers, one that recognises aviation workers as safety and security professionals. For far too long security has been seen in terms of technological fixes, where machinery is a substitute for people skills rather than a tool to enhance human performance. Aviation companies need to see safety and security as an investment rather than a cost. The days in which aviation industry leaders argue for “the least cost safe option” must be over.

*From: Transport International, No 8, 2002*

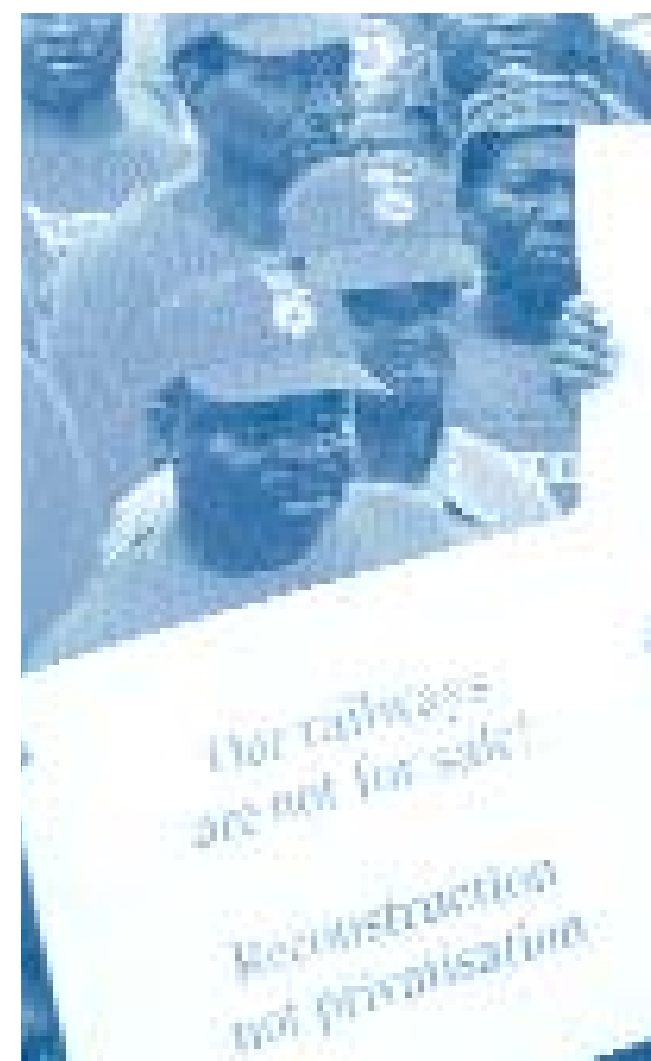


## Railway restructuring: global trends

**“It is important that we expose the myth that privatisation automatically brings increased efficiency. The truth for railway workers is that it brings exploitation.”**

*Jim Knapp, former General Secretary, National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), UK*

Railway workers around the world know the meaning of industrial restructuring. They share common experiences of privatisation, commercialisation, downsizing and outsourcing. For railway workers everywhere, this has meant attacks on working conditions and jobs. In Britain, 30,000 railway workers were made redundant. In Pakistan, almost 40,000 workers accepted “voluntary” retirement. In South Africa, management proposed to reduce the workforce by 15,000 in order to restructure.



In developing countries, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, the World Bank has been involved in the restructuring of the railway industry. It provides advice and finances for the transfer of state owned railways to private management. For workers, this has usually resulted in a massive loss of jobs.

At the most recent ITF Railway Workers’ Section Conference, delegates discussed the main trends in railway restructuring. These include:

### ■ **Outright privatisation**

Track and rolling stock is sold off to private companies. For example, privatisation in Britain and New Zealand. Private companies are entitled to look after their own commercial interests. In other words, they can run the railways to make profits.

### ■ **Concessioneing**

Private operators are awarded long-term contracts to operate rolling stock and/or maintain track. Ownership of the track remains in state hands. This is the preferred policy of the World Bank. It has been followed widely in Latin America and Africa.

### ■ **Commercialisation**

Different elements of the rail system are put on a commercial footing, though remaining in state hands.

### ■ **Devolution of responsibility to regional governments**

Financial and administrative responsibility is shifted from central to regional government, while ownership and operation remain in state hands, usually in urban and regional passenger services.

### ■ **Outsourcing or contracting out of non-core activities**

Non-core activities such as cleaning, security and ticket sales are contracted out, whilst the main transport activities of the rail system remain in state hands.

### ■ **Downsizing and multi-skilling**

Ownership remains entirely in state hands but the workforce is cut and multi-skilling is introduced in order to improve productivity.



## Not for sale

The South African transport unions have successfully fought off plans to privatise the country's rail network. Jane Barrett of the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU) explains how it was achieved.

*"In late 2000, government announced that Spoornet, the long distance (not urban) rail network of South Africa, was to be partially privatised. They wanted to concession off two business units considered 'profitable': Coal-link which carries coal from northern Kwazulu-Natal to Richards Bay; and Orex which carries iron ore from the mines to Saldanha Bay on the west coast. Luxrail, a kind of luxury hotel on wheels, was also to be sold off. Mainline passenger services on the busiest routes would be concessioned out. Some of the fees would be used to beef up the general freight business. Meanwhile, 'non-profitable' customers and lines would be got rid of, and staff cut by about 15,000.*

*My union SATAWU suspected that if they were to take out the profitable lines, it would push the rest of the system into terminal decline. Our instinct was that the whole network should remain as intact as possible so it can be used to advance economic growth, particularly in less developed regions of the country. We supported the idea of improved efficiency but only if done democratically through consultation with the unions.*

*We took our ideas to our national shop stewards' committee and we linked up with the other two rail unions. Historically, relations have not been good because they were the unions for skilled white workers such as drivers. But in this case we had common interests and a united position. In late March 2001, we used the ITF International Railway Workers' Action Day to publicise our position, with marches in various places.*

*A joint government-labour 'task team' was set up but government couldn't answer our questions. The input of Spoornet management and its consultants Halcrow was vital. Their assessments for technology, labour and investment over the next twenty years proved our hunch was right – the whole system would go into terminal decline if the profitable bits were cut away. Even 'low-density' lines are an integral part of the whole, and important for keeping goods such as rural produce off the roads.*

*Probably the most critical factor is that Spoornet has been self-funding since it was established. It is a body owned by the state, and has borrowed money and paid it back with government guarantees, but it has never relied on a state subsidy.*

*At the time of writing, the minister has agreed not to sell off Coal-link, and Orex will probably also stay. Passenger services are to remain in state hands, apparently learning the lesson from Britain. The unions agree to Luxrail being privatised because to us it doesn't have any strategic or social use. We have accepted that, in the face of technological change, there will be job losses. But we have room to fight over the final figure, using the normal labour relations procedures.*

*It has been an exhausting process, and it has seriously consumed union resources. We were engaging with some of the biggest consultancies in the world, notably the UK-based bankers Rothschild who have a vested interest in privatisation."*

## The role of railway multinational companies

Railway ownership is becoming increasingly globalised. In particular, European and American companies are making new purchases and forming joint ventures, making inroads into each other's markets, and into other regions of the world.

- **US rail companies have purchased railways in Canada, Latin America, Britain, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand.**
- **Canadian National Railways, privatised in 1995, merged with Kansas City Southern Railway to create a rail network across America, Canada and Mexico.**
- **The French company Vivendi has one large passenger franchise in Britain, as well as operations in Australia, Portugal, Sweden, Netherlands and Germany.**
- **Freight and passenger divisions of the national companies in Europe have begun to merge or form joint ventures.**

This trend has been encouraged by liberalisation. In December 1999, the European Union's transport ministers agreed to the setting up of a Trans European Railway Freight Network so as to open up the

European rail freight market. Rail companies, including private operators, will be able to run freight services wherever they want to in Europe. International shipping companies are among those already taking advantage. P&O Nedlloyd and Maersk Sealand set up the European Rail Shuttle between the port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands and inland terminals in Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Italy as part of their "door-to-door" logistics chain.

Workers have various experiences of the railway multinational companies. Some companies try to prevent union entry into the workplace. Some have refused to recognise collective agreements and have forced workers to sign individual contracts. In other instances, multinational companies have been forced to change their attitude to unions.

**"We know that some of these multinationals act like a chameleon. They may recognise the trade union in one country but can be anti-union in other places. This is why the ITF emphasises the importance of co-ordinating international solidarity as a part of its activities."**

*Mac Urata, ITF Railway Workers' Section Secretary*

## The changing face of rail freight in Europe

Railion, Europe's first cross-border rail freight firm, was formed in 2000 by Germany's state-owned DB Cargo and NS Cargo of the Netherlands. The joint venture was established to gain access to the huge port of Rotterdam, which has the capacity to handle new large ships that cannot be handled in Hamburg, the German port. On its first day of operations, it claimed to have 45,000 employees, and predicted an annual turnover of US\$3.8 billion.

Railion is seeking out national operators to join in so as to create a genuine trans-European railway. The Danish State Railways freight business joined Railion at the end of 2000. Railion is also planning to extend its activities to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania.

Railion predicts that, in time, there will be no more than three or four companies running European freight networks, with most railways relegated to become national or regional feeder routes into them. These pan-European companies would then join forces with six to ten huge freight forwarding companies.



## Multinational companies in road transport

The road transport sector is growing rapidly. Transportation of freight is essential for world trade and trucking is a key link in the global production and distribution chain. Yet liberalisation to increase competition in the market has also caused road transport workers everywhere to suffer lower terms and conditions of employment.

After trucking was deregulated in the US, there was an explosion in low-cost truck carriers, all non-union firms. Destructive competition led to low wages, long hours and unsafe conditions for the drivers. Their workplaces became known as “Sweatshops on Wheels”.

In the European Union, road transport activities provide about 6.5 million jobs, of which over two million are truck drivers. But since liberalisation, Western European trucking firms have been able to cut costs by using drivers or sub-contracting to owner-operators from Eastern Europe. There, salaries and other social costs can be ten times lower than in, for example, Germany. The German firm Willi Betz now mostly employs drivers of Turkish, Belarussian and Bulgarian origin and its 8,000 trucks are mostly registered in Eastern Europe. (See also the box on page 13 concerning the St Gotthard tunnel fire in 2001.)

Most trucking firms around the world are not large like Willi Betz but small owner-operators, each employing just a few drivers. Profit margins on contracts are very tight and so there are great pressures to cut costs, for example by using cheap labour across borders. US

firms are employing Mexican drivers, and South African firms increasingly hire drivers from Botswana and Swaziland.

In June 2001, 24 Lithuanian truck drivers got stuck in Belgium without food or money. They had not been paid for a month. On the road delivering foodstuffs around Western Europe for three months, they almost never left the truck’s driving compartment. One driver slept, while the other drove. So they were not migrant workers settling in Western Europe. They were highly exploited workers across borders. The Belgian Transport Workers’ Union (BTB) came to their rescue and helped to negotiate their trip home.

The most common way to cut costs is to push drivers to the limit. An ITF survey in 1999 showed that most drivers, irrespective of their regions or the vehicles which they drive, exceed the legal driving and/or working hours. The ITF campaign “Fatigue Kills” unites drivers worldwide to combat this abuse (see page 41).

As markets have opened, many large inland transport companies have become more multinational. In passenger transport, companies such as Stagecoach, Arriva, FirstGroup from Britain as well as H Vivendi, Transdev and VIA-GTI from France have bought bus companies and other public transport services in various countries abroad. FirstGroup, for example, is now involved in the US school bus industry, and this has caused an increased interchange between the Transport and General Workers’ Union in Britain and Service Employees’ International Union in the US.

### Truck drivers who wait then rush

It is ironic that what “just in time” means for truck drivers is often long, frustrating hours of wasted, unpaid time. While drivers wait to load or unload, they are not being paid. Frequently the only way that drivers on tight delivery schedules can make up for waiting time is when they hit the highways and run illegally.

If their schedules force them to speed, their poor pay packets force them to work long hours. The average non-union driver in the US earns 42 per cent less than the average unionised driver and works 70 hours per week, almost 15 per cent over the legal limit, so as to boost take home pay. Companies are prepared to inflict low pay and long, unsocial hours on their workers in order to meet the ‘just-in-time’ delivery needs of industry.

## Multinational companies across the sectors

Companies are also investing in a range of transport modes. For example, Stagecoach is a British transport multinational that now covers buses, coaches, rail rolling stock, and aviation (see box below). H Vivendi is a French transport multinational covering buses, trams and trains.

The ITF expects the international activities of such companies to grow in the future. This clearly has implications for the way that road, rail and aviation workers in such companies organise together.

### Stagecoach: Travelling across borders

Stagecoach was set up in 1980 to capitalise on the early deregulation of the British bus industry. By 2000, it owned 16 bus subsidiary companies in Britain, and employed around 20,000 staff.

In the 1980s, Stagecoach started buying and selling bus companies throughout the world. It has bought and sold:

- Gray Coach Lines in **Canada**
- Bus operations in **New Zealand**
- A stake in **Portugal’s** bus operations
- Swebus – one of **Sweden’s** bus companies, and its **Denmark** operation
- Transit Holdings, operating in **Britain** and **Australia**
- Stagecoach **Malawi**
- **Kenya** Bus Services
- Citybus, **Hong Kong**
- A stake in the Chongqing bus company, **China**
- Coach **USA**, and 11 North American coach and taxi companies.

In addition to the bus services, Stagecoach owns rail services, trams, and an airport in Britain; a New Zealand ferry company; a stake in Hong Kong’s toll road operations; and has been negotiating a stake in Miami airport, US.





## Giants that call door-to-door

In the highly competitive global economy, components and supplies as well as finished products have to get to the right place, at exactly the right time, and at the lowest cost. The scale of the challenge is persuading manufacturers increasingly to outsource their freight needs to a new generation of transportation corporations.

These new corporations are not airlines, rail operators, trucking companies or shipowners, but include elements of all of these together with internet technology thrown in. Their delivery is door-to-door, from the factory gate to the retail outlet or even the individual consumer in their own home. Another term for them is “multi-modal logistics organisations”.

For example, P&O Nedlloyd and Maersk Sealand, which are known as shipping companies, set up the European Rail Shuttle (ERS). ERS charts shuttle trains between Rotterdam port on the Dutch coast and inland terminals in Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, and Italy. ERS stands ready to buy rail operations when they become available. It already provides “door-to-door” delivery using local road transport companies.

In the goods distribution sector, four multinational companies are dominant: TNT, DHL, UPS and Federal Express. These companies are constantly expanding

their worldwide businesses, through mergers, acquisitions and sub-contracting. Both UPS and Federal Express maintain air fleets bigger than those of many national airlines. DHL is in fact now owned by the Germany postal service Deutsche Post, which has bought up 30 companies since 1997. In 2000, Deutsche Post brought its logistics empire into alliance with the cargo wing of the German airline Lufthansa, creating the largest integrated freight network in the world.

This is the result of the unrelenting demand for ever faster transport, over ever greater distances, at ever lower costs. These companies are in turn making new demands on workers for greater work intensity, more flexibility and lower labour costs.

Employees working in different transport modes are, therefore, all part of a logistics chain, involving not just drivers, railway workers, port workers, seafarers or aviation workers, but workers in warehouses, distribution centres, and call centres. This shift in the way that an important part of the transport industry operates will have an impact on the kind of strategies and co-ordination that unions may need to develop to defend their interests.



## United Parcel Service (UPS): A new global logistics giant

UPS (United Parcel Service) is the world's largest package distribution company, transporting more than 3 billion packages annually. It uses more than 570 aircraft and 157,000 vehicles, and operates in virtually every country in the world. UPS operates the largest air express and air cargo network in Latin America through its acquisition of Challenge Air Cargo.

UPS is one of the world's largest employers with more than 340,000 employees.

UPS has moved far beyond being only a small package distribution company. It now also deals with large items and heavy freight across international borders. It has developed this capacity by merging with several large freight forwarding companies. UPS paid US\$450 million for the American owned Fritz Companies trucking empire. The company describes its strategy as:

**“Today the freight forwarding and customs brokerage industries are highly fragmented, both geographically and in the way services are provided to customers. Moving forward, UPS will be able to offer customers a single point of accountability. For example, a customer will be able to manufacture products anywhere in the world and through UPS, move those goods by any mode of transport across any border. When combined with our technology solutions, the financial solutions offered by UPS Capital and supply chain management provided by the UPS Logistics Group, UPS has created an unparalleled offering in the marketplace.”**

*David Abney, UPS*

This statement reflects how UPS is turning itself into a huge logistics corporation. For example, it has set up a subsidiary called UPS Logistics Group. This offers services such as supply chain management, logistics technology and financial, call centre and transportation services.

UPS has expanded internationally in the past few years. This list gives just a few examples of the activities of UPS around the world.

- Purchase of Polish Parcel Service Polkurier (PPS)
- Purchase of Challenge Air Cargo
- Joint venture with Jetair, India
- Purchase of service parts logistics companies – Comlasa, CLS, Burnham
- Joint venture with Yamato Transport in Japan
- Investment in the Taoyuan International Airport Service Company Ltd, Taiwan's largest ground handling company
- Acquisition of Finon Sofecome, French service parts logistics company
- Acquisition of Trans-Border Customs Services
- Purchase of Shannon MRO, aircraft maintenance provider based in Shannon, Ireland
- Purchase of Unión Pak de Argentina SA, a package delivery company
- Strategic alliances with convenience stores; for example, Family Mart in Taiwan and 7-Eleven in Hong Kong.

For details of the UPS workers' strike in the US, see page 44.



## Key questions for discussion

- ☐ How is your own transport sector being restructured in this era of “globalisation”?
- ☐ What has been the impact – positive and negative – of investment by transnational corporations in your sector?
- ☐ How has your union responded to the challenges of the global economy? How might your union’s response be strengthened?

### Activity: Organising in transnational corporations

Choose a good example of a particularly active TNC in the sector(s) represented by the participants. The more the participants are familiar with the chosen example, the better the activity will be. Try and find out in advance a little about the company: where it is active, how it has developed in recent years, its attitude to unions and industrial relations, and so on. If possible, write a short (one page) paper for distribution to the participants (see for example, the brief company profiles given on pages 21, 25, 27 and 29).

Divide the participants into groups, and ask each group to pretend that they have been invited by the ITF to develop a campaign designed to:

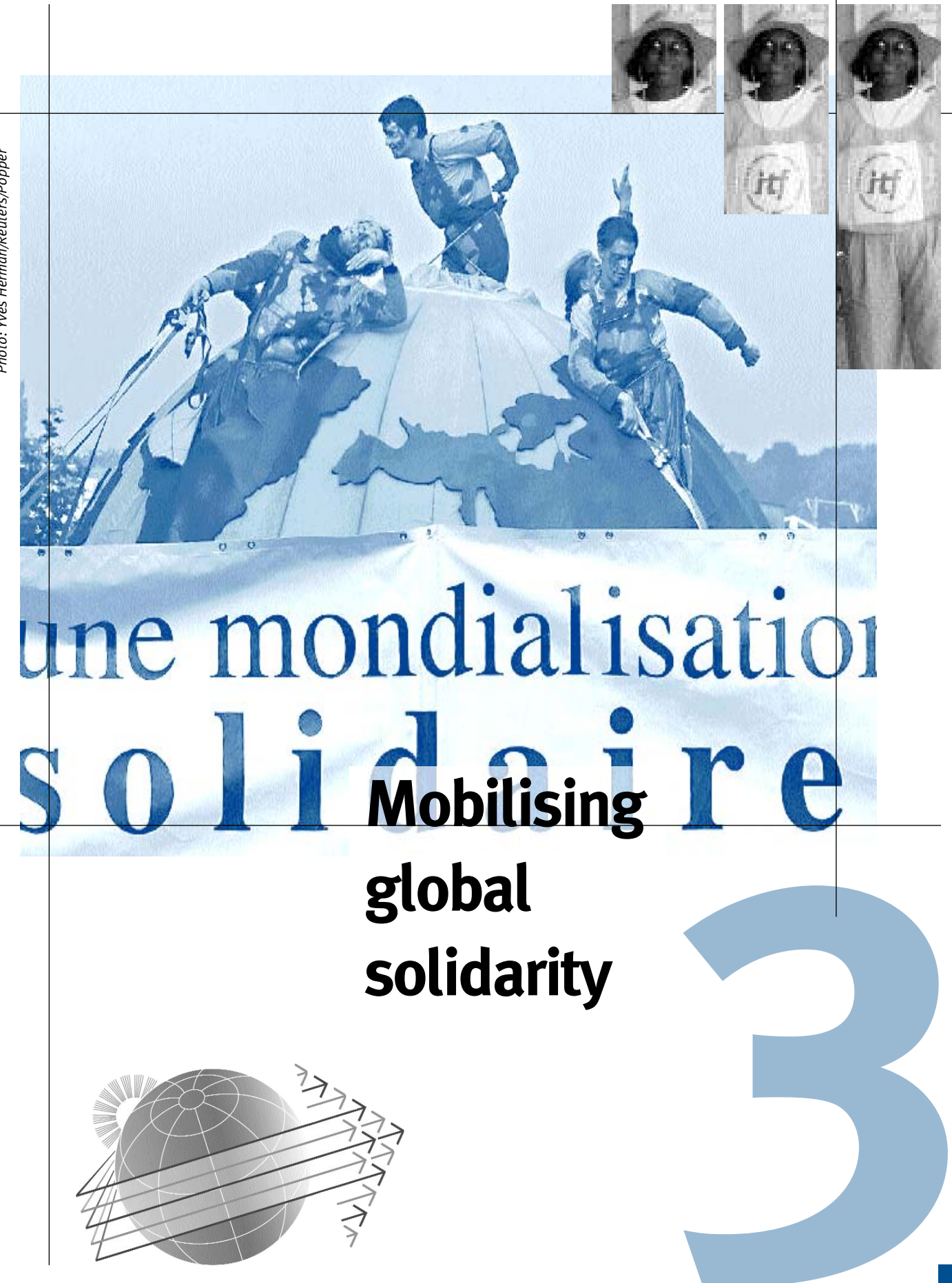
1. build a global network of unions representing workers employed by the company
2. support local and national campaigns for union recruitment and recognition within the company
3. persuade the company to meet with the ITF at the negotiating table and sign a worldwide agreement on trade union rights.

Ask each group to spend one hour drawing up plans for a two-year campaign. Each plan should include reference to:

4. Key demands and union messages
5. Pre-campaign publicity and education programmes for union members and representatives
6. Possible campaign partners and allies (other unions, community-based groups, NGOs, etc)
7. Campaign events and targets
8. Media strategy
9. Means of national and international campaign co-ordination.

Urge the participants to be as realistic as possible. You may need to remind them that they cannot expect the ITF to provide a budget or staff, although the Secretariat or Regional Offices can provide advice and support. Ask each group to present their plan to plenary for debate and discussion.

Photo: Yves Herman/Reuters/Popper



**Mobilising  
global  
solidarity**

3



**“Many unions have already learned the lesson and others are about to learn it. Those who give solidarity today may need it tomorrow. No group can be guaranteed immunity from attacks on jobs, union rights or working conditions. Increasingly many unions may depend for their survival on the ability of unions in other countries to deliver solidarity when it is needed.”**

*Mobilising Solidarity, ITF*

**S**olidarity – collective trade union strength – has always been and remains the basis of the ITF and the entire international trade union movement.

The international nature of the transport industry provides many opportunities for international solidarity action, and ITF members have responded on many occasions. In fact, the ITF has over one hundred years of experience in organising international solidarity. (See the ITF resource book *“Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”* for some more of this history.)

**“In the past, it was not so important to be a member of the ITF because our industry was just working in our country. Now so many multinational companies are investing in Germany. We know the same companies are working in other countries too. It is very important and helpful to work together and share information with workers in other countries. We all share the idea of a trade union movement.”**

*German worker, ITF Summer School*

Today transport workers across the world are experiencing massive workplace changes. All transport sectors have seen full or partial privatisation. Large multinational transport operators now dominate in many areas. Even in the bus and rail industries, many ITF members now have employers based in far off countries. Cross-border employment and social dumping used to be limited largely to shipping but such problems are now facing unions in all transport sectors.

Globalisation has presented the international and national trade unions with new industrial and organisational challenges. “Mobilising Solidarity”, a policy document adopted by the ITF Congress in 1998, says that international activities and solidarity need to become an integral part of all ITF affiliates’ strategies. It is something recognised by many transport workers around the world.

The increasing globalisation of the world economy has made international labour solidarity increasingly important not just to transport workers, but to virtually all other industrial sectors as well. Solidarity is now needed between trade unionists across sectors. It is also needed with other types of organisations and campaigns, for example involving women’s groups, consumer and environmental campaigns, human rights bodies, and many more. How can such solidarity be built?

**“Unions, which have for many years always given solidarity, have found themselves needing to ask for it. African airport workers have taken action in support of British Airways cabin crew. German and Italian employees of United Parcel Service have threatened strike action in support of American workers. Dockers have begun to ask for, and receive, solidarity support from seafarers as well as from other dockers.”**

*Mobilising Solidarity, ITF*

## ‘Global Unions’

The ITF is part of the international trade union movement. Increasingly the term “Global Unions” is being used for the major institutions of this movement. Global Unions comprises:

- the **International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)**, which represents most national trade union centres. Most individual unions therefore relate to the ICFTU through their national union centre.
- the ten **Global Union Federations (GUFs)**, which are the international representatives of unions organising in specific industry sectors or occupational groups; the ITF is one of these GUFs.
- the **Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC)** to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is a specialist body which works with the industrialised countries.



For example, the ICFTU services the Workers’ Group within the ILO, and co-ordinates the campaign to promote the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights and the core labour standards of the ILO covering forced labour, freedom of association and collective bargaining, child labour, and discrimination in employment.

The ICFTU also co-ordinates campaigns relating to gross

violations of ILO standards. One of these is the campaign for human rights in Burma, bringing pressure on employers which do business in Burma despite that country’s persistent violation of ILO core labour standards. Many ITF affiliates, particularly in Asia, have been taking part in this campaign. For more on the ILO, its standards and related campaigns, see the ITF resource book *“Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”*.

Co-operation under the umbrella of Global Unions also includes the joint ICFTU-GUF office in Washington, which handles relations with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ICFTU also co-ordinates the campaign to get core labour standards, or a “social clause”, put into the trade liberalisation rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), so that countries which do not respect basic trade union rights do not benefit from world trade.

Most international union bodies are very large organisations, but they have very small secretariats with over-stretched staff and budgets.

An individual union (but not all unions) will usually belong to a national union centre in its country which will then affiliate to a world body such as the ICFTU. The same individual union will also usually affiliate to a Global Union Federation relevant to the industry where it has most members. Many unions with members in many different industries will belong to more than one GUF.

The ICFTU is now the predominant international body co-ordinating national union centres. The ITF’s cold war era rival the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has virtually ceased to exist in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The World Confederation of Labour (WCL), rooted in the Catholic trade union movement, has managed to survive.

The ICFTU co-ordinates input to international organisations. Among these are UN agencies including the International Labour Organisation (ILO).



## 'Millennium debate'

As part of the activities marking the ICFTU's fiftieth anniversary in 1999, the ICFTU and the Global Union Federations launched a comprehensive review of international union structures and activities called the "Millennium Debate". It aims to make the whole international union movement function better together, and eventually to persuade all democratic and representative unions around the world to feel and act as part of a single Global Unions family. The Millennium Debate focuses on five main areas:

- **Strengthening national trade unions:** international help for national organising strategies, including ways of bringing more women and young people into unions, and addressing the special situation of "informal" workers.
- **Influencing the global economy:** finding ways in which the trade unions can better influence international bodies whose decisions have a profound effect on union members; such bodies include the UN system (particularly the ILO), the OECD, World Bank, IMF and WTO.
- **Tackling global capital:** developing more techniques for putting pressure on multinational companies and other employers, such as solidarity action, framework agreements/codes of conduct, and use of capital markets.
- **Developing better campaigning methods:** increasing the ability of international bodies to work together on key problems or disputes through, for example, Action Days and Weeks, as well as better handling of the press and media.
- **Developing more effective structures:** this includes a re-evaluation of how the ICFTU's regions work, and its relationships with the GUFs. There is also a need for closer co-ordination between international union bodies and European trade union bodies. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) groups ICFTU-affiliated national centres (about 95 per cent) and WCL centres (about 5 per cent) in Europe.

More information on the ILO and international labour standards is given in the ITF resource book *"Workers' Rights are Human Rights"*.

### Using 'Global Unions'

When thinking about how to mobilise global solidarity, ITF affiliates should always remember that they are part of the Global Unions movement.

There is (or should be) no competition between international union organisations. The decision about which union is best suited to organise a particular kind of worker is one which can only be taken nationally. Equally, unions will rely on different organisations for different services which they need at the international level. Often the ICFTU (or TUAC) can help on issues which are common to all unions in a country. Meanwhile a GUF (or sometimes several) will be more help on issues specific to an industry and occupation, or in handling relations with a particular multinational employer.

Whichever structures unions use, it is vital to work closely with each other. For most unions, international solidarity is becoming more and more central to their daily organising and negotiating work. But the trade union movement's resources are too limited to allow for the luxury of duplicated work. Mobilising global solidarity works best when the union, its national centre, the GUF, and the ICFTU and/or TUAC all work together, and ensure that each is kept well informed.



## Global Union Federations

The Global Union Federations, such as the ITF, are federations of national trade unions from specific industries. Some unions, representing workers in more than one industry, may affiliate to more than one GUF. Global Union Federations used to be known as International Trade Secretariats.

The GUFs are the closest international structures to the day-to-day union work of representing the industrial interests of workers. GUFs perform a number of key functions including:

- **Support for trade union development** (eg education programmes).
- **International solidarity actions in defence of trade unions under attack, or in dispute.**
- **Research into global and regional industrial developments.**
- **International co-ordination of responses to transnational corporations.**
- **Representation at international meetings and organisations.**
- **Assisting affiliates to exchange experience and information, through publications, seminars, conferences, etc.**
- **Campaigns on key issues facing the sector or industry.**

### The Global Union Federations

A process of recent mergers has reduced the number of GUFs to ten at present:

- **Education International (EI)**
- **International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine & General Workers' Unions (ICEM)**
- **International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)**
- **International Textile, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF)**
- **Public Services International (PSI)**
- **International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**
- **International Federation of Building and Woodworkers (IFBWW)**
- **International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)**
- **International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco & Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)**
- **Union Network International (UNI)** (finance, commerce, private services, white collar, post, telecommunications, graphical, entertainment workers)

The GUFs work closely with each other on issues and employers which cover more than one sector or occupation. For example, the ITF works with:

- **ICEM** on transport to the offshore oil industry and disputes involving chemicals and oil transport.
- **PSI** on issues related to public services and privatisation including relations with the World Bank.
- **IFBWW** on issues such as transport of wood and relations with furniture companies.
- **IMF** on the scrapping and building of ships.
- **IUF** on tourism workers and aviation catering.
- **UNI** on tourism, security companies and aviation, and the growing logistics business.





GUFs are increasingly being requested to provide a co-ordinated international union response to multinational employers. Different industries require different approaches and GUFs have adopted a number of strategies. They include:

Company Councils:

These bring together unions organising within a single multinational company. This strategy is particularly effective where an industry is dominated by a small number of large companies and where unions are relatively strong, particularly in the company’s “home” country. Relevant here are the European Works Councils established under European law for some companies. Where this representation is by bona fide trade unions, these could form the core for the creation of World Councils, or other union or union/employer bodies.

Global Framework Agreements:

These are usually reached between a multinational company’s management and a Global Union Federation. There are about 12 of these agreements so far. Most of them include a commitment by the company to observe ILO core labour standards, to guarantee certain rights to their workers, plus a mechanism for monitoring in which unions play a major role. The commitment often extends not only to the company’s own operations around the world, but puts pressure on its suppliers and sub-contractors as well.

These agreements are so new that it is not yet clear how they will impact on collective bargaining by unions at a local or national level. The agreements often state explicitly that they do not replace local-level industrial negotiations.

The ITF has not yet negotiated any framework agreements with individual companies. However, as virtually every company uses transport, the ITF would like to see all framework agreements include a transport clause. It is in discussion with a company that has a framework agreement with another Global Union Federation about how it transports its supplies and products.

What the ITF has achieved is a global agreement with the International Maritime Employers’ Committee (IMEC), signed in 2000. It is a unique international collective agreement covering the wage levels for 60,000 seafarers on board vessels owned by IMEC members, who include Maersk, Mobil, Chevron, Shell and Swire Pacific.

Codes of Conduct:

Adopted by companies with some trade union input, they vary enormously in scope and importance and there are differing views about how important codes are. In some industries, however, codes can be a way of using the sensitivity of employers to their public image. There is more about codes and other pressure on employers to respect labour standards in the ITF resource book “Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”.

“Different tools suit different industries and it is too early to judge which are most effective. One thing everyone agrees on is that monitoring their implementation by workers at the shopfloor level is the most important aspect of all agreements and codes.”

ITF General Secretary David Cockroft

Meanwhile, Global Union Federations are increasingly also launching joint campaigns on specific issues with NGOs and social movements, including environmentalists and human rights organisations. The ITF has worked with Amnesty International on the rights of refugees, Greenpeace on the illegal fishing industry, and Global Witness on Liberia, for example.

Practical international solidarity

“I was only asked by the ITF to write a letter to the Filipino government protesting against problems that Filipino railway workers were facing. I did it and feel so good about it. International action put tremendous pressure on the government which forced them to address the issues with the workers. It shows that unions are relevant and play a role in international issues in spite of being told that globalisation is inevitable. We can make a difference.”

Canadian worker, ITF Summer School

Some solidarity is “symbolic” – messages, resolutions and diplomatic pressure. This level of solidarity remains important. In some countries, the mere threat of action by other ITF members has helped achieve settlements, secure the reinstatement of sacked union leaders, or cancel legal attacks on unions.

“Our Ministry of Transport wanted to turn our independent Metro administration into a commercial company and suspend collective bargaining. Through letters of protest sent by the ITF to the government, we managed to solve this dispute.”

Romanian metro worker, ITF Summer School

Financial solidarity can also be important. Unions often face massive costs because of attacks by employers or governments. These could be fines or other legal actions which threaten their ability to defend their members’ interests or force workers back to work through starvation.

Given the challenges facing trade unions, are these forms of solidarity sufficient? Since it was founded over one hundred years ago, the ITF has also encouraged direct solidarity. The ITF flag of convenience campaign – running for over fifty years – continues to deliver practical international solidarity every day between seafarer and docker affiliates (see box on page 40).

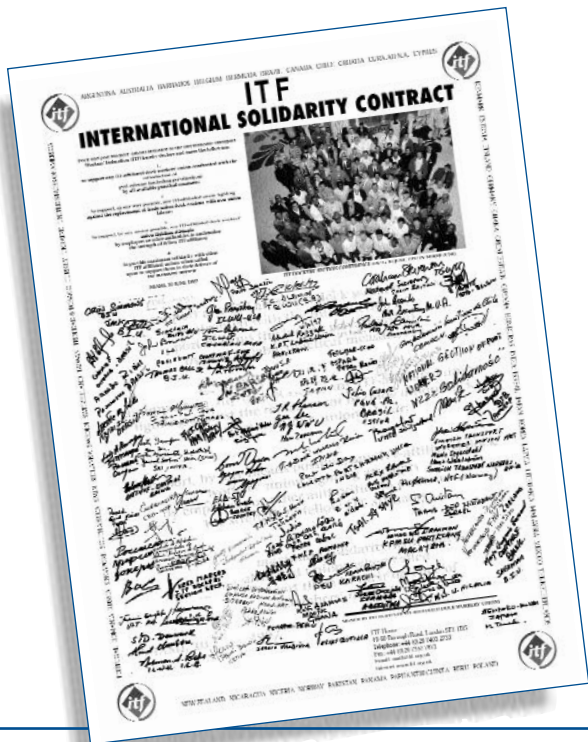
Workers in other transport sectors too are increasingly turning to such practical and direct forms of international solidarity. They have held sympathy strikes, boycotts, and taken industrial and other direct action, as can be seen in the many case studies in this book and in the accompanying manuals “Workers’ Rights are Human Rights” and “Women Transporting the World”. Such actions can exert strong and direct economic pressure on employers or governments.

If your union needs solidarity from other ITF affiliates, there are guidelines on the best way to request this. They are given in “Workers’ Rights are Human Rights”.

ITF International Solidarity Contract

Dock and port workers’ unions in the ITF have a long and proud history of solidarity with other dock workers and with seafarers. In June 1997, they committed themselves:

- To support any ITF-affiliated dock workers’ union confronted with the introduction of port reforms (including privatisation).
- To support any ITF unions fighting against the replacement of trade union dock workers with non-union labour.
- To support ITF dock workers’ unions fighting attempts by employers or other authorities to undermine the strength of fellow ITF affiliates.
- To provide maximum solidarity with other ITF unions when called upon to support them in their defence of their members’ interests.



# International campaigning

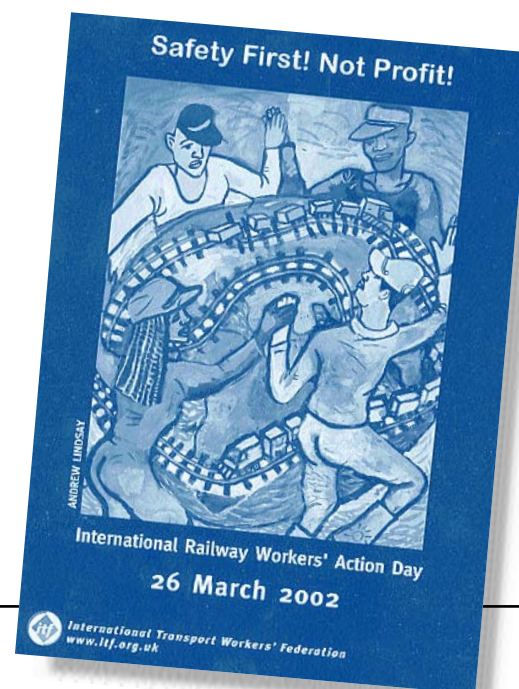
**“We know that the UK’s top three transportation companies are now operating in the US. Perhaps other transportation companies will see the opportunities these three have taken. Or maybe US transportation companies will see opportunities overseas and become players in other countries. Certainly, given the globalisation of transportation, trade unions will have to think seriously about an international strategy to confront a company on a local level.”**

*Jeanine Nagrod, Washington District, AFL-CIO, US*

For many trade unions, participating in an international trade union organisation has mainly meant attending international meetings. These meetings are expensive to organise. They often do not lead to practical actions. Unions can find it difficult to maintain links and contact between meetings.

So the ITF has been strengthening other means of global action, particularly through a more campaign-

based approach. The aim is to involve the members of trade unions, mobilised to take action on a specific issue, not only at a local or national level but co-ordinated across the world. In the roads, railways, and civil aviation sectors, ITF campaigns have so far concentrated on global Days of Action.



## Safety First – Not Profit: international railway workers’ action day

In response to the radical restructuring of the rail industry around the world (see page 23), the ITF organised the first ever International Railway Workers’ Day in March 2000. More than 40 countries organised activities, as they also did for the second global action day in March 2001.

Railway unions from different ITF regions made the same call: for workers to be fully involved in the restructuring process from the beginning, for railway jobs to be protected, and for rail safety standards to be maintained.

There were displays and leafleting at railway stations from Austria to Thailand. Mass rallies and demonstrations were held in countries such as Botswana, India, Namibia, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Japan, Latvia, Malaysia and Turkey unions met with management and/or government. Work stoppages took place in France, Italy and the UK.

Cross-border meetings were held between unionists from Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg, as well as between Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. In Ghana, Kenya and Ukraine, there were safety inspections and clean-up campaigns. Canadian activists ran a mass fax campaign to government. In New Zealand, meetings were held nationwide to launch a new health and safety team. In the UK, a tree was planted in memory of the victims of rail accidents.

In this way, each ITF affiliate undertook whatever activities it felt appropriate in its own situation, combining with the others to form the Global Action Day.

## Saying no to ‘Air Rage’

On 6 July 2000, tens of thousands of cabin crew and airport staff in around 100 countries took action against “air rage”. Ground staff distributed thousands of leaflets to passengers, information booths were set up in airports, banners were displayed in departure lounges, announcements were made on different airlines and, in some countries, work stoppages were organised.

The ITF’s Zero Air Rage Campaign put pressure on airlines and governments to take action against violent and disruptive passengers. An Air Rage Charter was presented to governments as part of the day of action.

The ITF co-ordinated action worldwide. At airports in Mexico City, Cancún and Guadalajara, ground staff, cabin crew and pilot unions handed out 10,000 leaflets along with badges. Similar events took place in Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, United States and many other countries.

In almost all cases, trade union delegations received a sympathetic response from government ministers. For example, the New Zealand government said it would amend a bill in parliament to address the problem. In Thailand, the government also announced its intention to change the law.

The campaign received excellent media coverage worldwide. Many unions found themselves barely able to cope with the interest shown by newspapers, radio stations and national and international television networks. Air rage campaigners in the United States said they had never before experienced such a media response.

*“This unprecedented global trade union action is a reminder to the industry and governments that the ITF and its affiliated unions are ready to mobilise in a common cause,”* said Shane Enright, the ITF’s Civil Aviation Section Secretary. Countries such as Britain, America and Australia now have excellent legislation in place to protect staff and passengers. However, there are many countries which still do not have laws to deal with the perpetrators.

A global “Zero Air Rage” day was organised again in July 2001. Ground and air workers in many countries called for governments to adopt national laws and to support a global treaty to ensure the prosecution of air rage incidents. The ITF has worked closely with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to develop such a legal instrument.





## Flags of convenience: No place to hide

For more than half a century, the ITF and its maritime affiliates have campaigned against the flag of convenience (FOC) system (see page 16). It is a system that allows shipowners to run their business with the minimum of scrutiny, and many are bad employers.

The FOC campaign is carried out on a day-to-day basis by a network of over 120 inspectors from ITF affiliates in the world's major ports. They inspect seafarers' living and working conditions, particularly on board FOC vessels. They negotiate with the owners to sign an ITF-acceptable agreement that gives the seafarers at least minimum standards. Each year, some 7,000 ship inspections are made by these inspectors, and nearly 6,000 FOC vessels are sailing under ITF agreements. Inspectors also recover back pay where the seafarers have not been properly paid. In 2000, for example, over US\$28 million was recovered in back pay for crews. Where necessary, inspectors use powers that exist under local and international law to have sub-standard vessels arrested in port until the owners sign up.

Dockers also provide the backbone of the FOC campaign. Around the world and over history, dockers have taken action in support of seafarers. The willingness of dockers to prevent or delay the loading and unloading of ships remains an inspirational example of solidarity. In return, seafarers are asked not to perform cargo handling which is traditionally the work of dockers. Seafarers are increasingly being asked by shipowners and masters to handle cargo, partly to save turn-around time in port. But it puts them at risk of accidents because dockers' work is dangerous and requires training. It also takes away dockers' jobs.

In London, the ITF Claims Unit investigates claims that are made by sick or injured seafarers, or the families of seafarers who have died at work. This includes claims for negligence where a vessel has sunk causing loss of life and personal injury. All too often, shipowners and their lawyers try to get workers and families to sign away their full rights to compensation.

All these issues come together in the regional ITF Weeks of Action held each year. In 2001, Latin America and the Irish Sea joined in for the first time, building on the campaign weeks already running in Asia/Pacific and Europe. Each year the weeks force FOC shipowners to sign ITF agreements, and they win back at least US\$1.5 million of outstanding wages for seafarers. In the Irish Sea, ITF unions and inspectors found gross discrimination, with European seafarers earning European rates while Burmese, Indonesian and Filipino seafarers get just US\$450 a month.

Meanwhile, the campaign also has its political and lobbying wing, working with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and others, including reputable shipowners, to expose and combat the FOC system and sub-standard shipping.

The campaign is overseen by the ITF Fair Practices Committee, which is made up of representatives of about 100 seafarers' and dockers' affiliates from all world regions.



## Fatigue Kills!

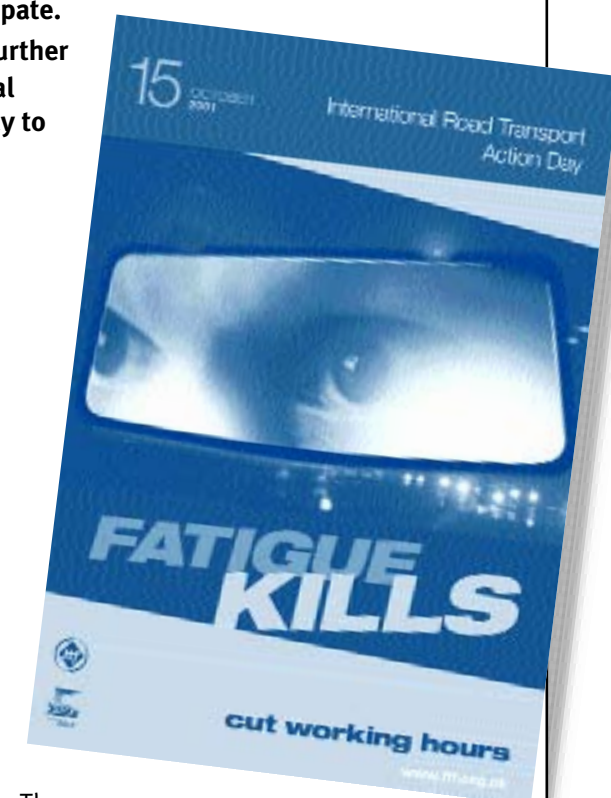
### Road transport workers campaign for reduced working hours

The ITF has co-ordinated an International Road Transport Action Day each year since 1997. Truck, bus and taxi drivers around the world are protesting against the dangerously long hours demanded of them, especially where deregulation of road transport has led to increasingly cut-throat competition.

The International Action Day in 2001 saw professional drivers in 60 countries take part. Drivers and other transport staff used everything from a lobby of parliament to border closures, demonstrations of traffic accidents, and a video lorry to demonstrate that being forced to work long hours at the wheel endangers every road user.

An international ITF meeting of road transport workers discussed the achievements and lessons of this campaign. They found that:

- **Participating unions identify a common issue but decide tactics based on their local conditions. With this flexibility, a wide number of unions can participate.**
- **The international campaign has helped unions to take further their demands for improved working conditions at a local and national level. Many unions are using the Action Day to negotiate with management or government. In some countries, unions have won changes to legislation on working hours.**
- **Rank-and-file workers have become involved in an international activity, sometimes for the first time.**
- **Unions from neighbouring countries have met and organised cross-border events for the first time.**
- **The campaign day is more than a one-off event. Unions take action before and after it.**
- **Regional education activities have been linked to organising for the campaign.**
- **The campaign has stimulated better national co-ordination between road transport workers' unions, and between them and other transport workers' unions.**
- **Participating unions have become more confident in developing campaign techniques and taking action.**



For bus drivers in Sheffield, UK, fatigue is an ongoing problem. The concentration needed to weave through crowded city streets is very wearing. Low wages mean that many need to do overtime and end up working 6 days or 60 hours a week, sometimes even more. Divorce rates are high. The drivers are concerned that the Labour government is dragging its feet over the European Working Time Directive. "The TGWU has an on-going campaign, but the ITF Action Day forces us to think of doing more, especially to involve the lay members," said Branch Secretary Martin Mayer.

# Industrial action across borders

**“In all major disputes with airlines, we have asked for international assistance and it has always been effective.”**

*Cabin crew member, Australia*

**“When disputes occur in companies which have adopted a global expansion strategy, unions will only win disputes if they think globally too.”**

*David Cockroft, ITF General Secretary*

Industrial action is the most powerful instrument available to workers. The ability, if necessary, to stop things moving is the essence of transport trade unionism. Millions of transport workers have experienced industrial action at a local or national level. Today, transport trade unions need increasingly to put pressure on companies and decision-makers through industrial action at a global level.

Transport is key to the global economy. The use of “Just in Time” and “Logistics” means that employers in a wide range of sectors are seriously vulnerable to transport disruption across national borders. The integration of the global transport system means that even a small action can have a big effect. Unions have the power to make use of this new global environment. How can workers and unions build effective international industrial action?

## Learning from other workers

In the British Airways and UPS strikes (see case studies on pages 44 and 45), striking workers turned to workers in other countries for support. The solidarity action in response made a big difference to the outcome of these strikes. Management became uncertain as to whether the service could be delivered reliably and on time. They feared damage to customer confidence. Companies such as BA and UPS have invested huge sums of money in creating a global brand name. They are highly vulnerable in the global market place to effective international campaigning combined with industrial action.

In another example, in Argentina, all cross-border trade was virtually paralysed by “snail” action by road transport workers that was co-ordinated with the union in Chile. This action received a great deal of local public support. This is the kind of activity that can provide a model for other workers.

There are of course many difficulties in carrying out international solidarity activities. In many countries, unions are losing members and are becoming weaker. Industrial action is difficult to organise. Solidarity action in support of other workers is even more difficult. In some countries, serious legal obstacles exist. High unemployment and job insecurity have greatly increased the risk of employer retaliation.

Direct action, including international solidarity action, therefore has to be carefully planned. Disruption to

transport can be a very effective weapon. It can also provoke governments to hit back. For example, the European Commission threatened to intervene against union action in the name of preserving the European Union internal market.

It is often better to take action which is customer/public friendly. During the BA dispute, US cabin crew actively helped passengers make bookings on other carriers. Unions organising in BA competitors encouraged those companies to put on extra flights.

## Solidarity action and the law

In many countries, anti-union legislation has made secondary boycott action and other forms of solidarity very difficult. Employers have also become much more aggressive at using the law. Unions face penalties for even minor breaches of the law, often out of all proportion to the seriousness of the action. They might include huge fines, seizure of assets or even imprisonment of officials.

Do unions sometimes use the law as an excuse as well as a genuine reason for not taking action? It is sometimes easier simply to say “the law prevents us from doing anything” rather than “this is what we can do”. Effective international solidarity action should mean concentrating on what can be done and not on what cannot. For the ITF and its affiliates, the law must be treated with respect but not used as an excuse for doing nothing.

Unions have developed many different tactics and ideas. One is to negotiate a clause that gives workers the right to engage in sympathy strikes or respect picket lines. The international nature of the ITF solidarity network can make it harder for legal action to be enforced. If there is a risk of legal attack in one country, sometimes the action can be shifted to

another with a better legal environment. Sometimes international action is the only available option where a union faces tough legal and political attack locally.

In some disputes, unions mobilise international support by sending striking workers or officials to the country where pressure is needed. A delegation from the American union, the Teamsters, visited Europe during their dispute in August 1997 to address mass meetings of UPS workers and meet executive committees of unions being asked to take solidarity action. A month before, the movement had been the other way across the Atlantic when members of the British Transport and General Workers’ Union went to picket JFK airport during the British Airways strike.

Solidarity cannot be turned on and off like a tap. Union members who take global industrial action might be risking their wages and sometimes even their jobs. As the examples show, many workers around the world are prepared to take this risk in support of fellow workers. This needs too to be respected.



## Belgian workers support strike in Germany

A DHL parcel delivery worker attending the ITF Summer School explains how he joined in actions to support DHL workers in Germany:

**“I work at DHL Aviation at Brussels airport, where DHL parcels are delivered. We were informed by DHL shop stewards in Germany that a plane coming from Frankfurt had been loaded by management. German DHL workers were on strike. When the plane arrived in Brussels, workers sat in front of the container to prevent it from being unloaded. Our management was very angry. For a company like DHL, it is very important to deliver on time. This is what customers are promised. By blocking goods, management said we were violating the agreement between our union and the company. We let the goods through when the German workers had finished their strike. Three months later, management is still wanting to give a warning to shop stewards.”**





## 'Part-time America Doesn't Work' UPS strike wins global support

In 1997, American workers and their Teamsters' union took strike action against United Parcel Service. UPS is the world's largest package distribution company (see the company profile on page 29). Strike action won massive public support in the US and there were rank-and-file actions around the world in support. As a result, the company was forced to meet the demands of the workers.

The UPS strike reflected how globalisation has impacted on workers. In 1997, two-thirds of the UPS workforce in America were part-timers. They were paid half the wages of full-time workers, had poor health benefits and no pension coverage. UPS had a very bad health and safety record. The Teamsters demanded an end to unsafe, dead-end, part-time jobs. Workers mobilised around the slogan "Part-time America Doesn't Work".

A crucial part of the union's tactics was to put pressure on UPS' overseas strategy. They identified areas where the company might be vulnerable. For example, UPS was trying to win markets in Europe through offering "just-in-time" services. It had invested US\$1 billion in European operations. The company feared that a UPS strike in America would spread to Europe, undermining on-time performance reliability, customer loyalty and confidence in Europe.

The Teamsters developed strong ties with UPS unions in other countries through the ITF World Council of UPS Unions which included unions from many European countries, Brazil, Canada, as well as the US. Solidarity activity was organised:

- **The Teamsters identified strategically important UPS air hubs and distribution centres in Europe. During the strike, they visited these sites. Workers held demonstrations and sympathy strikes. For example, in Belgium, workers went on a wildcat strike.**
- **Unions in European countries which represented workers at companies which were large customers of UPS, such as Mercedes-Benz and Philips, were urged to put pressure on their employers to stop using UPS services during the strike.**
- **Public sector unions in Europe were asked to get customs officers and labour inspectors to scrutinise UPS packages.**

UPS workers in Europe identified with the demands of the American workers. They too had problems with UPS management practices, including part-time work, poor health and safety, and union-bashing. The strike in America provided UPS workers in other countries with the opportunity to voice their own demands. Through joint participation in the ITF World Council, UPS unions found the basis for a united global response to UPS management.

**For more information:** *"The Development of International Campaign-Based Network Structures: A Case Study of the IBT and ITF World Council of UPS Unions"* by Andy Banks and John Russo.

## 'No Way BA': British Airways strike

In 1997, British Airways cabin crew went on strike. BA planned to introduce greater levels of sub-contracting and work flexibility. The reorganisation involved longer working hours with no pay increase, as well as developing a new workforce of younger and less experienced but super-cheap cabin crew. The company refused to negotiate these changes with the majority union, TGWU-BASSA, a division of the Transport and General Workers' Union in the UK.

The company tried to intimidate workers by writing to all union members threatening dismissal. It claimed that individual workers would be sued for losses. Management also took photographs and video film of workers on the picket line.

ITF affiliates around the world supported the BA workers. Workers in other airlines knew that the outcome of the BA dispute would affect their terms and conditions too. Their managements had warned that they would follow BA's strategy to reduce costs. So for the ITF and its civil aviation affiliates, the BA strike was seen as a strategic priority for an international campaign.

One striker said: *"I look at the notice board every day. Every day there are new messages from Spain, South Africa, Hong Kong, Japan...everywhere. It shows we are not alone. Everyone sees this strike as a fight for basic rights which affects everyone in this industry."* BA threatened the ITF with legal action and demanded an end to solidarity support.

The strike ballot in Britain caused ticket sales to drop. Unions elsewhere released press statements saying that there would be a strike in BA. The media picked the story up, alerting potential customers to disruption in BA. Ticket sales were further hit. This was very damaging for a company in a highly competitive industry.

BA tried to set up a strike-breaking team of workers by chartering foreign aircraft and crews. The largest charter carriers in America declined contracts. The American Teamsters' union had warned them that they would not accept any strike breaking. Carriers in Holland also faced Dutch union action.

In many countries, the law prevents secondary action by workers. But at JFK airport in New York, workers could refuse to cross a picket line, a right guaranteed by their collective bargaining agreement. After securing the necessary permission from the airport authorities, members of TGWU-BASSA arrived from Britain and formed a picket line. The resulting industrial action delayed several important transatlantic flights. This dealt a big psychological blow to BA.

Civil aviation workers in Malta, Denmark and Zimbabwe tried to delay BA strike-breaking flights. In Finland, catering staff refused to board the aircraft. The airline industry is time sensitive. So any delay is damaging for the company. The company was very worried that the strike would escalate into a wider action internationally. Management was never sure how far ITF solidarity would be taken. Meanwhile in Britain, the strikers had won significant public and media sympathy.

BA was forced to abandon its plans to break TGWU-BASSA and was not able to impose new conditions without negotiating with the union.



## Turning the tide of anti-trade unionism: International support for Australian dockers

On 7 April 1998, over 2,000 Australian dockers were dismissed. Patrick Stevedores, one of the country's two major port operators, brought in non-union workers to take their jobs. With support from the right-wing Australian government, the company was trying to create a union-free ports industry in Australia.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) led the dockers in a struggle against the company. Picket lines were set up outside the gates. They received massive support from the dockers' families, other workers and unionists, community leaders, artists, actors and politicians. Wives, girlfriends, partners, mothers and daughters of the sacked dockers formed Women of the Waterfront in support of the strikers.

The MUA also took legal action. In support, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) submitted a complaint to the International Labour Organisation against the Australian government. The ICFTU said that workers were sacked because they were members of a union. The action was supported by the ITF and the Australian national trade union centre, the ACTU.

Labour laws in Australia limit the ability of unions to engage in solidarity action. So organising international solidarity action was very important to winning the dispute. *"Dock workers internationally have shown just how global solidarity can be built and used during industrial disputes. No-one has forgotten the role the ITF played during the dispute"*, said John Coombs, MUA National Secretary.

The ITF sent daily information bulletins to affiliates and updates were provided on the ITF website. Workers in many countries held demonstrations. Some unions donated money to the dockers.

The *Columbus Canada*, loaded by non-union labour in Australia, arrived at the port of Los Angeles. ITF-affiliated American International Longshore and Warehouse Union longshore workers refused to cross a solidarity picket line of 1,500 labour and community activists. The ship was stranded off the US coast for two weeks. It was eventually obliged to return its non-union loaded cargo, including up to 60 containers of meat and dairy products, to Australia.

Hundreds of demonstrating Japanese trade unionists met the *Australian Endeavour* to protest about the use of non-union labour. In Holland, unloading of the *Botany Bay* was delayed for several hours. Another Australian ship was diverted from Mumbai after the ITF-affiliated dockers' union warned that it would be targeted.

The company and government took legal action against the ITF, but ITF affiliates in many countries continued to take solidarity action. In the end, the pressure of strong local and international mobilisation forced the company to reach an agreement with the union.

The Australian dockers' dispute shows the importance of well-co-ordinated international action. Organisations such as the ITF, MUA, ILO, ACTU and ICFTU each had a clear role and kept the others informed. It was also a campaign which successfully united local and global activities.



## 'The taste of injustice': LSG-Sky Chefs dispute

LSG-Sky Chefs is the world's largest airline catering company. The company delivers meals to 260 international airlines. It has catering facilities in over 200 countries.

In response to changes in pay and conditions, workers operating from Heathrow Airport in Britain went on a legal one-day strike in 1998. Most of the workers were Asian women organised by the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). The company sacked them. For 18 months, the workers held a picket at Heathrow. Many other trade unionists, politicians and activists joined the picket line in solidarity.

The company brought in strike-breaking workers so that production would not be affected. This weakened the industrial muscle of the sacked workers. Due to restrictive British labour laws, they also did not have a good legal route to winning back their jobs. For the workers to put effective pressure on the company, international solidarity action was essential.

The ITF identified the owners of LSG-Sky Chefs at Heathrow. The ITF-affiliated German union, ÖTV, played an important role in helping to put pressure on the parent company, LSG Service Holding, based in Germany. The company only owned 25 per cent of LSG-Sky Chefs but accepted moral responsibility for the Heathrow dispute. The German management agreed to negotiate with the TGWU and ITF, and a series of meetings were held.

Similarly, Canadian unions put pressure on another owner, the Canadian caterer ONEX. ONEX was bidding to purchase Air Canada and Canadian Airlines in order to merge the companies. It did not want union opposition to such a bid. By asking about the dispute at Heathrow, Canadian unions used their leverage to put pressure on the company.

Danish unions also put pressure on the German management of LSG. Their national airline SAS was in the process of sub-contracting catering to LSG-Sky Chefs. In negotiations about this transfer, the unions asked about the dispute at Heathrow.

The ITF identified those airlines which were customers of LSG-Sky Chefs. ITF affiliates then distributed pamphlets to passengers who were asked to sign a statement in support of workers' rights.

Although workers did not win back their jobs, they were paid compensation. This was a gain for the workers. For months, the company had denied there even was a dispute. International solidarity action helped to open negotiations and win some rights for the sacked workers.

*"We would not have been able to do this without the assistance of other unions both in Europe and North America. It shows that even big unions like the TGWU can benefit from international solidarity,"* said a TGWU member at the ITF Summer School.





# Organising the unorganised

**“We have to rise to the challenge of providing a proper service to the informal sector. We want to ensure that taxi workers are exposed to trade union education programmes that redress their lack of familiarity with workers’ rights.”**

*National Organiser for Taxi Workers, South African Transport and Allied Workers’ Union (SATAWU)*

The mobilisation of international solidarity depends on strong and representative local trade unions. In many countries, however, strong unions do not exist.

Many unions urgently need to develop strategies to organise the unorganised. They face difficult questions about how to bring into the union movement workers in informal employment, owner-operators, women workers, non-traditional transport workers, and others who have traditionally been marginal to the unions.

For example, women workers are entering the transport industry in increasing numbers. However,

unions remain male-dominated. Many affiliates have not adequately dealt with the needs and concerns of women workers. Women have generally not been integrated fully into unions and have often faced hostility and harassment from fellow male workers.

**“Unions which do not fight for the rights of their women members will face both a threat to their membership and to working conditions and salaries for all workers. It’s our job to make sure that does not happen. Unions need women, and women need unions!”**

*Sarah Finke, ITF Women’s Officer*

Organising workers in informal employment is another challenge for unions. New questions have to be asked. For example, if there is no “employer” in the traditional sense, what does the union have to offer? How does a member benefit from membership? Is an owner-operator or informal worker a “worker” or an entrepreneur? Should they join a union, or a chamber of commerce?

In reality, especially in many developing countries, associations of workers in informal employment are partly recognisable as trade unions and partly as employers’ federations.

Road transport unions have been trying different ways to reach out to unorganised workers:

- **In Luxembourg, a special “one-to-one campaign” in which individual union members talked to non-union workers increased the membership by ten per cent.**
- **In Finland, unions are visiting vocational training schools to talk to trainee drivers and administration workers.**
- **Affiliates in Africa have been handing out symbolic ITF international drivers’ cards to show the benefits of international representation.**
- **A series of education seminars in South Asia have helped several unions to recruit new members successfully.**
- **Japanese unions are leafleting professional drivers at rest areas.**
- **In the United States the Teamsters allows owner-operator associations to affiliate to the union.**



## Organising workers in informal employment

Informal employment in transport services is growing worldwide. Taxis, minibuses and rickshaws operate mostly individually. Whether the drivers are self-employed owner-operators or employees of an owner or company, they are largely unorganised workers. As a result, working conditions are poor and dangerous.

Informal workers need the support of trade unions. And trade unions need the support of informal workers. Without participation in trade unions, the low terms and conditions of informal workers could undermine trade union negotiated agreements.

Some trade unions have co-operated with informal worker associations and self-help groups. There are many different possible avenues – from coalitions to one-off task groups or strategic alliances with women, young people, social groups, small business groups or others. Unions can assist with education, training, legal work or obtaining finance. Unions also need to build their own capacity to link with workers in informal employment, by having policies, strategies and contact people.

“The initial strategic goal in approaching informal workers should not be formal union membership but co-operation, and the identification of common interests. It is a good idea to pursue a step-by-step approach so as not to frighten off interested people with membership fees,” advises Dr Jörn Altmann, who has studied these issues.

*From Transport International, No 4, 2001*

## Reaching out to drivers in Indian ports

KB Bajpai, Secretary of the Transport and Dockworkers’ Union in Mumbai, India, explains how his union has reached unorganised workers:

“Once the port and dock workers were all our members. Then, when containerisation was introduced in 1987, we realised that we also had to bring the transport workers involved in port operations under our banner. The truck operators, like a mafia, had an iron fist control over the drivers and other staff, who were reluctant to come to the union office when we initially made contact.

We then went out to meet and talk to these workers in their homes in the evenings, assuring them that they would not be victimised if they joined the union. Our efforts slowly succeeded, and 50-60 of them enrolled. This became our core group.

We filed a Charter of Demands to the operators, who tried to prop up a self-sponsored union, but we stood our ground, and gave a strike notice. The strike materialised. The biggest of the operators agreed to negotiate and signed an agreement. But when it came to payment time, he declared a lock-out. In response, we told all nine operators that the union would boycott them.

For two months the union sustained the struggle until the employers relented. We made an agreement with the shipping agents and government, regulating our members’ wages, working conditions and absorption as regular employees. Today a majority of the transport workers operating in our port are union members. Organised workers have a responsibility and should close ranks when it comes to organising unorganised workers.”

*From Transport International, No 6, 2001*



## Women Transporting the World

Women Transporting the World is a global ITF campaign to win better employment rights for women transport workers. The campaign also aims to get more women involved in trade union activities. *“This is the first time we have asked unions to campaign on an issue that affects every transport mode and every transport workplace,”* said David Cockroft, ITF General Secretary.

The ITF carried out a survey of affiliates to identify areas for campaigning. The survey confirmed that women transport workers face direct discrimination in the workplace.

In the first year of the campaign, participating unions identified specific targets for reducing inequalities between men and women workers. They also organised education activities for their members. The ITF supported the campaign by distributing campaign posters and postcards.

On International Women’s Day in 2001, many ITF affiliates organised events to promote women’s basic rights. Rallies were held in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Niger. In Brazil, a campaign was launched on the health of women airline workers. In New Zealand, women aviation workers campaigned for company childcare provision. Over 50 countries participated in the events.

In 2002, the Day of Action focused on organising particularly young women, many of whom do not yet belong to unions.

*“From discrimination and harassment to lack of childcare, this event has ensured that issues that matter worldwide to women have been raised by women.”*

*Sarah Finke, ITF Women’s Officer*

The ITF has set up an international women’s network so that women activists in transport unions can share information on a regular basis. Each ITF union has been asked to nominate a contact person for the network. These contact people identify where women members are in the union and work for the formation of women’s structures, for women’s recruitment, and for positive policies for women union members. They have an important job. They are also best placed to tell whether the work the ITF is doing is useful to women members.

More information on ITF activities to promote women’s participation in transport unions is given in the ITF resource book *“Women Transporting the World”*.

WOMEN  
transporting the world

## Planning campaigns

Planning a good campaign takes time. It needs to have well defined and achievable objectives as well as, in most cases, a defined end point.

### Focus

For a campaign to be effective, it must be very clear what it is about. Most successful campaigns are built around one main issue which can unite many workers because they feel it deeply. An example is driver fatigue in road transport which is common all around the world. Addressing too many issues becomes confusing.

A good campaign issue is also one that is winnable, at least in part. Nothing is more demoralising than losing a big struggle over a just but unwinnable cause. The campaign should aim to win concrete improvements for union members, give them a sense of their own power through collective action, and alter the relations of power.

### Targets

Targets might include specific employers, the government and/or other institutions. The global economy has produced easily identifiable corporate targets, for example, multinational companies involved in railway privatisation, or the airlines which need to take more responsibility for combating air rage. It is important to assess where they are vulnerable, for example their public image or investor confidence. A good campaign also targets those who have the power to make decisions in the unions’ favour such as major customers, large banks and finance companies.

### Allies

The plan should identify allies of the campaign, separately from the targets. They may include other unions, passenger groups, community-based organisations, politicians, the mass media, environmentalists, women workers’ organisations, consumers, union-friendly lawyers and academics, and so on. Work out how to gain the maximum support from each ally.

### Activities

Campaign activities should be defined clearly. There are many possibilities as the ITF Global Days of Action show. They include workplace demonstrations, mass rallies, marches, blockades, work stoppages, petitions, leafleting, exhibitions and mobile displays, lobbying of government, meetings with management, and so on. The press and media should be kept informed as much as possible. In an international campaign, the tactics that each union adopts might be different, depending on local circumstances.

### Involving members

If global campaigns are to succeed, they need the active participation of workers. Many workers are experienced at local campaigning, but the very idea of global campaigning may be new. Workers need not only to understand the purpose but to be part of developing appropriate forms of action. Ways of involving workers include:

- **Running local education programmes and/or meetings which focus on campaigns.**
- **Inviting transport unions with expertise in global campaigning to share it with union members.**
- **Sending lay activists to learn from campaigners elsewhere.**
- **Ensuring that lay activists are involved in campaign committees.**

### Resources

Whatever the scale of a campaign, unions need to have adequate resources locally and internationally. Identify what resources you have, what you need, and where you can get additional support.





## Good campaign planning

- Determine the union's goals.
- Identify workers' and union issues.
- Create the campaign theme.
- Select targets, and analyse their strengths and weaknesses.
- Analyse your own strengths and weaknesses.
- Select allies and identify how to maximise their support.
- Identify available resources.
- Create a time-scale for the campaign.
- Develop the campaign strategies.
- Develop tactics that fit your strategies.
- Organise an effective campaign communications system.
- Evaluate your strategies.
- Develop new tactics to fit the new strategies.

*From "Campaign Planning", by Andy Banks and Teresa Conrow.*

## Some useful campaign principles

- Everything starts with the members.
- Express campaign goals and issues as a fight for social justice.
- Pick an issue which is winnable, at least in part.
- Include as targets those who can make decisions in the unions' favour.
- Do your research, including a global picture of your targets.
- Devise a strategy which focuses on the target's vulnerability.
- Educate the public on the justice and feasibility of your cause.
- Encourage key elements of the broader community to participate.
- Begin with small, low-risk tactics; increase intensity as the campaign proceeds.
- We will never stop! Keep the pressure constant and changing.

*From "Principles of Strategic Campaigns", by Andy Banks and Teresa Conrow.*

## Education and training

Globalisation creates a new and urgent agenda for trade union educators: how to equip union members with sufficient understanding of global processes and with the confidence that they can work effectively in solidarity with unions and workers in other countries. Union representatives and negotiators, at all levels of union organisation, need to develop international skills.

Union representatives and members in different transport sectors have different educational needs. In shipping and aviation, the international nature of the industry is obvious to most of the workforce. In road and rail, the impact of globalisation is more recent. Workers' experiences in these sectors may not immediately expose them to the international operations of their industry.

Some of the education activity required is relatively basic. An introductory understanding of economic globalisation and the international trade union movement can be built into a broad range of local trade union education programmes. Workers quickly appreciate the importance of these questions.

There are also dangers. Sometimes an education programme can be insensitive to local circumstances or to the specific needs of the transport workers concerned. Also an approach which emphasises the sheer power and wealth of global corporations can demoralise and disempower workers. Education programmes need to look at examples of practical international solidarity action to build confidence and show what can be achieved.



### Some simple steps

Unions can take a few simple and perhaps obvious steps to build confidence and understanding in international solidarity. Even those unions with limited resources can adopt an international approach to education which can be cheap but effective:

- **Invitations to trade unionists from other countries.** Whenever there is an appropriate gathering of union members, consider inviting trade unionists from other countries – not necessarily senior leaders but maybe workplace representatives. Inviting fellow workers with direct experience or interest from other countries can be especially useful for specific industries, employers, sections or campaigns.
- **International news and features in trade union publications.** Workers often never see ITF publications. Editors of union magazines and newsletters can reproduce articles and news features locally, especially if they have access to the ITF website. Those unions which have their own websites can highlight and regularly update links to the ITF website, or sites managed by other affiliates.
- **Educational meetings before and after attending international events.** Although many delegates who attend international meetings then write reports for internal circulation, the opportunity should also be taken to hold educational events. Both before and after the meetings abroad, members can debate the issues. This is particularly important to “de-mystify” international union processes and build the democratic participation of workers.



# Deepening union education programmes

Many education officers are interested to explore how questions of globalisation and international solidarity can be introduced into trade union education programmes. This can be done by providing specialist courses, inserting new international modules within existing programmes, or inviting union representatives from other countries to participate in education programmes.

Developing international solidarity education has been greatly improved by access to the internet. The internet can be used as a source of education materials from other countries. It can be a way of participating in education programmes organised internationally. It can be used as a networking tool between educators. This opens up the possibility of running international education programmes involving ITF affiliates from different countries.

Some union education officers and tutors already have practical experience of international education programmes to address globalisation. Several problems and difficulties have been recognised:

- **Understanding the global from the local.** Many trade unions stress the importance of building on, and recognising the value of, the experience and understanding of workers taking part in education. Building on, and drawing from, local experience – rather than relying on external expertise – is at the heart of the workers’ education tradition. Even when the subject matter is international, this principle remains valid. For example, workers can be asked to compare their experience of negotiating

with TNC employers. It is more difficult, however, to draw on workers’ experience when discussing the trade union movement in other countries, or the workings of international trade union organisations, unless participants have had that direct international experience.

- **Language, culture and approaches to education.** Educational language and culture in trade unions vary enormously from country to country and region to region. Building practical collaboration between education officers and departments to design and deliver common courses on international solidarity requires time and sensitivity.
- **Inclusive, international and relevant.** It is obvious that a common international education programme for transport workers, particularly for some sectors, has to be broad enough to include a huge range of economic and political conditions, levels of experience, strength of trade union organisation, and so on. On the other hand, experience suggests that the more that education courses are specifically targeted, the more one can expect practical and direct outcomes. A course on “Globalisation” is less likely to succeed than a course on “Globalisation, the World Bank, and Rail Transport in Southern Africa”, for example.

For all these reasons, education to encourage practical international solidarity requires a highly flexible, targeted and local approach.



## The ITF Summer School

The annual ITF Summer School is an opportunity for activists in affiliates to meet across the boundaries of section and region, and to discuss and debate. It was first held in Oxford, Britain (1999), then Berlin (2000) and Denmark (2001). It brings together 40 or so participants, for a mixture of presentations, panel discussions and group activities.

Topics have included an understanding of globalisation of the transport industry, implementing mobilising solidarity policies in the activities of affiliates, and the design and delivery of international campaigns.

## Globalisation and International Development Project, Transport and General Workers’ Union, Britain

The Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU), one of the largest general unions in Britain, launched a project in 1999 specifically aimed at introducing globalisation and international solidarity into the union’s education programme. The core of the project consisted of a series of week-long residential courses for senior workplace representatives, many from global corporations. There they discussed globalisation in their industry, the role of international trade unionism, and practical steps to develop international solidarity.

Each course focused on a particular industrial sector. A course for workers from the transport industry was held in May 2001, organised in close consultation with the ITF. Also attending the courses were representatives from two or three unions from other countries. The project successfully encouraged the workplace union representatives to take a direct interest in the international trade union movement and the international activities of the TGWU.

The project also developed a special section on the union’s website. This contains all the education material developed for the courses. It is designed for individual union members to study via the internet, and for union tutors to build modules from the project courses into the union’s day-to-day education programme. It is primarily designed for TGWU members but is available for anyone to use at: [www.tgwu.org.uk](http://www.tgwu.org.uk).





# Information, technology and language

For international solidarity to be effective, workers and trade unions need regular information from other countries. It is often only union officers and officials who have access to this information, however.

The internet allows unions to publish and distribute information at high speed and low cost. These days it can be accessed by virtually anyone, not only from desktop PCs but from Internet Cafés, not only in industrialised countries but in cities around the world. Yet many unions and workers in developing countries still have only limited access. It is important that trade unions and workers develop strategies to make use of this technology to improve their international communication.

As a result of the explosion in electronic communications media, there is a risk of information overload. Trade unions need to identify the most important developments and sources of data. This can be time consuming, and requires organisational capacity. The ITF Secretariat helps by circulating useful sources of information to affiliates by means of the ITF website and email/fax messages.

Unions may need to change their structures and practices in order to make international communication and action easier. Generally, requests for international assistance pass “up” from local to national level and then “up” to the ITF. The response then goes back down through the national to the local level. This can work well when people know the background, are available at the right time, and can communicate quickly with the union officials or activists directly concerned.

Often, however, the traditional communications “pyramid” breaks down. By the time the communication has found its way up and down again, it can be too late to act. There is frequently an urgent need for a different kind of communication, for example, direct and immediate contact between the union officers or shop stewards directly involved in a problem and the ITF Secretariat, or workers and unions in one country with workers and unions in another.

Establishing solidarity networks is not easy. There is a big practical workload of identifying and training the individuals and equipping them with the necessary communications means (computers,

internet connections, etc). There are also difficult political questions to resolve. For example, what are the lines of accountability between such contact people and their individual unions? What are the decision-making powers of such networks? So it is important to define duties and responsibilities carefully so that networking takes place within a clear framework of political decision-making, reporting and accountability. National/local union officials and ITF officials all need to know the limits within which each can operate.

Even where international solidarity networks have not been built, unions can take small steps to improve communication. For example, participants at ITF meetings can share post/email addresses and telephone numbers. This might encourage better direct contact between workers and unions in different countries.

Such a networking approach could help ITF members to react fast and flexibly, and pose a more serious challenge to transnational companies. Transport plays a key role in the international production and distribution chain. So transport trade unions need to have the ability to mobilise solidarity quickly. This is also important for workers in other industries who may rely on transport workers for support.

## Language

Organising international solidarity is often made difficult by language differences. ITF activities which can operate largely in English have a huge advantage over those which require translation. Information can be sent quickly by fax or email, meetings can be convened at short notice and documentation is based on the needs of the unions rather than the ITF's capacity to translate in time.

Many ITF materials and activities are translated into five, six or even sometimes a dozen languages, at great expense. In the trade union movement, the ITF is also pioneering the use of machine translation, which uses computer software to translate text from one language to another. These machine translations certainly do not meet the standard of a human translator. They have to be used carefully and are limited to certain kinds of document. But they may considerably increase our capacity to produce materials in more languages in the future.

Nevertheless, many ITF affiliates still do not receive international materials in a language understood by most of their members. They also cannot speak in their mother tongue when they attend ITF meetings, which may discourage members from attending such meetings at all.

The ITF has adopted a flexible approach to languages. The real needs of the unions or individuals attending meetings are assessed and all attempts made to

provide translation or interpretation. Requests for action arriving at the ITF Secretariat are treated seriously, no matter which language they arrive in.

Unions also need to consider what can be done at a national level. For example, should unions provide language training for officials, shop stewards and rank-and-file members? This might be one of the most cost effective ways of improving the ability of unions to participate in international solidarity.

## Global communication for a global workforce: the internet in use

Ingo Marowsky, Assistant Secretary of the ITF Civil Aviation Section, was a founder of the Star Solidarity Alliance and its cabin crew sector's first Co-ordinator when he was a union representative at Lufthansa. He explains how and why the network grew:

*“In the late 1990s, Lufthansa German Airlines, United Airlines and three other major international airlines founded the ‘Star Alliance’. It became clear that labour needed to respond. The Star Alliance, the so-called ‘airline network for Earth’, was literally spanning the globe. The companies were not only combining their route networks. Management teams were also getting together regularly and discussing issues of corporate and – importantly – employee concern.*

*The network employs around 350,000 workers represented by over twenty unions. This created an unprecedented challenge for the unions. They agreed that the best response was a union network of the same dimension, a truly global labour coalition.*

*The unions identified constant communication and exchange of information as an important need. The internet seemed to be the logical step. Apart from day-to-day business such as rumour-hunting and question-and-answer swapping, the unions needed a system of regular exchange of standardised information.*

*A quarterly reporting form was developed by the network's elected Co-ordinator. Unions used this form to inform each other about company and bargaining developments, workforce growth or decline, changes at the workplace, and working conditions. The responses were re-circulated by email to all in the network. All labour representatives could be quickly updated, no matter where they were or in which time zone they worked.*

*A joint website was about to be developed but the idea was dropped for reasons of accessibility, reliability, and confidentiality. However, new web initiatives are being pursued.*

*This project has been an incredible success. At times, the information flow between participating unions outpaced that between managers. The fact that unions were even communicating globally surprised management. The network structure has also been adopted by unions in similar alliances.*

*Cabin crew unions are in a privileged position. English is a compulsory language in the profession, and so international communication is relatively easy. It is also a very global as well as a fully 24-hour workforce. This is true for hundreds of thousands of other aviation workers.*

*Even where other workers do not have these benefits, email has proved to be a fast and convenient way of communicating. Aviation unions have shown that the new global challenge for labour also gives new opportunities for labour.”*



# Integrating international activities

**“If we cannot agree on common trade union goals and strategies, workers everywhere in the world will end up as the losers of the globalisation process.”**

*German railway trade union representative, ITF Summer School*

Trade unions have a wide range of attitudes towards international activities.

Some ITF unions, whose membership has for many years been affected by the tide of globalisation, are deeply engaged in international work and treat it as a natural extension of their national organising and bargaining work.

Other trade unions treat international activities as a low priority and view ITF international meetings as an opportunity for overseas travel.

Some unions are reluctant to send delegates to attend meetings abroad. There are often good reasons for this – union resources are stretched, travel is an expensive item, and servicing members at home takes priority. Even when meetings are important, some unions still find it hard to justify the time and expense to their members who view foreign travel as a luxury.

As globalisation affects workers and trade unions worldwide, many trade unions are realising the need to integrate international (and regional) work fully within day-to-day union activities. What steps should unions take to improve their approach to international work? There are many possibilities including:

- **Building union structures which deal specifically with international work. Structures could take different forms. For example, an international department or an international committee.**
- **Delegating responsibility to staff members for international work. The union might want to elect or appoint an International Officer. The union should include international work in all staff training programmes.**

- **Developing education and training programmes for shop stewards and union members on international issues.**
- **Ensuring that union budgets include finances for international work and activities.**
- **Promoting a culture of internationalism in all union structures, and integrating an international perspective into all union activities. For example, union media should carry information and articles on international issues.**
- **Developing use of the internet for international communication.**
- **Encouraging shop stewards and union officers to participate in ITF international solidarity networks.**
- **Ensuring that union delegates to ITF international meetings are prepared in advance, and have opportunities for reporting back and follow-up.**
- **Developing national co-ordination between ITF affiliates.**
- **Maintaining regular contact with the ITF, circulating ITF publications, etc.**

Preparation is crucial. The ITF issues guidelines, manuals and briefings wherever possible, for unions to use so that the rank-and-file members know what they are being asked to do and why.

# Key questions for discussion

- ☐ Can you think of a recent occasion when your union might have been more effective in a campaign if it had better integrated a global perspective? On reflection, what could have been done better?
- ☐ How could international activities be more effectively integrated into the day-to-day work of your union?
- ☐ What steps could your union take to improve its effectiveness in supporting ITF campaigns?

## Activity 1: Mobilising Solidarity

The document “Mobilising Solidarity” adopted at the 1998 ITF Congress in New Delhi, contained a number of important recommendations for ITF-affiliated unions. These included:

1. All ITF unions should include international modules in their education programmes.
2. Education activity should prioritise techniques for international solidarity action.
3. Affiliates, where appropriate, should seek to form national ITF co-ordinating committees.
4. Affiliates (and the ITF itself) should give higher priority to campaign work.
5. Affiliates should ensure that:
  - People sent to international meetings are properly qualified and motivated to take part.
  - Members fully understand the need to integrate international with national organising and bargaining activities.
  - The union devotes the necessary financial and human resources to international activities.

Photocopy and hand out these statements, or display them on a flipchart or blackboard. Ask the participants, perhaps in small groups, to consider:

- Which of these recommendations, as far as you know, have been successfully adopted in your union?
- If new policies have been adopted, what have been the practical results?
- If new policies were not adopted, what were the obstacles that prevented it and how can they be overcome?



## Activity 2: Ten practical steps to international solidarity

This is a fairly lengthy activity which is ideally suited for the end of a course or seminar, and/or when the participants need to spend some time interacting and moving about. It is also a good interactive exercise for larger events involving more than 16 participants.

Divide the participants into pairs. Give each pair ten large index cards, and a felt marker pen. Ask each pair to spend 15-20 minutes on the following:

Using the cards, write down (clearly) the ten most important practical steps that you think your union could take to improve trade union solidarity in the global transport industry. Your suggestions can refer to activity at the workplace, national or international level.

Encourage the participants to think of specific and practical activity. “More education”, or “better communication” are too general. Better, for example, would be “run a workshop for senior representatives on the role of the ITF” or “produce a monthly newsletter on reports from international meetings”.

Collect all the cards together, and shuffle them. Now divide the participants into groups of four, and redistribute the cards evenly. Each group should have up to 20 cards. Ask each group to spend 15-30 minutes on the following:

Study and discuss the ideas or proposals on the cards. Select the ten cards you think are the most important and useful. Discard the remaining cards.

Now merge the participants into groups of eight people each. Each group should, again, have 20 cards in front of them. Ask them to repeat the selection and discard process.

Repeat the process (groups of 16, and so on) until you are left with two large groups. Ask each group to nominate one person to present their selection of ten cards to the plenary.

Stick the final 20 cards up on a wall or a flipchart. Debate and discuss them, and try and reach agreement on the “Ten best practical steps to global solidarity”. If necessary, hold a vote!

## Directory of international organisations

### International trade union organisations

#### International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II  
B-1210 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 224 0211  
Fax: +32 2 201 5815  
Email: internetpo@icftu.org  
Internet: www.icftu.org

#### Global Unions

This groups the major institutions of the international trade union movement, the ICFTU, the Global Union Federations (see below), and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).  
Internet: www.global-unions.org

### Global Union Federations

#### Education International (EI)

5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II  
B-1210 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 224 0611  
Fax: +32 2 224 0606  
Email: headoffice@ei.ie.org  
Internet: www.ei-ie.org

#### International Federation of Building and Woodworkers (IFBWW)

Route des Acacias 54  
PO Box 1412  
CH-1227 Carouge Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 827 3777  
Fax: +41 22 827 3770  
Email: info@ifbww.org  
Internet: www.ifbww.org

#### International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM)

109 Avenue Emile de Béco  
B-1050 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 626 2020  
Fax: +32 2 648 4316  
Email: icem@geo2.poptel.org.uk  
Internet: www.icem.org

#### International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)

155 Rue de la Loi  
B-1040 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel +32 2 235 2200  
Fax +32 2 235 2219  
Email: ifj@ifj.org  
Internet: www.ifj.org

#### International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)

Route des Acacias 54 bis  
PO Box 563  
CH-1227 Carouge Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 308 5050  
Fax: +41 22 308 5055  
Email: imf@iprolink.ch  
Internet: www.imfmetal.org

#### International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF)

8 Rue Joseph Stevens  
B-1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 512 2606  
Fax: +32 2 511 0904  
Email: itglwf@compuserve.com  
Internet: www.itglwf.org

#### International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

49-60 Borough Road  
London SE1 1DR  
UK  
Tel: +44 20 7403 2733  
Fax: +44 20 7357 7871  
Email: mail@itf.org.uk  
Internet: www.itf.org.uk

#### International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)

Rampe du Pont Rouge 8  
CH-1213 Petit Lancy  
Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 793 2233  
Fax: +41 22 793 2238  
Email: iuf@iuf.org  
Internet: www.iuf.org

### **Public Services International (PSI)**

45 Avenue Voltaire  
F 01210 Ferney Voltaire  
France  
Tel: +33 50 40 6464  
Fax: +33 50 40 7320  
Email: [psi@world-psi.org](mailto:psi@world-psi.org)  
Internet: [www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org)

### **Union Network International (UNI)**

Avenue Reverdil 8-10  
CH-1260 Nyon  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 365 2100  
Fax: +41 22 365 2121  
Email: [contact@union-network.org](mailto:contact@union-network.org)  
Internet: [www.union-network.org](http://www.union-network.org)

## **International labour research and education organisations**

### **Global Labour Institute (GLI)**

Ave Wendt 12  
CH-1203 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel/Fax: +41 22 344 6363  
Email: [gli@iprolink.ch](mailto:gli@iprolink.ch)  
Internet: [www.global-labour.org](http://www.global-labour.org)

### **International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)**

PO Box 8703  
Youngstorget  
N 0028 Oslo  
Norway  
Tel: +47 23 06 1288  
Fax: +47 23 06 1270  
Email: [jmehlum@online.no](mailto:jmehlum@online.no)  
Internet: [www.ifwea.org](http://www.ifwea.org)

## **Internet based resources**

**Labourstart** is a website at [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org) which gives daily news reports from the labour movement worldwide, and has discussion forums on various topics. There are entries in ten languages, and more are encouraged. Laborstart relies on the participation of activists around the world to send in information.

**The Cyber Picket Line** is a website at [www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/union/](http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/union/) which has many useful information sources. These include a comprehensive

world trade union directory, with links to the websites of individual unions. It has lists of useful publications and cartoonists, research centres, up coming conferences, and trade union studies courses at universities. It also links to a site where you can list your strike. It is organised by Steve Davies, a senior research fellow with the PSI Research Unit at Cardiff University, UK, and relies on the participation of activists around the world.

## **International intergovernmental institutions**

### **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**

4 Route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 798 8685  
Fax: +41 22 799 6111  
Email: [ilo@ilo.org](mailto:ilo@ilo.org)  
Internet: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

### **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

700 19th Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20431  
USA  
Tel: +1 202 623 7000  
Fax: +1 202 623 4661  
Email: [publicaffairs@imf.org](mailto:publicaffairs@imf.org)  
Internet: [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)

### **World Bank**

1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20433  
USA  
Tel: +1 202 477 1234  
Fax: +1 202 477 6391  
Internet: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

### **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**

Rue de Lausanne 154  
CH-1211 Geneva 21  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 739 5111  
Fax: +41 22 731 4206  
Email: [enquiries@wto.org](mailto:enquiries@wto.org)  
Internet: [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

# **Notes**



# Notes

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