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*L'information au service du BIT: Linda Stoddart (en veste grise), nouvelle directrice de la bibliothèque, entourée par tous les collègues travaillant dans le domaine de l'information et la documentation (photo: M. Crozet/ILO)*



## EDITORIAL

### Davos ou Porto Alegre?

L'année 2001 sera-t-elle pour le BIT celle du consensus? Du juste un peu, mais pas trop? A écouter ou observer les acteurs faisant la une de notre journal, il semble bien que l'ère de l'engagement collectif ou individuel soit passée de mode ou en tous cas, ait pris un sérieux coup de plomb dans l'aile.

Lorsque vous demandez au Président du Conseil d'administration s'il préférerait siéger à Davos ou à Porto Alegre, vous vous attendez à ce qu'il vous fasse une réponse bien engagée, telle que vous les aimez, et qui mettrait du baume au cœur à votre âme de fonctionnaire tout dévoué à la justice sociale. Et bien non, ce diplomate aguerrri, natif pourtant de Sao Paulo, a répondu, nous vous le donnons en mille: *Genève*.

Lorsque après une année 2000 riche en événements syndicaux, vous entrez le 30 janvier dans la salle réservée à l'assemblée générale de votre Syndicat 10 bonnes minutes après l'heure et que vous pouvez largement choisir où vous asseoir, vous avez déjà compris que ce n'est pas dans cet endroit que vous rencontrerez les 60 pour cent de taux de syndicalisation du BIT (mais où donc alors si ce n'est pas lors d'une AG?). Vous vous attendez quand même, après les options radicales prises par vos représentants, et à entendre toutes les horreurs qui circulent dans les couloirs de la part des «antis», à une foire d'empoigne en règle, à une querelle entre les anciens et les nouveaux, ou au moins, comme au mauvais vieux temps, à une grande discussion sur la place de la virgule dans le 2<sup>e</sup> paragraphe de l'antépénultième résolution. Rien, Niet, Nada: *Absence, abstention, apathie*.

Pourtant, lorsqu'un syndicat passe de la revendication à ce qui ressemble quand même fortement à de la cogestion, il y a, nous semble-t-il, matière à débattre. Ce n'est paraît-il qu'une question culturelle et de différence d'approche syndicale (les nordiques contre les latins). Il n'empêche que les 60 pour cent de taux de syndicalisation auront peut être plus vite que prévu maille à partir avec les centres d'évaluation, leur hiérarchie ou l'Administration. Ils iront alors peut être se plaindre à leurs représentants qui auront d'une certaine manière contribué (sans obstacles majeurs de la part de leurs mandants) à mettre en place ce nouveau système. Le réveil risque alors d'être brutal.

Mais soit, «Qui ne dit mot consent»: va pour la *participation active*. Le mot est tellement joli.

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## EDITORIAL

### Davos or Porto Alegre?

Is 2001 to be the year of consensus for the ILO? Maybe just a little, but not too much? To listen to the movers and shakers making the news within these four walls recently, one might well conclude that political commitment, whether collective or individual, has gone right out of fashion, or is at least lying low for a while.

Say, for instance, you were to ask the Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body if he would rather have been in Davos or Porto Alegre last month. Like us, you might be hoping against hope for a right-on answer to fair gladden the heart of the international official with a lifetime devoted to the cause of social justice. If so, prepare to be disappointed. São Paulo homeboy though he may be, seasoned diplomat that he is, what the man actually replied was – guess what? – *Geneva*.

Another example. It's 30 January. After a year 2000 that was nothing short of historic for your Union, you arrive a good ten minutes late for the AGM only to find that you can sit pretty well anywhere you please. It dawns on you that this is not, after all, the ideal place to meet the 60 per cent of ILO staff who pay Union dues (but if not at the AGM, just where, exactly?). Even so, with all the radical initiatives taken by your representatives, not to mention all the badmouthing from the "antis" that you've been hearing in the corridors, you are expecting a regular free for all, a good old-fashioned slanging match between the old-timers and the new radicals or, at the very least, as in the good old bad old days, an interminable discussion on where to put the comma in the second paragraph of draft resolution SU/AGM/2001/1/R.2. You wish! What you get instead: *Absence. Abstention. Apathy*.

Yet when a trade union is in the process of moving from a stance of demand-tabling and claim-pressing to one that from here looks very much like joint management, there are, it seems to us, some grounds for debate. It may very well be a mere question of differences of culture or union approach (Nordics vs. Latins). But a good part of those 60 per cent of ILO staff who pay their dues may just, sooner rather than later, find themselves in a head-to-head with the assessment centres, the hierarchy or the Administration. At which point they will logically complain to their representatives, who themselves will in many ways have contributed to putting the new system in place (without much protest from their constituents). It could be a wake-up call for all parties – a brutal one at that.

But there you go. "Silence means consent", as the French say, even where (active) *participation* is the watchword. And a beautiful word it is too.

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Imprimerie: Imprimerie Genevoise SA, 12 rue des Mouettes, 1227 Carouge  
Régie Publicitaire: Publi-Annonces SA, 25 rue Jacques-Grosselin, 1227 Carouge

# “Exploring the ILO’s potential to the fullest”

## An interview with Celso Nunes Amorim, Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body

Having served his country as Minister of Foreign Affairs and with a stint as President of the UN Security Council under his belt, Celso Nunes Amorim is a natural diplomat, as Catherine Comte, David Dror and I quickly discovered when we went to meet him on a misty January morning. Trim in a relaxed sort of way, and decidedly boyish despite the grizzled beard, he seems at ease both with himself and with others.

Our encounter took place at the Brazilian Mission in Geneva, which cohabits with the European Broadcasting Union in a pre-postmodern building whose smoked-glass exterior looks a little out of place along Grand-Saconnex’s Ancienne Route. Against a tasteful backdrop of contemporary Brazilian art, and entirely unperturbed by the prospect of brutal interrogation at the hands of a trio of militant trade unionists, he settled back to answer — in flawless English — our probing questions. Before cutting to the chase, it seems only fair to warn readers that our attempts to trip him up failed miserably.



**Union:** *As we speak, the World Economic Forum is taking place down the road at Davos while an alternative event is going on in your own country, at Porto Alegre. Where would you rather be?*

**Celso Nunes Amorim:** I am happy to be here in Geneva. Davos and Porto Alegre are both important. Where globalization was once seen as a panacea, Davos is now adapting itself. Porto Alegre is a useful counterpoint, but you cannot fight globalization. I recently read that 50 per cent of the world’s population have never even received a phone call. Globalization creates opportunities but there are side effects: unemployment, the environment. It’s useful to have dialogue. There is no such thing as *la pensée unique*.

*Where does the ILO fit in?*

The ILO is part of the solution but, again, not a panacea. We had an important discussion during the latest Governing Body meeting, in the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization. It took in employment, decent work, the worst forms of child labour — information is also global. The ILO’s tripartite structure is a useful one in this context. It’s important to take account of people who are marginalized.

*Should the Office’s internal practices reflect what it preaches to the world outside?*

You’re referring to the initiatives taken on relations with staff? These are the responsibility of the Director General, and what I can say to you is that Mr. Somavia is a democrat in every sense of the word. As Chairperson of the Governing Body, I am just a fleeting personality. Of course I have affinity with the general philosophy, but in my position I must show humility. I support the initiatives taken — the ILO is a standard bearer for the UN system. But while I am able to go deeply into some subjects, others have a political content.

They say your first meeting as a chairperson is uneventful: mine was on the difficult question of Colombia — politically, very sensitive. We needed to be fair to both the workers and the government. Thanks to Mr. Somavia, we found a good solution. On Myanmar, on the other hand, we would have liked to reach a different solution than we did. It is important to show that the ILO has the means to induce governments to respect the labour standards. But the best sanctions are those that do not need to be used.

*You also represent your country at the UN and the WTO. Is it more difficult chairing a tripartite body?*

It presents more situations but not necessarily more difficult ones. In the ILO, the governments are less keen on their differences. I have tried to keep an atmosphere of dialogue: not confrontation or compromise for the sake of compromise, but solutions people are comfortable with.

*You say the ILO should be an example of good practice. In the World Bank, staff representatives sit on the Board — not as members, but for the purposes of consultation. What if there were an initiative in this direction in the ILO?*

It’s difficult to say. I’m not familiar with the World Bank, but as a student, I was always for students being on the board. It depends on the subject at hand. Some questions are eminently political: there would be no added value in staff having a position on Colombia or Myanmar, for example, but the question is worth studying.

*It seems that during the November GB session some governments were unhappy about the agreements negotiated between Staff Union and Administration representatives.*

The Governing Body is not so involved in day-to-day issues. We have to reconcile legal objectives with procedures. People are cautious. All organizations have a power structure. The Governing Body didn’t want to give away its prerogatives. But we reached a positive resolution. People are more satisfied if they are part of a consensus rather than winning a vote.

And at the upcoming March session?

We're in a time of change in the Organization. Change is always difficult, but usually positive. People are used to certain ways.

*If you could be personally associated with a particular change, which one would it be?*

There are so many dimensions, some topical. It would not be one regulation or decision, but rather for social questions to become a central aspect of the activities of international organizations. If I could help to achieve that, I would consider it very positive. This involves several things: there are the subjects peculiar to the ILO, such as labour standards, and there is the conceptual level, of which globalization is one example. But ensuring the proactive role of the ILO in particular countries — if I can help with that, it will be a good thing.

*How can it be achieved?*

I think by exploring the ILO's potential to the fullest, without abandoning its traditional role of standard setting and application: finding solutions to the new problems created by globalization, and getting more involved in real solutions, as with Colombia and Myanmar. This also could resolve problems in other organizations, as with the question of labour standards in the WTO. They think the ILO has no power, but we're showing it does. There are a number of levels to this, and we have to take account of new realities — how does the tripartite structure react? — and make concrete interventions to improve specific situations.

*With the recent US elections resulting in victory for the*

*Republicans, usually regarded as unfavourable towards the UN organizations, do you foresee repercussions for the ILO and its budget?*

I cannot comment on any country's internal politics, but the ILO has never been so visible as it is now. Thanks to Juan Somavia, the ILO is a very important actor which is taken into account by, for example, the IMF and the World Bank, and Mr. Somavia has done a good job with the US Congress. In the United States as elsewhere, the President depends on the Congress, and I am by no means pessimistic.

*In your UN experience, what is the perception of the ILO's moral stance, relying as it does on a consensual approach?*

The ILO is greatly respected. Some countries have difficulty adopting labour standards because of their constitutions. If a country is criticized in an ILO report, this gets great attention. Although countries are sensitive to their own situation, I have never seen anyone expressing doubt about the ILO. It is getting more visibility, and it is more involved in the social dimension and in the social spillover from globalization.

*What is your image of ILO staff, and what message do you have for them?*

I find them to be very competent. I am very impressed not just with their technical ability but also with the running of meetings. I had that very positive impression before, even ten years ago when I was first in Geneva. That is my message: they are an example to other bureaucracies, in this town and elsewhere.

Union Deputy Editor  
Catherine Comte  
with Mr. Nunes Amorim



Austin



Why? See page 13  
(from *The Guardian*)



## Committee Corner

### Is the Committee doing its job ?

Two systems govern staff conditions of service: (1) the ILO system; and (2) the UN common system (it could be argued that the ILO Administrative Tribunal constitutes a third). It follows that there are two central purposes for our ILO Staff Union (like any other UN agency staff association or union): (1) to defend and improve staff conditions of service governed by the ILO; and (2) to defend and improve staff conditions of service governed under the UN common system.

While our ILO Staff Union Committee has been doing excellent work as regards staff conditions of service governed by the ILO and has been fully occupied in that, it therefore could not pay attention to the staff conditions of service governed under the UN common system. Most of our important staff conditions of service – such as staff salaries, allowances and benefits, and general conditions of service of the professional and higher categories and the general service categories, both at headquarters and in the field – are governed under the UN common system and not under the ILO. Therefore, it is essential for the Staff Union Committee to pay equal attention to defending and improving staff conditions of service governed under the UN common system.

If the Staff Union Committee is fully occupied within the ILO it should call on other colleagues who are interested and competent to assist it in dealing with UN common system issues. Now the question arises: how can the Staff Union Committee represent staff under the UN common system? At present there are only two staff representative organizations, FICSA and CCISUA, mandated to represent staff before UN common system bodies. The ILO Staff Union has left FICSA and not joined CCISUA. Without membership of either of these bodies, the ILO Staff Union Committee is unable to represent ILO staff under the UN common system unless the Union either has direct access to common system bodies (which is not possible) or forms a third staff representative body and seeks access to the UN common system bodies (which is also difficult).

The above staff representative bodies cannot be dominated by a specific association/union and one cannot reform them from the outside; but if one is inside, one can make an effort to convince others and bring improvement. Our Recognition Agreement provides that the ILO Staff Union can jointly take up matters under the UN common system, but in that system staff and administration are two separate bodies (which is only right from the point of view of freedom of association and expression).

According to FICSA's recent Report on its Annual Activities for 2000, "the ILO Staff Union has been absent from the UN common system scene to the detriment of all". Such a remark is not useful for the reputation of our Union, which had been a founder and political and technical leader of the staff representative body mandated to represent staff under the UN common system. Similarly, the FICSA Executive Committee Member for Asia, during his recent mission to the region, remarked: "If the ILO Staff Union is not negotiating staff conditions of service under the UN common system, then what it is negotiating?"

It is difficult to answer such a question because, as stated above, staff's fundamental conditions of service (in

other words staff and their families' bread and butter and their future) are governed under the UN common system and not the ILO system, and the relevant Rules and Methodologies relating to those conditions of service need to be improved. This cannot be done without being in the staff representative bodies mandated and recognized as representing all staff under the UN common system.

For example, the current Methodology, which was changed, for updating GS staff salaries in the field is very damaging for staff as regards keeping their salaries among the best under the Flemming Principle, and this also is not good for an organization wishing to retain and attract qualified staff. The same is true for professional and higher category salaries and allowances, both at headquarters and in the field, as well as for GS staff at headquarters.

The ILO Staff Union Committee can only address these issues through the above staff representative bodies mandated to represent staff under the UN common system. It is vital that we endeavour to defend and improve staff conditions of service under that system. I have said in the past that the ILO Staff Union Committee is doing 50 per cent of its job. By that I mean that the Committee is working within the ILO but not within the UN common system. And that is an equally essential area within which to work.

**Basharat Ahmad** ■

*SUC Regional Titular Member for Asia*



## Le questionnaire de Marcel Proust

Vous trouverez dans cette colonne un de vos collègues à découvrir. Si l'envie vous tente de mieux vous faire découvrir, contactez-nous.

Nouvelle année, nouveau siècle, début du millénaire. Quel privilège de faire partie d'un commencement. On aurait presque peur de ne pas être à la hauteur, ou de rater une étape. Humains que nous sommes, nous nous arrêtons sur des considérations de ce genre et nous oublions parfois de regarder en avant, vers l'avenir, vers ailleurs. Spectateurs ou acteurs? A chacun de choisir et de trouver son bonheur, pour pouvoir le transmettre. C'est déjà beaucoup de gagné!

### Voici notre invitée:

Le sourire c'est son « copyright », sa gentillesse c'est sa devise. Depuis combien de temps fait-elle partie de cette organisation? Oh, très longtemps... Mais c'est presque une jeune fille encore! Tous ceux qui ont eu la chance de travailler avec elle sont unanimes: elle est la gentillesse à l'état de grâce. Ses colères s'expriment plutôt par des rougissements que par des mots. Et en plus, quelle travailleuse! Elle n'arrête pas, s'intéresse à mille choses et participe beaucoup à la vie de la maison. Dernièrement, elle lutte pour le bien de nous tous et s'en sort très bien. Qui est-ce?

Jane Da Silva-Pellaux



### Questionnaire:

1. Quel est le trait principal de votre caractère? *La bonne humeur*
2. Quelle est votre occupation préférée au BIT? *Aider les gens*
3. Qu'est-ce que vous aimeriez être? *Fonctionnaire en préretraite*
4. Quel est votre rêve de bonheur? *La paix*
5. Quelle est la qualité que vous appréciez le plus chez les individus? *La franchise*
6. Quelle est la qualité qui vous manque par-dessus tout? *Un certain manque d'organisation*
7. Quel est votre mot préféré? *Amitié*
8. Quel mot détestez-vous le plus? *Non*
9. Votre juron, gros-mot ou blasphème favori? *Merde*
10. Quel est le métier que vous n'auriez pas aimé faire? *Enseignante*

11. La plante, l'animal ou l'arbre dans lequel vous aimeriez être réincarnée? *Un chat domestique et (très!) gâté!*

12. Si Dieu existe, qu'aimeriez-vous, après votre mort, l'entendre vous dire, à vous cher collègue? *Bienvenue! Ainsi je saurai que je suis au paradis!*

13. Quelle est la réforme que vous estimez le plus? *L'émancipation des femmes*

14. Quel est le don de la nature que vous voudriez avoir? *Savoir chanter*

15. Quels sont les fautes qui vous inspirent le plus d'indulgence? *Celles qui ne se répètent pas*

16. Quel est l'état présent de votre esprit? *Enthousiaste*

17. Quelle est votre devise? *Mieux vaut tard que jamais*

18. Qu'est-ce que vous détestez par dessus tout? *La malhonnêteté*

19. Quels sont vos héros dans la vie réelle? *Nelson Mandela et tous les gens qui savent pardonner!*

20. Quels sont vos auteurs préférés? *Je lis des livres qui me plaisent, peu importe les auteurs*

21. Comment aimeriez-vous mourir? *Sans douleur*

### Solution p. 15

BIT, Genève, février 2001

## IPEC project staff dismissed by ILO in Islamabad

A friendly cricket match was played on 12 January 2001 at Islamabad between the cricket teams of the ILO Office, Islamabad, and the ILO Project for Elimination of Child Labour in the Soccer Ball Industry, Sialkot. The match was witnessed by the Director and staff of the ILO Office, Islamabad, and of the Project. The winners were the Islamabad office team under the captaincy of Basharat Ahmad. The match was followed by a dinner in the evening at the ILO Islamabad office premises. For most of the Project staff it was their first visit to the ILO Office. These happy events provided an opportunity for the staff of the ILO office and the Project to meet each other.

**Basharat Ahmad**

Staff Union Representative, Islamabad



Everybody out!  
The ILO Islamabad  
one-day test squad

# Open revolt in the court of “king” Wolfensohn: Managers live in fear at World Bank

[from *The Guardian*, 31 January 2001]

Senior staff of the World Bank are in open revolt at attempts by its president, James Wolfensohn, to impose Wall Street culture on the Washington-based bureaucracy, according to a leaked document seen by *The Guardian*.

The internal memorandum reflects the civil war inside the world's biggest development institution, with Mr Wolfensohn's management style attracting outrage from senior staff. He is accused of humiliating senior staff in front of colleagues and expressing his low opinion of workers to outside audiences.

The memo was prepared by senior staff and managers after a pre-Christmas request from Mr Wolfensohn for feedback on why staff were so demoralized. It says the Bank is in “deep trouble,” with a “growing cynicism and to some extent even a sense of resignation among staff”.

Mr Wolfensohn, a former Wall Street banker, has spent six years trying to rid the Bank of its reputation for being arrogant and out of touch with its developing country clients. In particular, he has forced the Bank to engage with its critics in the development community.

While he has improved the Bank's external reputation, the memo highlights weaknesses within the institution. These are: the president's management and leadership style, a lack of clear direction, problems with senior management, inadequate resources and the high degree of negativity among staff.

“Of these five issues we believe the first one is the most important which the president must deal with personally,” the memo says.

“We do not think the president receives honest feedback from his senior managers. He does not welcome criticism or tolerate dissent. Managers at all levels live under fear. Many have learnt that it serves them to agree with him. He is thus isolated from reality.”

A spokeswoman said the memo reflected the views of a small group of staff from one region whose jobs were under threat.

Development organisations say the Bank under Mr Wolfensohn has suffered from “mission creep” – a tendency to take over areas covered by other international institutions. Staff, according to the memo, are too afraid of the president to challenge his pet projects.

“People run scared and won't challenge him”, said Alex Wilks of the Bretton Woods Project, a pressure group which monitors the Bank. “He's like a medieval king surrounded by fawning courtiers who won't tell him the ship is about to hit the rocks.”

Contributing to the low morale among staff is the threat of redundancies. “It is difficult to have motivated staff when they live constantly under the threat of being declared redundant,” says the memo. “It is even more difficult when the managers themselves feel that the redundancies are not justified on work programme grounds.”

## Pourquoi les fonctionnaires ne sont-ils pas heureux? Episode V

On ne nous dit jamais rien.

Souvenez-vous... il y a quelques semaines, un homme est entré dans votre bureau avec son chariot et a entrepris de bidouiller le matériel de votre collègue, avant de s'approcher de votre périmètre personnel. Vous vous êtes étonné(e), et il vous a laconiquement fait savoir que «c'était pour les téléphones». Sans condoléances superfétatoires, il s'est emparé du poste avec lequel vous aviez noué des liens très forts, et l'a mis au rebut dans sa hotte où s'entassaient déjà quelques victimes, pauvres choses obsolètes destinées au recyclage. A la place, il a installé une sorte de gros jouet lugubre hyper-profilé et aux sonneries multiples, qui vous propose la gamme à l'endroit, à l'envers, et de gauche à droite. Et l'homme est parti, vous abandonnant avec le Fisher Price.

Décidé(e) à «faire votre deuil», comme le conseillent tous les magazines à la mode, et malgré la perte cruelle de votre ancien poste, vous avez tenté d'appivoiser la chose. Elle vous a carrément snobé(e), et vous avez fini par vous contenter de décrocher quand elle faisait retentir les premières notes de Jingle Bells, et de composer vous-même des numéros limités à quatre chiffres, sans utiliser évidemment le répertoire intégré, l'avenir étant à l'infiniment miniaturisé mais vos gros doigts patauds démodés n'étant nullement adaptés aux touches liliputiennes.

Quelque temps plus tard, des instructions vous sont enfin parvenues pour apprendre à relationner avec votre nouveau compagnon de jeu. Vous avez dû enregistrer votre nom sur la messagerie, étape qui s'est révélée longue et douloureuse: vous aviez un chat dans la gorge; vous ne parliez pas assez fort; vous hurliez; au finish, la voix de la dame qui vous accueille dans la navette en partance pour Titan fait passer la vôtre pour un râle de renne en rut.

Finalement, après vous être abondamment informé lors de cours avancés de formations pointues, où les mérites du progrès et de l'économie ont été largement traités, au terme d'une présentation dithyrambique, il résulte que l'avantage de ce nouveau poste réside principalement dans des fonctions prévues pour le lien patron-secrétaire.

Vous n'avez pas de patron, vous n'êtes pas secrétaire, vous êtes free-lance.

C'est vraiment trop injuste.

Kalimero ■

## From ILO communications

*These (out-of-context) extracts do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board of Union.*

**The ILO at EXPO 2000** In a speech to the world on 3 October, the ILO Director-General reminded his audience that there is a "global decent work deficit".

*World of Work No. 37 (2000)*

**L'OIT** Son but est de promouvoir des mesures propres à réaliser le plein emploi des travailleurs et d'améliorer leurs conditions de travail, d'alimentation, de logement et de loisirs.

*Le nouveau mémo Larousse (avec bloc-notes 2001)*

**Don de sang** Conducteurs d'ambulance, conducteurs de bus, de locomotives, pilotes, grutiers, couvreurs: Ne donnez votre sang qu'après le travail.

*Pancarte au Salon du personnel à l'occasion de la collecte de sang*

### Health promotion

- The **Medical Service** promotes the health and safety of all staff in the International Labour Office. Through the provision of a variety of clinical and occupational health services it enhances the well-being of staff.

- **Medical Kit:** The main emphasis should be on risk reduction (brochure, bed net, condoms [lubricated and tested], insect repellent) to the traveller's health status and the provision of minimal treatment options (medication).

- **The Sports and Leisure Association** offers a variety of activities which can enable staff members to stay well and have fun.

*mirror/intranet/english/bureau/pers/med/healthprom.htm*

**Happy New Year!** The HRD team extends to you its best wishes for the new year. This message is the first of a series of updates planned to inform staff of HR initiatives. Under the new procedures, staff interested in applying for vacancies will submit their candidatures when eligible. To be eligible, staff must pass assessment centres if they wish to apply for posts in grade bands higher than their own. An assessment centre differs from other evaluation techniques in being multi-dimensional and by being conducted by trained assessors. Activities such as written exercises, reasoning tests, group and individual discussions and presentations will be used to test competencies including transparency, cultural sensitivity, knowledge development, initiative taking, decision making, communication, collaboration, managing work, adaptability and client service. The resourcing unit

of HRDEV has introduced an open-door policy from this year. Staff members are invited to address staff of the unit with questions and comments regarding the new selection process each day from 15:00 to 16:00.

*HRD User Broadcast (January)*

**Report on mission to Paris (France)** 1. Purpose of the mission: To act as lead Panellist. 2. Work accomplished: I acted as Lead Panelist for the Workshop. Unfortunately, in spite of my many communications, it would seem that my efforts to collaborate with UNCTAD have not been reciprocated as UNCTAD is going its own way in organizing an event for May.

*mirror/intranet/english/employment/ent/mreps/europe/finneg5.htm*

### Report on mission to Kosovo

The first refreshment training for SYB (Start Your Business) was found to be unsatisfying, only one candidate showed up for the refreshment training. The reason for this was that the people supplied by the Employment Offices were rather looking for dependent-employment than for self-employment.

*mirror/intranet/english/employment/ent/mreps/europe/sievers.htm*

No matter if there is no reason – SMILE

And you will find one.

*For further information, please contact the Web Development Team*

### Strategic policy framework, 2002-05

This is not a plan in the conventional sense of the term; in an uncertain world, an organization must have a clear sense of its objectives and strategies. The strategic objectives and indicators have been revised with a view to achieving greater focus and ensuring a critical mass for high-priority action: the 16 operational objectives have been reduced to ten, and the number of indicators has been reduced from 46 to 38. In view of the constraints on the regular budget, voluntary contributions could do much to help overcome them.

*GB279-PFA-6-2000 (November 2000)*

**InFocus Programme Crisis Response and Reconstruction** The ILO's first ever Crisis response capacity-building workshop for its network of crisis focal points was held at the ILO Turin Centre. The workshop set out to reflect the exigencies of the crisis contexts, ILO's mandate and comparative advantage and relevant actors, included an introduction to crises and why it is not certainly "business as usual", and an overview of structural and proximate causes. Follow-up activities identified: advocacy and

resource mobilization; generic ILO response manual; mainstreaming of crisis response sensitivity and culture in ILO's work; fulfilling the other commitments made. What took place at the workshop marked a critical step forward in the capacity building process envisaged under the IFP/CRISIS programme.

*mirror/public/english/employment/recon/crisis/conf/turin.htm*

**Yesterday in Parliament:** Uproar over corrupt officials. On a separate matter, the Chair directed the Labour Assistant Minister to confirm to the House this afternoon whether the U. Society was one of the recipients of Sh40 million given to Kenya in 1997 by the International Labour Organization to help street children. The Members expressed fears that the funds were not spent properly.

*UserBroadcast LIST-ILISNET@ibm03.ilo.ch*

**PROG/MAS & ITCOM** We hope that this guide will help you in figuring out where to get a solution to your specific problem. 1a. As application development is decentralized, PROGRAM is using ColdFusion / SQL. 1b. As Oracle is the database standard, ITCOM will administer, secure and maintain all Oracle databases. 2a. PROG/MAS will provide a roster of consultants for HTML and web application development in ColdFusion. 2b. ITCOM will provide a roster of computing consultants, firms and consultants for web application in Oracle.

*mirror/intranet/english/www/guides/roles.htm*

**Standardization of Web Development Software** Out of those that responded, WebEditors confirmed using 13 different HTML Editor software packages in the ILO. It was also clear that most ILO WebEditors were not familiar with Site Management or HTML Validator tools; some did not even know they existed.

*mirror/intranet/english/www/conf/2000/software/meeting.htm*

**Personal mail in your in-box** A number of officials have received an envelope A4 format, brown colour, addressed to them personally. These officials are kindly requested to return this envelope immediately to the Secretariat.

*HRD (User Broadcast)*

**Internal call for candidatures** Senior Human Resources Officer – Focal point for non-Headquarters duty stations – P.5 Grade. Due to financial constraints, this competition has been cancelled.

*Announcement, bullet-proof bulletin board R.2 North*

## Going back a BIT

*The first in an occasional misty-eyed series...*

In the autumn of 1933 I came to Geneva to take a temporary job at the International Labour Office, then part of the now defunct League of Nations. Kitty and the two children and I had a small apartment in the Rue de Lausanne overlooking the Lake and the Jardin des Anglais.

The ILO, brain-child of Albert Thomas its first Director-General, was set up at the same time as the League of Nations in the mood of ebullience which followed the 1914-18 war, the intention being to reinforce the League's machinery for safeguarding international peace by equivalent machinery for promoting social justice, on a basis of fair wages and humane working conditions. Alas, despite Albert Thomas's valiant efforts and ardent oratory, as little progress seemed to have been made towards the realisation of social justice as of peace. By the time I arrived on the scene, Thomas was dead, and his place had been taken by an English don and sometime civil servant named Harold Butler, who accorded me a brief interview when I took up my temporary post. He had to a marked degree the curious, disconcerting way dons had in those days, when one was supposed to be conversing with them, of seeming to have dozed off and to be muttering in their sleep.

The section of the ILO to which I was posted had overflowed from the newly constructed main building into a temporary structure in the grounds, and was engaged in preparing a survey of co-operative movements throughout the world. It was to assist in this work that I had been appointed. The head of the section was a tiny, pedantic Frenchman, M. Prosper, with a large moustache that seemed quite out of proportion with the rest of him; like the luxuriant bushes you sometimes find sprouting out of a minute crack in a rock face. I never discovered that he had any particular interest in co-operative movements; any more, for that matter, than I had myself. This, despite lingering memories of going shopping for my mother at the Croydon Co-op, and of the confidence of my father and his friends that a retail trader whose profits were distributed as divi to the customers must ultimately put out of business competitors who kept them for themselves.

When asked to pronounce upon some point of policy or principle in connection with the work of his section, M. Prosper invariably retreated behind his moustache, and exclaimed in a voice that was quite remarkably deep and resonant for so tiny a frame: "J'ai mes règles, j'ai mes règles!" What these rules were, who had drafted them, and to what end, no one was ever able to find out. Contrasting with his laodicean attitude to co-operative movements, even in his native France, let alone in China or Peru, was the relentless concern with which he followed anything to do with the ILO's internal organisation; more particularly, promotions, salary scales and superannuation arrangements. When these were under consideration, he would become enormously vehement and excited, waving his arms about, and injecting into his voice a note of passionate concern, which, as things turned out, met with its just reward. I like to think of M. Prosper living out his days comfortably in some agreeable spot in Provence, noting with quiet satisfaction that his monthly cheque, drawn on the Banque de Genève, maintains its value in a shifting world.

There were some six or seven of us in his department engaged in preparing the survey of co-operative move-

ments. In our temporary building where we toiled on M. Prosper's behalf it used to get very hot owing to an uncontrollable heating system, and this made me sleepy. From time to time a trolley brought in tea or coffee and biscuits. I used to long for its coming, as I had for the teatray when I was wrestling in my room in the Guardian office with a leader; maybe one on this very ILO C an institution held in high esteem in Cross Street. The biscuits, when they came, were all stamped with the initials BIT, which somehow made them like sacerdotal wafers; if so, presumably munched in remembrance of the lantern-jawed Princetonian, Woodrow Wilson.

I cannot pretend that I threw myself with much zest into collecting and collating data about co-operative movements. For one thing, the information came exclusively from government sources, and was therefore highly suspect. Some of it, indeed, was manifestly absurd, suggesting, as it did, that co-operative enterprises were more numerous and advanced in countries like Cuba and Afghanistan than in France and Switzerland. When I raised this point with M. Prosper, he rather crossly remarked that it was not our business to question the genuineness of the data provided for us by member States; our business was to present it, as clearly and cogently as possible. So, with these dubious bricks, we constructed our great statistical edifice. When I left, it was still far from completion. Perhaps even to this day it exists somewhere or other as a work of reference, to be quoted from, or used in arguing a thesis or making a case. Cholerton's famous comment on the Moscow Trials C that everything about them was true except the facts C might well be applied to it; as, indeed, to much of the output of the League and its affiliates. I well remember a senior official coming one evening into the canteen, and telling me with the utmost satisfaction that eight years of earnest endeavour had just been brought to a successful conclusion. So, it was a gala-day for him. It seemed that he had been engaged in drafting a Convention banning the employment of women in mines, and at last, with only two member States C Poland and India – entering a reservation, his draft had been unanimously approved. It came out afterwards that Poland and India were the only two countries among those adhering to the Convention in which women did work in mines.

By this time, Kitty and the children had gone back to London to set up house in preparation for my return. M. Prosper kindly provided me with a testimonial to the effect that I had performed my duties with diligence and conscientiousness. It was, I fear, even less deserved than such statements usually are; my contribution to the massive report on co-operative movements throughout the world having been minute, and shaky at that. My last days in Geneva were solitary and morose, and largely spent pounding along beside the Lake, which seemed particularly leaden and ill-omened on those dark winter days. It, too, had I but known it, had a future destiny as the last hiding place of the world's hoarded gold, deposited there in fear as, in my time, its hoarded peace had been deposited there in hope.

Malcolm Muggeridge ■

Adapted from *Chronicles of wasted time: 2. The infernal grove* (London, Collins, 1973). (Thanks to Ron Kirkman. Any further contributions gratefully received C Ed.)

**Questionnaire de Proust (p. 11):  
L'invité est: Mary Hamouda (Secrétaire  
générale du Comité du Syndicat).**