

316

Janvier-Février 2002

unión



Le nouveau Comité du Syndicat du personnel vous souhaite ses meilleurs vœux pour la nouvelle année.
De gauche à droite: Johanna Van Rijn (secrétariat du Syndicat), Roland Cissé, Fernando Peral, Mike Shone (Président), John Sendanyoye, Nadia Skalli-Berny, Ditiro Saleshando, Naoko Otohe, Brigitte Pillonel-Alvarez (secrétariat), David Dror, Elizabeth Piccoli, Pierre-François Recoing, Gerhard Reinecke, Marleen Rueda-Catry, Jean-Yves Legouas, Colleen McGarry (absents: Basharat Ahmad, Bernardo Bello, Frank Hagemann, Walid Hamdan, Yasuhiko Kamakura, Ahmad Khalef, Charles Kameni, Vicky Majuva-Hincha)

BIT

Bulletin
du Syndicat

• ILO •

Staff Union
Bulletin

• OIT •

Boletín
del Sindicato

HOT OFF THE PRESSES: SPECIAL BURNING ISSUE

- **No smoke without fire**
- **Emergency? What emergency?**
- **Second-hand smoke**
- **Dropping like flies**
- **Être précaire au BIT**
- **Vacances au pays**

EDITORIAL

No smoke without fire

The fire that damaged the ILO bookshop at the turn of the year was as sudden as it was unexpected. It seems to have occurred entirely by chance, there is no indication that anyone planned it in advance, and the people most affected had received no advance warning.

In other words, just like most things that go on around here.

Consider the evidence.

You hear on the grapevine that they're closing down Voyages and handing its responsibilities over to the commercial travel agent. You dismiss it as a rumour - but it happens anyway.

You notice the mail hasn't been coming around as often as usual, so you berate your local messenger. Haven't you heard? he replies. They've changed the system - most of the others have already been transferred.

Idly scanning the noticeboard as you wait for the elevator, you find a message to staff from the ILO language teachers. What's this? Surely some mistake - classes are to be closed down with immediate effect.

Over coffee, the bad news is that the vacancy announcement for the chief of SHIF is still being held up after six months and now they want to downgrade it to P4. Only... nobody thought to tell the management committee or the ITU.

But there is some good news for once. Seems they're going to build a staff sports centre on R1. Only... nobody thought to tell the Staff Union or the Sports & Leisure Association until the last minute.

Returning to your office, you see you've received one of those top priority user broadcasts in the fiery red virtual envelope. Trembling with excitement, you open it to discover that the DG has decided to adopt a new design concept for ILO publications. Apparently it was presented to the staff on 27 November. You don't recall anyone presenting it to you. Maybe that was the day you called in sick?

Of course it's easy to mock (why else would we do it?). But when collective bargaining became statutory in the ILO, we did think that meaningful consultation had at last become part of the institutional culture.

Yet we have the distinct impression that people feel just as disgruntled, unempowered and directionless as in the bad old days.

Some might say that when there is a fire in the bookshop of an organization that produces publications on health and safety in the workplace but does nothing to enforce its own ban on smoking - whose preferred medium of communication, indeed, seems to be smoke signals - well, maybe someone somewhere is trying to tell it something.

We prefer to call it spontaneous combustion.

The editors
unionmag@ilo.org

EDITORIAL

Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu

L'incendie qui a ravagé la librairie du BIT en ce tout début d'année a été aussi soudain qu'imprévu. Il semblerait qu'il soit apparu totalement par hasard, que personne ne l'ait planifié à l'avance et que les personnes les plus touchées n'aient pas reçu de préavis particulier.

Exactement comme tous les événements se passant dans cette maison.

Vous en doutez? Les faits parlent d'eux-mêmes.

Vous entendez un jour que VOYAGES va disparaître et transmettre ses fonctions à une agence privée commerciale. Vous pensez que c'est une mauvaise rumeur mais c'est effectivement la vérité.

Constatant que votre courrier n'a pas été distribué aussi souvent que d'habitude, vous vous empressiez d'interpeller votre messager local. «Z'êtes pas au courant? Z'ont changé le système... La plupart des confrères ont déjà été transférés...»

Parcourant négligemment le tableau d'affichage en attendant l'ascenseur, vous tombez sur une information dispensée par les professeurs de langue. Vous n'en croyez pas vos yeux: c'est sûrement une erreur. Mais non: les cours de langue sont supprimés séance tenante.

En prenant votre premier café de l'année, vous apprenez que la vacance de poste du Chef de la caisse maladie n'est toujours pas annoncée alors que son prédécesseur l'a quittée depuis six mois. Il est même question de le dégrader à P4 - sauf que..., personne n'a songé à en avvertir le Comité de gestion, pas plus que l'UIT.

Parmi les inattendus, quelques bonnes nouvelles tout de même. Il semblerait qu'un nouveau centre de sport pour le personnel soit en train d'être aménagé au R1 - sauf que..., le Syndicat et l'Association Sports et Loisirs n'ont été avertis qu'à la dernière minute.

Retournant dans votre bureau, vous voyez sur votre écran que vous avez reçu un courrier super urgent (vous le savez parce que l'enveloppe est rouge et signée «user broadcast»). Vous l'ouvrez en tremblant pour découvrir que le DG a décidé d'adopter un nouveau design pour les publications du BIT. Apparemment ce dernier a été présenté au personnel le 27 novembre. Vous ne vous rappelez pas que quiconque vous ai présenté quoi que ce soit ce jour-là. Sûrement encore un de ces jours où vous étiez malade.

C'est vrai, la moquerie est aisée mais lorsque la négociation collective a fait son entrée dans ces murs nous pensions vraiment que les mécanismes de concertation étaient devenus à tout le moins partie intégrante de la culture institutionnelle.

Au contraire, nous avons la forte impression que nos collègues deviennent de plus en plus mécontents, impuissants, sans véritable direction, comme dans les plus mauvaises périodes de l'Organisation.

Certains diront que lorsqu'un feu se déclare dans un endroit qui publie des ouvrages sur la santé et la sécurité au travail sans savoir faire respecter l'interdiction de fumer, et dont les moyens de communication préférés sont, de toute évidence, les signaux de fumée, eh bien c'est que quelqu'un, quelque part est sûrement en train de nous dire quelque chose.

D'autres préféreront parler d'inflammation spontanée.

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Union es el boletín oficial del Sindicato del Personal de la OIT publicado por el Comité del Sindicato con la colaboración de un Comité de Redacción. Los artículos firmados comprometen únicamente a sus autores y no reflejan necesariamente las opiniones del Comité del Sindicato. En caso de reproducción de los textos, se debe mencionar la fuente.

Union magazine is published ten times a year (with double issues in July-August and November-December). The Editorial Board will consider every submission. Pseudonyms are acceptable provided the author's name (which will remain confidential) is supplied to the editors. The copy deadline for contributions is the first working day of each month (except June and October). If accepted for publication, the earliest they may appear is in the following month's issue. Articles may be submitted in English, French or Spanish. The preferred length of manuscripts is under 1000 words. If possi-

ble, they should be submitted in a common word-processing format (as simple as possible: unjustified, with no tabs, no indents, no underlining) as an email attachment or on diskette, together with a hard (paper) copy. Photographs should preferably be black-and-white bromide prints, or colour slides. Originals should be supplied of all drawings.

The magazine *Union* parait 10 fois par an (avec 2 numéros doubles, juillet-août, novembre-décembre). Le Comité de rédaction examinera toutes les propositions. Les pseudonymes sont acceptés à condition que le nom de l'auteur soit communiqué à la rédaction (information qui restera confidentielle). Le délai de soumission des contributions est le premier jour ouvrable de chaque mois (à l'exception de juin et d'octobre). Lorsqu'elles sont retenues, les contributions seront publiées au plus tôt dans le numéro du mois qui suit. Les articles peuvent être soumis en anglais, français ou espagnol. La longueur des articles ne devrait pas excéder 1000 mots. L'original devrait, si possible, être soumis sous format traitement de texte (texte au kilomètre: sans tabulation, sans alinéa, sans soulignement) en pièce jointe de courrier électronique ou disquette, accompagnée d'une copie papier. Les photographies sont les bienvenues, de préférence en noir et blanc sous forme de bromure, ou diapositives couleur. Tous les dessins devront être soumis sous leur forme originale.

La revista *Union* se publica 10 veces por año (con dos números dobles en julio-agosto y noviembre-diciembre). El Comité de Redacción examina todos los textos propuestos. Se aceptan los pseudónimos a condición de que se comunique a la redacción el nombre del autor (información que tendrá carácter confidencial). El plazo de presentación de las contribuciones acaba el primer día laborable de cada mes (excepto junio y octubre). Las contribuciones que hayan sido aceptadas se publicarán en el número del mes siguiente o en números posteriores. Los artículos pueden presentarse en inglés, francés o español y no deberían exceder de 1000 palabras. El original debería presentarse, de ser posible, en formato de tratamiento de texto (texto sin formato especial: sin justificación a la derecha, sin tabulación, sin sangrado y sin subrayados) como texto anexo al correo electrónico o en disquete, acompañado de una copia impresa. Las fotografías deberían ser preferentemente copias de bromuro en blanco y negro o diapositivas en color. Los dibujos que se presenten deben ser los originales.

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Committee Corner

This is your Union:

Message from the Chair of the Staff Union Committee

Late last year, I stood for the Staff Union Committee on the broad platform of increasing the visibility of the Union, improving the communications within the Union, increasing membership, encouraging a more active working relationship on issues of common interest with HRD, securing a more prominent voice for the SUC within the UN system and seeking an overall improvement in the ILO office "culture". In short I wished to see the Staff Union as a model of "best practice" and one which other UN and related organizations would choose to emulate. These concerns, amongst others, are now embodied in the SUC Programme and Strategy for 2002 that was adopted by the General Meeting of the Union on 31 January here in Geneva.

My election as Chair of the Staff Union Committee in my first meeting with the Committee is certainly an unexpected privilege and honour for me and signals the opportunity for some reorientation of committee work for 2002. My approach to my work builds on what I have learned from nearly 15 years "in the field" with the ILO and will emphasize consultation and consensus.

The 2002 Committee got away to a very busy start to the year with a retreat in Ferney-Voltaire to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the SUC and the Collective Agreements signed or under process. The new SUC builds on the remarkable achievements of the SUC in recent times, although their achievements are not as well known, or recognized in the office, as they should be. Improved communication with our members in 2002 will aim to address this matter and members will be the judges of that.

To some extent it can be said that when things are working well and there is an effective Committee in place there is less interest in Union activities by the membership at large. But when there is controversy and conflict, then mass meetings become the norm. While membership activity is generally considered quiet at the present time, that is not to say that the current Committee do not have some very serious issues to negotiate this year, including the outstanding need for negotiating proposals for the reform of the ILO Administrative Tribunal and the need to move ahead with the various collective agreements.

One of the immediate realities which has struck me since joining the SUC office is the huge and largely unrecognized workload of the SUC officers and Committee on a day-to-day basis. It is not well known for instance that the Union deals with hundreds of personal cases each year, and at headquarters and in the field there is a constant flow of staff members seeking advice and support. Nearly all of this Union work is quietly and methodically carried out by SUC members both at headquarters and in the field on a purely voluntary basis and usually after working hours.

Since the election of the new Staff Union Committee, we have already had a special full meeting of the Committee with Juan Somavia, the Director General, and we have had the chance to put to him all of our major concerns: the need to improve communications, the need to remove obstacles to the work of the JNC, and the urgent need to address issues of health, safety and welfare of staff.

Representatives of the SUC have also met with Joan Connors, the newly appointed Ombudsperson, whose long-awaited appointment was made in partnership with the Director General. We are all delighted that she is now in office, albeit with an extremely heavy workload.

SUC members have also met with representatives of the ILO Youth Association and we plan to establish a new SUC-Youth working group to take on board their special concerns through the appointment of an SUC liaison person.

Nadia Skalli-Berny, our new Assistant General Secretary, is at the time of writing in Washington as ILO representative at the meeting of the FICSA Council and on her return will report back to the Committee, which envisages creating a special working group to consider future relations between the ILO, FICSA and our sister UN Unions and Associations.

The culmination of more than 20 years of hard work and lobbying by the SUC has resulted in recent groundbreaking collective bargaining agreements between the Staff Union and the Director General of the ILO. With these and other mechanisms the ILO Staff Union has established a huge leadership position within the UN system, still largely struggling with a top-down approach by management to staff conditions and decision-making. These new achievements of the Union place even greater obligations on us to now also play a more active role of support within its sister UN and related organizations.

We have many important issues ahead of us for 2002 and as a consequence of our fresh approaches to our overall communications this year, we do hope that our membership will become much more involved in our work.

This is your Union. I personally look forward to hearing from all members. You may email me at syndicat@ilo.org.

Mike Shone ■



Vacances au pays

Vous n'êtes pas curieux pour un sou, le monde entier vous indiffère et vous détestez voyager. C'est parfait. Suivez ce journal de bord et je vous garantis que votre intégrité mentale est sauve.

Par les temps qui courent il faut avoir fortement l'envie ou le besoin d'entreprendre un voyage. Celui-ci a commencé dans la douleur.

Au départ de Genève ce 11 décembre 2001, le vol de 11h30 à destination de Miami via Londres est d'abord repoussé à 12h10 puis annulé pour cause de brouillard. Les hôtes, plutôt acariâtres, doivent refaire des billets et diriger les passagers sur Madrid ou ailleurs. A l'aéroport de Madrid, l'option qu'a choisie votre chroniqueur, le tutoiement est de rigueur et l'agent à l'énième contrôle semble avoir une opinion très élastique de son pouvoir inquisitorial: «Te quedas en Miami?»

Un jeune homme bien de sa personne aurait pu altérer quelque peu l'atmosphère du vol qui, par ailleurs, allait se dérouler sans histoire. Heureusement, des borborygmes bruyants annonçaient en éclaircieur toutes les cinq minutes environ la flatuosité pestilentielle dont il allait inonder les voisins. Dit autrement, ceux qui n'appréciaient pas nécessairement ses pets avaient le temps de fuir.

A l'aéroport de Miami, outre quelques tracasseries supplémentaires telles les fouilles au corps bras levés et l'extension du temps d'enregistrement, des informations contradictoires sont venues jeter le trouble au sein des voyageurs haïtiens. Alors qu'un écriteau indique clairement vers quelle porte d'embarquement se diriger, les écrans de contrôle en annoncent une autre. Comme un seul homme, le troupeau des voyageurs s'est lancée à la conquête de la porte désignée par l'écran. L'autorité de l'ordinateur sans doute. Là, agglutinés sur ce territoire conquis sans lutte, ils laissent libre cours à leur verbiage, à leur exubérance; tel gesticulant le téléphone portable vissé au creux de l'oreille, tel autre se vantant des prouesses accomplies au volant de sa belle voiture... Et comme pour convaincre l'observateur qui douterait de l'évolution parallèle de deux sociétés haïtiennes, un couple de «bourgeois» complète le tableau. Reconnaissable à la mine grave qu'il affiche, l'air austère, le souci manifeste d'en imposer, gobant religieusement les fadaïses que débite la télévision, tels des communiant l'hostie. Mimétisme affligeant frisant l'absurde. Le sourcil en bataille et les yeux qui crachent de temps en temps une lueur d'agacement sont les seuls signes de reconnaissance de la présence des autres. Et pourtant, l'heure avance et quelque chose ne tourne pas rond dans les indications du voyage.

Votre serviteur, bravant la furie d'un agent qui avait de toute évidence d'autres chats à fouetter que d'écouter ses doléances, a fini par lui faire accepter sa proposition de procéder aux vérifications nécessaires et de faire une annonce par haut-parleurs. Reflux de la foule.

Qu'ont-ils fait de toi ô Port-au-Prince, magnifique baie assiégée par des montagnes pelées et ceinturées de constructions lépreuses? Tu mérites un bien meilleur sort. Atterrissage en douceur, malgré une voix qui s'est élevée contre le «manque de douceur de ce chauffeur», formalités de passage à la douane simplifiées, l'air du pays!

L'air est malsain. L'actualité est dominée par le meurtre de ce journaliste dont les presses nationale et internationale ont abondamment parlé. Il a eu la poisse de s'être trouvé malencontreusement sur la trajectoire d'une pioche à deux pointes que maniait maladroitement un individu et qui l'a transpercé de part en part. La populace dont faisait partie le maladroit a eu pitié du blessé et, pour abrégé ses souffrances, l'a haché à la machette menu menu.

Dans ce climat hautement détestable et délétère sont survenus les troubles du 17 décembre 2001, au matin. A la barbe des quelque six mille hommes qui composent la Police Nationale Haïtienne (PNH) – subdivisée en: Unité de Sécurité de la Garde du Palais National (USGPN), Brigade de Recherche et d'Intervention (BRI), Corps d'Intervention pour le Maintien de l'Ordre

(CIMO) et le «SWAT Team» (groupe d'intervention) – une trentaine d'hommes armés ont fait trembler la république. Le pouvoir a crié au Coup d'Etat et l'opposition au coup monté. Ce qui est sûr, en revanche, c'est que les CIMO et autres SWAT Team se sont sagement mis à l'abri pendant que les «chimères» (milices populaires) érigeaient des barricades, brûlaient, pillaient.

Dans ce règne de la gabegie qui favorise le pullulement des coteries en tous genres (sectes, ONG, œuvres de charité...) où chacun roule pour soi, il est légitime d'être inquiet et réaliste de se demander pour qui et dans quel but roulent certains groupes de cette nébuleuse. A défaut de répondre à cette double question, penchons-nous sur ce que l'on pourrait appeler «des raisons d'espérer». On peut en retenir quatre.

Il y a tout d'abord quelques rares personnes appartenant à l'élite intellectuelle et/ou commerciale qui se battent honnêtement pour un changement ou, pour le moins, ne se reconnaissent pas dans cette déliquescence morale qui affecte les têtes.

Il y a ensuite les «notables» qui, dans leur ville ou village et dans leurs capacités, assument leurs responsabilités. Telle, par exemple, cette infirmière à la retraite que les gens viennent consulter pour toutes sortes d'affections. Avec l'expérience accumulée au cours de quelques dizaines d'années de professionnalisme, elle prescrit, donne gratuitement des soins ou envoie le patient à la consultation chez un médecin.

Il y a encore les «Madan Sara» (dames Sara). Ce sont des oiseaux de l'ordre des passereaux qui érigent dans la bonne humeur leur nid en tissant des feuilles de palmier. Le nom est donc donné métaphoriquement à des groupes de femmes industrielles qui chahutent, bougent, marchandent et font marcher le petit commerce.

Il y a enfin les «Vye Dyaspowa» (ceux de la diaspora). Ce terme est utilisé dépréciativement, aussi paradoxalement que cela puisse paraître, essentiellement par les basses couches sociales qui sont les premières bénéficiaires des sommes d'argent envoyées au pays et qui les font vivre.

Bien entendu, un changement véritable dans ce pays ne pourra venir que d'une décision surprenante entraînant une action non moins insolite qui romprait totalement avec le système. Ça reste à venir. Ce journal de bord peut bien s'arrêter là car le retour en Suisse n'a rien à offrir de bien excitant.

Wisler Frédéric ■

Correspondence

Salute to Abdoulaye Diallo

Abdoulaye: I was impressed by the characteristic words of wisdom in your parting interview published in *Union 315* («La lutte... c'est ma raison d'être»). It brought to mind so many of our joint and collective efforts for staff in the ILO and the rest of the UN system in the struggle to defend the cause of social justice. We can look back with measured satisfaction on the things we achieved, however small, without forgetting our disappointment – but not disillusion – about those we didn't achieve, mainly the lack of progress on collective bargaining. However, the groundwork had been done and the stage set for the more recent developments on negotiation agreements for ILO staff. The efforts of successive Committees and our collective actions were not in vain.

Your turn for retirement has come. May it be a happy time for you and your family. Take time to enjoy your well-earned rest and recuperation.

I salute you, Abdoulaye, and bid farewell to a brother in arms.

«La Pasionaria» ■

From ILO communications:

News you may have missed

New website (28.8.2001): Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System, "Review of Management and Administration in the International Labour Office":

Reporting on substantive programme performance in ILO is not entirely satisfactory.

ILO COMMENT: How true.

The training of experts at the Turin Centre, prior to their being posted to ILO field offices, should become a standard practice, in order to avoid the sending of unprepared experts.

ILO-COMMENT: So an expert is not necessarily an expert?

More often than not, the constituents' appeals to be better informed by the Office on programme implementation have resulted in submission of more bulky rather than of more focused and transparent documentation.

ILO-COMMENT: Constituents may wish to read ILO-Commenter's column.

The ILO activities report did not assess, in verifiable quantitative and qualitative terms, the extent to which the ILO has achieved its objectives.

ILO-COMMENT: The Joint Inspection Unit's assessment of the ILO is not very quantitative, either.

It needs to be mentioned, however, that while the Internal Audit Unit is also responsible for investigations, none of the staff is a professional investigator.

ILO-COMMENT: Every cleaner, these days, calls him/herself "professional" – why not investigators?

According to certain complaints, the management style of the former Director-General and his lack of communication with the staff has led to a troubled working atmosphere in the Office.

ILO-COMMENT: Did GB delegates and top management notice? Concluding ILO-COMMENT: Hopefully, there will be a follow-up to the Report by the Joint Inspection Unit?

Deepening Strategic Budgeting

By December 31, 2001 the project hopes to have achieved the following: Greater familiarity with the vision, concepts and language of Strategic Budgeting across the ILO, and a more consistent, accurate use of language and concepts by staff; Staff involvement in creating language, concepts and understanding of Strategic Budgeting at the working level; Definite actions and expectations by all senior management.

<http://mirror/intranet/english/dfid/newsletter.htm>

ILO-COMMENT: So managers ought, by New Year's Eve, to have had definite expectations about staff involvement in creating language. Now one understands how the Budget functions.

Human Resources Strategy: Update

As a consequence of the exercise, XXXX jobs were re-evaluated. XXX jobs were upgraded (X per cent of the population) and XXX grading appeals remain to be examined.

<http://mirror/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb282/pdf/pfa-10.pdf>

ILO-COMMENT: HRD, responsible for the Xs, obviously doesn't give a XXXX.

Workshop aimed at running promotional campaigns for Maternity Protection

Participants agreed that maternity protection issues affect women the most.

http://mirror/public/english/region/asro/suva/news/maternity_protection.htm

ILO-COMMENT: Agreed!

Certains problèmes fondamentaux que connaît le Tribunal

Le Syndicat n'a pas qualité pour agir auprès du Tribunal. On a refusé durant plus de dix ans toute procédure orale.

La question des communications avec l'administration

Le Syndicat du personnel n'a jamais eu l'occasion de rencontrer l'Equipe de direction et sa principale source d'informations est constituée par les bruits de couloir, qui contiennent souvent des messages tardifs et imprécis.

(Déclaration du Président du Comité du Syndicat devant la Commission du programme, du budget et de l'administration, 282e session du Conseil d'administration, faite le 7.11.2001.)

ILO-COMMENT: Comme c'est triste – ou: vivent les bons vieux temps?

Domestic partnerships

CCAQ examined the issue as to whether dependency status should be recognized in respect of situations other than a marriage formally solemnized by ecclesiastical or civil ceremony. This requires that the partners be each other's sole partner with the intention to remain so indefinitely... While the extension of benefits to a staff member in respect of a domestic partner is individually expensive – but no more expensive than the benefit granted to a staff member in respect of a spouse – the collective cost of introducing such a scheme is low both because domestic partnerships comprise a very small proportion of the population and because enrolment in domestic partnership is generally low.

GB282-PFA-12-2001-09-0213-EN.Doc/v2

ILO-COMMENT: "Indefinite partnership"? Just one question: Can the partner be a cat or a dog?

Panel on Men, Masculinities and Male Perspectives on Gender Equality

She added that it was important to shift "the blame" from men to masculinities... He was sometimes frustrated with the way in which the issue of gender was debated in the ILO. He was pleased to see that about half of the participants in the Second International Gender Conference, recently held in Ghana, were men, and noted the ease with which men had been accepted at the conference by women as partners... For this reason, he noted, masculinities had to be "made more visible" and suggested integrating the concept of men and masculinities in the priorities and programmes of the ILO.

<http://mirror/intranet/english/bureau/gender/men.htm>

ILO-COMMENT: Back to square one?

Sexual harassment

It may take many forms, including: sexually explicit jokes.

GB282-PFA-8-1-2001-0210-4-EN.Doc/v2

ILO-COMMENT: Oh! Have you heard the one about the feminine masculine XXXX?

Urgent – Deadlines for competitions extended until this Friday, 11 January: Programme Analyst (Bangkok) and Computer Information Technology Specialist (SAFEWORK). The reason for this is that the server which runs the on-line application system has been disconnected in order to be cleaned as a result of the fire on the first floor.

E-MAIL HRD_BROADCAST (1/7/02)

ILO-COMMENT: Hire and Fire?



Droit: deux poids – deux mesures

Pourquoi les fonctionnaires ne sont-ils pas heureux? Episode XIV

Peut-être vous-êtes vous parfois reconnu(e) dans la liste interminable de nos déceptions, récriminations, frustrations, insatisfactions, bref de tous ces tions qui nous gâchent un peu le plaisir d'être là cinq jours sur sept et qui constituent la substantifique moelle de cette chronique. Celle d'aujourd'hui concerne pourtant, apparemment, peu d'entre nous, et c'est donc aux dépens d'une minorité que nous allons, j'espère, sourire un peu.

Bridget Djé (nom fictif) appartient à cette catégorie sociale dénommée « parent isolé » ou encore « famille monoparentale ». Bridget fit autrefois un beau mariage avec demoiselles d'honneur et soirée dansante, où le kitsch des cygnes en sucre de la pièce montée le disputait à la lourdeur de sa robe en chantilly. Après quelques années d'un bonheur sans tempêtes qui culmina avec une heureuse naissance, le temps tourna à l'orage, et cette union devint aussi indigeste que le gâteau qui l'avait couronnée: Bridget divorça. Revenue du mariage, du couple, et de toute cette sorte de choses, quoique irrémédiablement hétérosexuelle, elle élève seule son enfant, que nous appellerons l'Enfant (toujours dans le louable dessein de respecter l'anonymat). Encouragée par les discours à la mode sur le bien-être familial et autres questions connexes, l'Enfant étant encore petit, Bridget choisit de travailler à temps partiel afin de lui consacrer le plus de temps possible, dans le but avoué d'en faire un être heureux, socialement épanoui, et rapportant de bons carnets scolaires.

Le 20 du mois, ouvrant fébrilement l'enveloppe tant attendue, Bridget a constaté que le montant de l'assurance maladie prélevé sur son salaire correspondait au pourcentage retenu sur un salaire à temps plein; croyant à une erreur, elle s'est adressée au service compétent, où il lui a été répondu que c'était absolument normal, et qu'il s'agissait d'une mesure de solidarité sociale.

Sur le même bulletin de salaire, les prestations familiales quant à elles avaient été diminuées de moitié, de même que l'allocation qui lui est versée à titre de soutien de famille. Cette fois encore, on lui dit que c'est tout à fait normal, parce que les prestations familiales sont calculées au prorata du revenu...

Autrement dit, Bridget paie deux fois plus qu'un employé à temps complet d'un côté, et reçoit deux fois moins de l'autre... Bridget a donc le choix: elle reprend une activité à 100 pour cent au détriment de l'Enfant; ou elle continue d'apprendre les mille et une manières d'accomoder les pâtes.

Allez, bonne année à tous!

N'empêche... j'ai quand même envie de dire...

cvti

K***** ■

La sagesse africaine

Les deux font la paire

I. Le fou et l'homme sensé

Dans un village vivait un Fou au milieu des gens sensés. Or il arriva un jour qu'un des habitants du village eut envie d'aller prendre un bain dans la rivière voisine.

Il s'en alla donc, ôta ses habits, les déposa sur la berge et se jeta à l'eau.

Là-dessus surgit le Fou. Voyant les habits déposés sur la berge par le Baigneur, il n'eut rien de plus pressé que de les enlever. Lui qui, d'ordinaire ne souffrait aucun vêtement sur lui, s'en revêtit et se hâta d'aller les montrer au village et de faire le beau.

Le Baigneur qui lui tournait le dos, ne s'aperçut de rien. Il ne constata la disparition de ses effets que lorsqu'il remonta sur la rive pour les reprendre. Mais il eut beau jeter les yeux de côté et d'autre, tout le long de la berge, il ne vit plus rien.

Force lui fit donc de rentrer au village tel qu'il se trouvait, sans le moindre bout de pagne. Tout en marchant, il aperçut soudain, loin devant lui, notre Fou, revêtu de ses habits. Il se lance aussitôt à sa poursuite dans la direction du village où il espère que les gens viendront à son secours.

« Arrêtez le voleur! Arrêtez le voleur » crie-t-il aussi fort qu'il peut. Mais les gens du village qui ont toujours vu le Fou tout nu, ne se rendent pas compte de ce qui se passe. Ils s'imaginent que celui qui court par derrière est le Fou, complètement dévêtu et que celui qui se sauve devant lui, tout habillé, est un de leurs voisins.

Ils accueillent donc le premier dans leurs bras et le protègent tandis qu'ils se saisissent du Baigneur et le ligotent étroitement, sans même lui laisser le temps de s'expliquer...

Conclusion de l'histoire: il ne faut jamais s'emballer dans une affaire mais agir toujours avec calme, sans quoi on risque d'avoir tort alors qu'on a raison.

II. Les deux esprits

Un jour, l'Esprit de la Forêt et l'Esprit de la Savane se lièrent d'amitié. Peu après, pour sceller leur amitié, l'Esprit de la Savane dépêcha son serviteur chez l'Esprit de la Forêt pour lui dire: « Donne-moi un esclave. Cependant, fais attention! Je ne veux ni un homme, ni une femme! Si tu ne peux pas, tant pis! »

L'esprit de la Forêt de lui répondre: « Je l'ai trouvé, ton esclave. Viens le chercher. Cependant, fais attention! Ne viens ni le jour, ni la nuit! Si tu ne peux pas, laisse-le! »

A cette réponse, l'Esprit de la Savane comprit et ne demanda plus rien.

Moralité: à l'impossible, nul n'est tenu.

Patricia Isimat-Mirin ■

LE CARNET D'ADRESSES D'UN GOURMET...

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Eric Hintermann candidat aux présidentielles françaises

(Le Dauphiné libéré, 10 janvier 2002)

Une candidature prétexte, c'est ainsi qu'il faut comprendre la récente déclaration d'Eric Hintermann au cours de laquelle il signifie sa candidature pour les prochaines élections présidentielles.

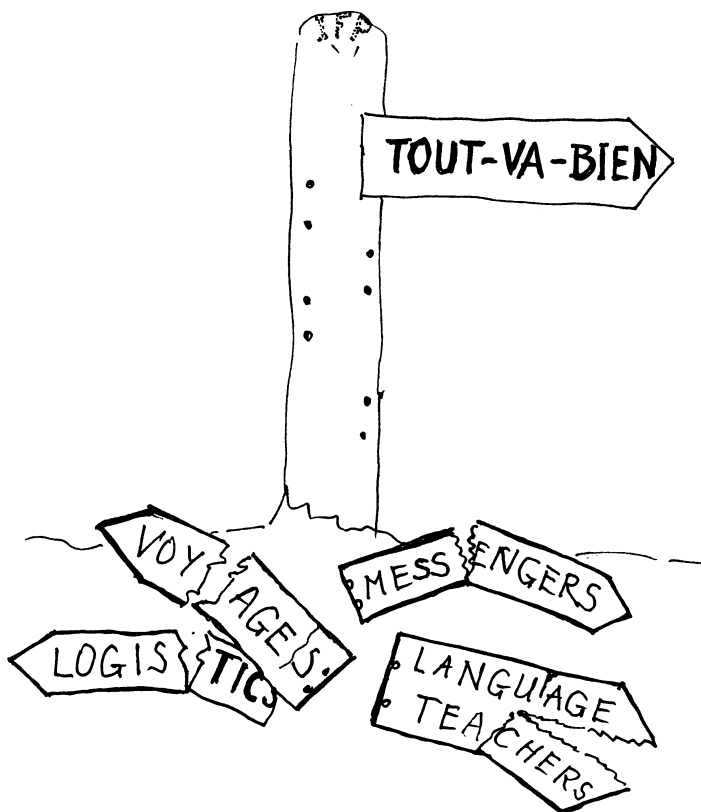
Dans un souci de transparence qui ne sera sans doute pas apprécié en haut lieu, l'intéressé explique tranquillement qu'il n'y a en effet pas beaucoup d'autres moyens pour se faire entendre au sein du PS. Et ce qu'il a à dire, surtout à défendre, est de son point de vue important et débute par un trait cinglant à l'adresse du candidat « probable » du PS: « Jospin n'est pas assez européen. »

« Il faut aller plus loin que la fédération des Etats nations, sinon, ce n'est qu'une zone de libre échange. » Son vœu: « Aller vers une véritable unification européenne dans le prolongement de l'euro qui est un immense succès populaire. Il faut donner à l'Europe une puissance politique qui lui permettra ensuite de mettre en place une politique sociale, environnementale etc. »

Eric Hintermann compte bien entendu sur sa carte de visite pour être entendu, notamment ses qualités successives de secrétaire général de groupe parlementaire à l'Assemblée nationale, haut fonctionnaire international au BIT (ndlr: en 1993-1994, membre du Comité du Syndicat), membre du Conseil économique et social...

Quant au recueil des 500 signatures pour gagner le droit d'être effectivement candidat, on comprendra qu'Eric Hintermann n'en a cure. D'ailleurs, aurait-il eu plus de succès dans cette entreprise qu'à celle qu'il préside pour briguer le fauteuil de maire d'Evian?

A trois reprises, soit en 1989, 1995 et plus particulièrement en 2001, le candidat a effectivement dû abandonner ses ambitions municipales, faute de colistiers.



Fire? What fire? Emergency? What emergency?

Last Thursday (as I write this), all staff received a joint Staff Union/HRD/BATIM email about the health and safety of staff in the wake of the fire on the first floor on 2 January. Three weeks after the event. Wow. The day before, the Director General and several highly placed officials honoured displaced PUBL staff with a visit to their splendid 1950s-style, US open-plan relocated “offices” on R1. I had been wondering whether there would be just such a morale-boosting visit to the troops. Indeed, I had been waxing quite indignant about its absence – and the continuing absence of the Director of HRD – from both the scene of the fire and our much reduced working space. Funny, really, because I don’t think of myself as needing that sort of reassurance and back-slapping. But, then, until the new year, I had never experienced the after-effects of a fire in my place of work.

Let me tell you about a few other, less-than-reassuring after-effects.

For the two days immediately following the fire, several of my colleagues in PUBL came into the office, and attempted to deal with the mess they found there. They were not told to stay away. Yet, by the third day, the area affected was cordoned off, and no one was allowed access. So why not before? Why wasn’t some responsible service out there with the authority to direct the traffic, «Circulez, il n’y a rien à voir»? And, incidentally, which ILO department was responsible for instructing staff what to do in such circumstances? All I can say is that apparently no one was jumping at the chance.

Rumours were rife throughout the office about the cause of the fire. Jokes proliferated about the ruthless expansionary ambitions of some departments. But no official words came to set the record straight. So, as usual, rumour fed on rumour, to further destabilizing effect.

And what about the possible health effects for staff who were in close contact with the very fine soot deposited on every surface? Where was the Health Services Unit? Not at the scene of the fire. Where was its advice? Safe with the Unit itself and available only when asked for – as when PUBL staff specifically requested a meeting on the subject. And, eventually, in the aforesaid email. What had apparently been the major initial concern? The danger of the fine dust for the electronic equipment. So much for a reassuring, person-centred, proactive approach.

What about trauma? Ever heard of trauma? Surely everyone has now, since 9/11? Fire and its aftermath can be as psychologically devastating as bereavement, and some people had invested very great effort and pride in the ILO bookshop, which is now no more. Where was the staff welfare service? Where, indeed.

I could go on about, for example, the absence of training for managers and staff in handling emergencies, the confusing and contradictory instructions about how to handle our books, papers and belongings, the strong suspicion that the fine soot will never be fully cleared out of the ducts and shafts linking all the floors in the building, the tangles of electric wires present beneath every desk in this pre-IT revolution building, the alleged construction fault revealed by the incident and which contributed to the *effet de cheminée*, whooshing the black smoke upwards to spread to other floors.

Which brings me to why I am writing this at all, going public with my observations. Well, over the years I have come to terms with a lot about the ILO work experience, but find I can’t come to terms with no longer feeling safe working here; hence my outburst. So, yes, I shall be contributing to plans to prevent such incidents and coordinate action dealing with them – and urge everyone to do the same. And yes, the most important services were on the spot at once. Heartfelt thanks to the firefight-

ers and ILO guards. I just hope that, come next December, should PUBL still be temporarily housed on R1, I shall not have to write:

“Dear Santa Claus,
All I want for Christmas is an office – and a properly constituted safe-work plan to ensure a working environment for ILO staff appropriate to and commensurate with the high principles upheld by that magnificent institution.”

Christine Smith ■
REVUE/PUBL
28 January 2002

UN firefighting role becomes burning issue

by our Occupational Safety and Health Correspondents,
Arsène O’Round and Karen d’Ash

New York: A United Nations employee from Germany was arrested on 22 December after allegedly setting fire to a neighbour’s apartment door.

A court complaint says the official admitted that he scratched anti-Semitic comments on the door and set it on fire in the Manhattan apartment building.

Held on \$50,000 bail, he was indicted on 31 December on charges of arson, criminal mischief, reckless endangerment and aggravated harassment. He faces up to 25 years in prison and deportation if convicted.

US federal authorities have asked local officials to hold the man if he makes bail because they want to question him about threats against the UN building.

His former lawyer said the defendant has worked in the UN political information department for eight years. An Internet site also lists him as a member of the UN home page team.

According to the court complaint, he began harassing the neighbour, who he apparently believes is Jewish, on 14 December when a building employee saw anti-Semitic graffiti on the neighbour’s 56th-floor door. From 17 to 22 December, he allegedly scratched additional remarks.

His current lawyer, who does not believe his client knows or has ever met the alleged victim, has not asked the court to have him undergo a psychiatric examination. But if the case goes to trial, “it would appear that there would be some type of psychiatric defence”, he said.

As *Union* went to press, there was no evidence linking the suspect to a fire on the night of 2-3 January in the ILO’s Geneva bookshop.



On mission to Islamabad, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Yasuyuki Nodera is garlanded as a symbol of welcome and greeted on behalf of staff by Staff Union Representative Basharat Ahmad (left), 14 January 2002

Second-hand smoke

A letter to Alan Wild,
Director, Human Resources

Dear Mr. Wild,

I am writing concerning a matter of occupational safety and health in the ILO, something that affects each one of us - you, me, the Director-General, the cleaning lady on my floor, in short anybody working or even setting foot in the ILO. The matter is second-hand smoke.

As most of us know, the ILO is theoretically a smoke-free building, except in designated areas. The famous circulars of 1997 and 1999 so decree it. As most of us also know, and smell, breathe or otherwise feel on a daily basis, the ILO is full of smoke seeping under the closed doors of scores of offices, pervading halls when certain doors are opened, and spread through the ventilation system in amounts that we can only imagine.

Many of our smoking colleagues respect the circulars and enjoy their vice in designated areas (woe betide your lungs if you have to take a coffee on R-1, but at least it is authorized there, so that is your own risk). For those that respect the policy, my condolences for their shortened life spans, but my thanks for their respect of us non-smokers.

No one seems to care much about the hidden smokers, however, the ones too lazy or too uncaring for the human rights of others to go down to the R-1 coffee bar or R-2 smoking areas, or to step outside for a puff. I have heard rumours that your department has drafted a reminder circular that this kind of practice is not tolerated, but alas some hidden hand among the famous "powers that be" (him/herself a smoker?) must be staying the inevitable. Who knows if such a circular would be any more effective than the last ones? But at least we might have some indication that the Office is aware and trying to do something about the problem. Instead, what we have is a poisonous silence wafting over our workplace, fitting accompaniment to the physical poisons that make us sick.

And sick we are becoming, whether we realize it or not. Second-hand smoke - technically smoke from tobacco users, "sidestream smoke" from smouldering tobacco between puffs, contaminants emitted into the air during puffs - is a known indoor air pollutant, classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as a human carcinogen for which there is no (dare I repeat no?) safe level of exposure. The scientific evidence shows that non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke suffer many of the same diseases as regular smokers - heart disease deaths, lung and nasal sinus cancers, not to mention common eye and nose irritation, headaches, sore throats, dizziness, coughing, etc. Maybe the flu epidemics that regularly strike our building during the winter are really "second-hand smokers' syndrome"? We may never know, will we? Not that,



The DG meets the new Staff Union Committee, 28 January 2002

or whether someday we drop dead from a heart attack brought on ten years early because that otherwise friendly colleague down the hall couldn't resist lighting one up behind the closed door of their office several times a day.

Whatever, this non-smoker thinks it is about time that the ILO administration became a responsible employer on this issue, and took some effective measures to ban such practices. There are, after all, staff regulations, aren't there? In a world where employers are increasingly held accountable for providing a safe and healthy workplace, how can the ILO of all organizations continue to tolerate such a danger? Will it take the threat of individual or collective grievances for the Office to live up to ILO safety and health standards? Or will those of us who think we are slowly being poisoned in our everyday working lives need to take more drastic action to defend ourselves? Perhaps the Office would turn the same kind of blind eye to vigilante fire brigades that we could set up (I have a bottle of water in my office that could easily douse a lighted cigarette down the hall) as it now does for the hidden smokers who thumb their noses at the ILO circulars and our lives. After all, would it not be legitimate self-defence? And indirectly serve the fire safety standards of the ILO? (I heard the first floor fire was due to a computer, but you will have to excuse my natural suspicion about the cause.)

Simple letters like this probably aren't the best forms of communication, but then I have some difficulty even convincing my Union that this merits its priority attention (though I am working on that one as well), and the responsible chiefs mentioned in the 1999 letter seem not to want this responsibility. So I write to you in the naive yet optimistic belief that if you put forward a logical proposal, you will get a logical response - sort of like homing in on your strategic objectives with some good targets and indicators.

Ultimately, however, I am trying in my humble way to make a very serious point - this concerns my health, my safety and perhaps my life, and my employer could ultimately be held responsible for any negligence. I hope you feel the same as I do, and that, sometime soon, we will get some action which meets our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Ratteree ■
Services/SECTOR
30 January 2002

Correspondence

Vous avez du feu?

After the 2 January fire, how about enforcing the no-smoking policy in the building? Smoke detectors in all offices might be a sensible investment. Less costly, presumably, than clean-up expenses, they could also help improve air quality and make working conditions in the building more healthful.

If the next fire were started by a poorly extinguished cigarette (left in the bin like many illicit smokes these days) and if people found themselves trapped in the higher floors or stairways, what could BATIM, SYNDICAT and the Administration ever say in their defence?

Brian Wenk ■

Pour ceux qui se demandent ce qu'est un employé précaire au BIT

Il y a maintenant un an que la circulaire conjointe HRD-Syndicat identifiant la précarité de certains contrats au BIT est parue. Cette circulaire définit l'employé précaire comme suit: employé ayant accumulé au BIT, au 31 décembre 2000, 24 mois de contrat dans les 36 derniers mois ou 36 mois dans les 60 derniers mois. Les personnes répondant à ces critères devaient se faire connaître soit au Syndicat soit au Département des Ressources Humaines, en vue d'une analyse de leur situation et de leur régularisation. Cependant, malgré toute attente, cette liste élaborée par le Département des Ressources Humaines en décembre 2000 n'est pas close! Elle continue de s'allonger, les nouveaux venus devenant les précaires de demain.

La plupart des employés précaires du BIT travaillent depuis de nombreuses années, alternant des contrats de collaboration extérieure avec des contrats short term ou special short term. Ce sont des personnes exerçant leurs activités soit dans le même service, soit dans différents services, pendant des années, pour certaines d'entre elles depuis plus de dix ans. Elles ont bénéficié et bénéficient encore de nombreux contrats consécutifs car elles sont reconnues compétentes, connaissent la maison et ont une capacité d'adaptation rapide. Elles accomplissent aussi bien des tâches ponctuelles que les activités courantes du Bureau. N'est-ce donc pas abusif de ne pas les régulariser? S'agit-il de l'inconscience de la machine administrative ou d'aléas d'une situation fragile qui ne prend pas en considération le bien-être des employés et de leur famille?

Et pourtant, la précarité a des lourdes conséquences pour ces employés, dont voici quelques exemples:

- ils sont très souvent soutien de famille et l'incertitude à propos d'un nouveau contrat crée une grande insécurité financière et familiale;
- le changement du type de contrats ou une coupure de plus de 30 jours se glisse entre deux contrats, empêchant ainsi l'employé précaire d'accéder aux différentes prestations sociales:
 - ils ne cotisent à la pension que s'ils atteignent sept mois de contrat short term consécutifs;
 - ils ne sont pas couverts par une assurance maladie équivalente à celle des fonctionnaires réguliers (taux de remboursement inférieur);
 - ils n'ont accès ni au congé maternité (l'OIT ne prône-t-elle pas la ratification de la convention sur la protection de la maternité pour tous les travailleurs du monde?) ni aux prestations familiales;
- ils n'ont pas le droit au regroupement familial, ni en Suisse, ni en France, la fragilité de la relation de travail étant considérée trop grande pour permettre à la famille de l'employé précaire de le rejoindre;
- ils se retrouvent en toute illégalité sur le territoire helvétique ou français si, lors de l'expiration de leur permis de séjour, ils n'arrivent pas à avoir un autre contrat, car celui-ci conditionne l'octroi d'un nouveau permis.

Cependant, et de toute évidence, les employés précaires croient au travail qu'ils accomplissent dans la maison et désirent continuer à travailler au BIT. Leur souhait est celui d'être régularisés le plus vite possible et d'éviter que cette fin d'année soit aussi douloureuse que celles des années précédentes.

Bonne année!

Des précaires du BIT ■

They're dropping like flies

It doesn't take antennae to see that stress has become a big problem for people even in the ILO. The signs are writ large on the faces that (occasionally) greet us in the lifts, corridors and offices. How many eyebrows would rise if it were announced that the annual cost to the Office of stress-related sick leave was to be reckoned not in thousands of dollars or even hundreds of thousands but millions?

When it comes to occupational safety and health (OSH), ILO standards and guidance are widely prized, particularly by countries still being industrialized. The visionaries who launched the Organization 80-something years ago somehow managed to look at the conditions in which people were working at the time and come up with a body of law and associated machinery to improve things.

In industrialized countries today, not so many people actually work in factories or other places doing manual labour. A lot, like ILO staff, work in offices and similar environments, more often than not with computers, paper and fellow humans.

So what does the ILO do about the occupational health problems of its own employees? From the look of things, not that much, possibly because the problems are too close to home.

But why do offices often seem to bring out the worst in people?

Whereas a peasant or carpenter can take out frustrations by shouting at a farm animal or beating harder on a nail, there is no similar outlet open to office workers.

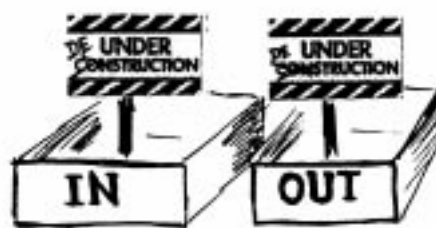
Offices are closed environments where noise, air and even meals are shared with the same groups of people day after day. Even at home or on holiday, emails demand answers to work-related questions anytime, anywhere. As roads clog, it becomes harder to get to work on time and with composure.

Lighting, furniture, air quality, workload, computers, and workplace meals and snacks may each in their own way conspire to limit or undermine people's pleasure in work and their ability to keep smiling and fit.

Subtler pressures from mounting workloads and interpersonal relations also take their toll, as will a lack of *job satisfaction* – that singular cocktail of action, impact and recognition.

To be cutting edge, to be just useful, the ILO might devote more energy to the problems – physical, mental and emotional – that office and service workers like its officials face. Unless something is done quickly and decisively, there may not be many left to continue passing on solutions to the older, easier problems. Look around: they're dropping like flies.

S. Fliege-Wasser ■



Internal mail services

Some observations on dispute resolution under the new collective bargaining arrangements at the ILO

Twenty five years ago, I was asked by the ILO to write a handbook on Grievance Arbitration. At that time collective agreements, grievance procedures, and grievance arbitration were probably more highly developed in the United States than in most other countries. I wrote the volume in the belief that the US system was making an enlightened contribution in encouraging union-management workplace responsibility and more importantly in eliminating resort to the wildcat strike as the only way in which employees could have their protests taken seriously by management. I certainly hoped the volume would help to spread the gospel of dispute resolution under collective bargaining, but I had little expectation that the message would be heard in the ILO itself.

The Office and the Staff Union are to be commended for the landmark accomplishment of working out agreements in so many different areas and for the development and reliance on a rational procedure for resolving the differences that are inevitable in a burgeoning collective bargaining relationship.

The ILO is in a particularly important position as the endorser of basic workplace protections and can serve as a beacon for encouraging employers and unions throughout the world to follow its example of negotiated rule making with peaceful procedures for resolving disputes between the parties arising over the interpretation or application of their agreements. In too much of the world, the power and authority over the workplace rests exclusively with the employer, the employees having little choice but to obey, or strike or quit. The beauty and wisdom of collective bargaining is its recognition that for the workplace to function most efficiently it needs the managerial skills of the employer together with the service and professional competence of the people employed to carry out the mission of the enterprise. That is as true with industrial enterprises as it is with professional or governmental institutions. Too many employers have been too slow to learn the benefits of a constructive relationship where management recognizes the right of the employees to designate their representative, and then voluntarily agrees to discuss with that designated representative matters of mutual concern over wages, hours, and conditions of employment. It seems a simple formula once it is in place, and it is after all a prescribed international norm, as recognized in ILO Conventions. But too many employers continue to resist union involvement in their operations.

In doing so employers not only lose the opportunity for constructive input from those who are often the most knowledgeable and expert in the operation of the enterprise and in the furthering of its mission; they lose the beneficial impact on morale of assuring fairness in the treatment of their employees while being held accountable for living up to the commitments made to employees. Enlightened management welcomes such monitoring to become aware of those members of management who improperly derail or divert the employer's higher purposes by improper conduct, discriminatory treatment or harassment of employees to the detriment of the employer and the team spirit within the enterprise. Above all, by foreclosing communication with the designated union as representative of the employees, employers deprive themselves of the important escape valve to let off employee steam over treatment or conduct that is unfair or even only perceived as unfair. Without that release the result is growing stress and unrest among the employees with the inevitable blow-up if there is no channel to vet their concerns.

How much better to have a mutually agreed-upon treaty, called a collective bargaining agreement, where the management and

the union spell out their shared concerns, and set forth the negotiated rights that they have achieved through the open and constructive discussions of collective bargaining. But a treaty alone is not enough. It requires a procedure for resolving the inevitable conflicts that arise in the workplace. That is the magic of the negotiated dispute resolution system. Not only do the parties negotiate their rights and recognize the rights of the other party; they go further to agree that when a dispute arises as to what those respective rights are, it will be resolved by a negotiated dispute settlement machinery. And that is what has happened here.

The dispute resolution machinery designed by the parties to fit within the structure of the ILO has properly put its focus on resolving the dispute as close to its source as possible. That is not a function shifted immediately from the parties to an adversarial or legalistic system. That adjudication function is provided, but as a failsafe, as the court of last resort to be invoked only if the parties are unable to work out the problem on an informal basis. The Dispute Settlement Procedures properly focus on having the parties work out the dispute as expeditiously as possible on their own, first through reexamination by the participants themselves in the process of administrative review of the employer's challenged decision to see if the decision is firm, if it can be rescinded or amended, or if it can be altered to meet the immediate concern. These discussions open the door to mutual review of the employer's decisions and their application. They provide the opportunity for continued dialogue between the parties on issues or applications which may not have been foreseen or addressed during contract negotiations but which come into sharp focus when a particular fact situation presents itself. This opportunity for ongoing negotiations enables the parties to continually modify and adapt their written agreement to the immediate needs of their relationship.

But failing agreement at this stage the procedure still does not trigger winner/loser adjudication even if the parties on review are unable to resolve their dispute. It introduces the skills of a trained facilitator to bring objective reasoning to the parties in their direct negotiations, more acceptably conveying ideas and proposals, with the opportunity to introduce new avenues or methods of accommodating the parties to bring them together in resolution of their dispute.

Even then, if there is not agreement, the claimant has the opportunity to turn to the office of the Ombudsperson for further help in reaching resolution, in gaining access to individuals who might be in a particularly crucial position for resolving the dispute, for securing documents which had been withheld, and for tolling the time for appeal to the adjudication phase in order to achieve a settlement that might otherwise be thwarted by strict adherence to appeal time limits.

The Ombudsperson in the ILO procedure is a bit more activist than in many other organizations where the parties believe that confidentiality and exclusion from the decision-making or recommending process enhances the credibility, accessibility and effectiveness of a behind-the-scenes confidant. But clearly, if the negotiated role of the Ombudsperson in this structure is achieved in enhancing the prospects of resolution through the dialogue process, then the variations in the traditional role of the Ombudsperson are justified.

But even then the goals of joint resolution are not abandoned when a case is submitted to the Joint Panel. There too, with the involvement of partisan designees to that body, there is still opportunity for voluntary resolution without the imposition of a formal decision. The experience at the comparable Grievance Committee at the International Monetary Fund with representatives of both parties and a neutral chair has shown that, even at that step, resolution should be the goal. In two decades of reliance on that office, the Grievance Committee has issued unanimous resolutions in all cases submitted to the forum.

This emphasis on dialogue and on tripartite determination before the Joint Panel holds open the prospect of most disputes

being resolved expeditiously and to the participants' mutual satisfaction. Inevitably there will be those cases which cannot be mutually resolved, where one or both of the parties is intractable and reason and compromise are unavailing. Those cases, whether determined by the Joint Panel or on appeal by the Administrative Tribunal, are not failures of the system; rather they are testament to the fact that the parties have developed a rational procedure for resolving their disputes, have adapted it from time to time as new issues have arisen, and have provided the adjudication process for those few cases where reason and cooperation are unable to bring accord. That is a good design with a prognosis for effective management of the inevitable instances of disagreement and conflict that characterizes a vital and constructive workplace relationship.

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The worst Internet hoaxes

Gotcha! E-mail hoaxes are out to get you. Here are the ten most cunning ruses to watch out for.

(PCWorld.com, 14 December 2001)

Communicating by e-mail seems safe and clean compared to the real world – no bad breath, no cauliflower ear, and no anthrax. But e-mail doesn't escape the clutches of con artists. Just because an e-mail message looks legitimate and plays upon our deeply felt hopes and fears doesn't mean it's true. Here's our top ten list of some of the most devious hoaxes and outright scams in Internet history. Don't be surprised to see some of them appear (and mutate into new forms) again and again. And don't get taken in.

10. Let the Good Times Roll Even the threat of a computer virus is enough to throw many PC users into a tizzy. And virus warning hoaxes are nearly as bad as the real thing. Frightened recipients frantically forward the bogus advisory to everyone they know. One of the first phony bulletins warned recipients not to read or download any files with the name Good Times. Naturally, the message spread like a virus, bogging down mail servers. Do you have a virus alert but you're not sure if it's genuine? Visit Vmyths.com.

9. Help a Sick Child Who wouldn't want to save a little girl dying of cancer? Or help a little boy with epilepsy? The various incarnations of this hoax go on and on. Most of them involve forwarding the e-mail message to others. In return, the American Cancer Society, a hospital, or another medical organization will donate anywhere from a few cents to a dollar to the non-existent child. See HoaxBusters (<http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>) for chapter and verse.

8. Bill Gates Reaches Out to You Impossible as it may seem, Bill Gates is contacting you, personally. And not only that, the billionaire wants to give you money! "My name is Bill Gates. Here at Microsoft we have just compiled an e-mail tracing program..." Naturally, there will be some forwarding of e-mail involved. Starting to see a pattern? Variations on this theme appear to come from Walt Disney Jr. (who never existed), The Gap, Victoria's Secret, and AOL. To get the skinny, hop to HoaxBusters.

7. Dial 809 for Trouble This started as a real e-mail scam, but somebody managed to turn the whole thing into a hoax, too. A few years back, an e-mail message requesting payment of an "outstanding account" demanded that recipients call a number in the 809 area code (a Caribbean prefix) to clear things up.

Lots of people dialed the number only to incur \$25-per-minute phone charges. ScamBusters (www.scambusters.org) exposed the original threat, but some joker started circulating an altered version of the ScamBusters report that adds to the confusion. According to ScamBusters, there were other area codes used in the scam: 242 (Bahamas), 284 (British Virgin Islands), and 787 (Puerto Rico). Does that mean you should never dial numbers in the 809 area code or these other zones? Of course not. Head to HoaxBusters for the dirt.

6. Money Nonsense in Nigeria You receive an urgent, confidential message from a Nigerian government official who wants to deposit millions of dollars in your bank account. The official is contacting you in order to bypass some local bureaucratic snafu. All he needs is your name and bank account number. Should you respond, or delete the message? You might find it peculiar, but lots of people have been conned out of their savings in this dangerous and ongoing con game, known as the Advance Fee Fraud, 419 Fraud, or Nigerian Scam. According to the 419 Coalition web site (<http://home.rica.net/alpha/419coal>) the con has pulled in more than \$5 billion and is one of the largest industries in Nigeria. For details, check out ScamBusters or the posting by the United States Treasury Department (www.treas.gov/usss/index.htm).

5. Save Big Bird Everybody knows that (the US Public Broadcasting Service) PBS needs your support to keep delivering its programming. So when you receive a professionally written plea quoting Nina Totenberg and warning that the system is in danger, it comes as no surprise. You don't even have to send money, just – you guessed it – forward the message. This kind of hoax is bound to stick around for a while. So for future reference, remember that there is no such thing as an e-mail petition. Hop to <http://urbanlegends.about.com> for more details.

4. The \$250 Cookie Recipe This is a true story, really. It must be – I read about it in an e-mail message. You've probably stumbled upon this message, too. But in case you haven't heard, the story goes like this: Someone ate a cookie for dessert at a restaurant in a Neiman Marcus store. The customer asked for the recipe, and was charged \$250 for it (not "\$2.50," as expected). Though this urban legend dates back more than 50 years, according to the San Fernando Valley Folklore Society (www.snopes2.com), it's gained a new life thanks to the wonders of e-mail. Whatever you do, don't bother forwarding it.

3. Deodorant Endangers Your Health? We tend to believe reasonable first-person accounts, especially if they report the advice of doctors or other experts and prey on our fears. A convincing-sounding message forwarded from a woman who attended a health seminar warned that deodorant can cause breast cancer. There's no truth to the story, says the American Cancer Society. But post the message to your favorite mailing list and just watch the panic ensue. You can stop worrying about shampoo and toothpaste, too.

2. Last Photo From the World Trade Center Deck? Even the tragic events of September 11th have spawned hoaxes. Did you see the photo posted on the Web of a tourist posing on the World Trade Center observation deck a split second before an airliner crashed into it? Visit the Urban Legends Reference Pages for the photo and the reasons why it never happened.

1. Next Time, Just Say "I Don't Know" If you've been suckered by an e-mail hoax, you're in good company. During the 2000 elections, a glib television reporter asked debating Senate candidates Hillary Clinton and Rick Lazio about pending legislation to establish a 5-cent tax on e-mail messages. Both stated their opposition to it – live on the air. Never mind that no such bill ever existed – the reporter had just read one of those urgent e-mails. Go to HoaxBusters for the full report.

Scott Spanbauer ■