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# unión

## SPLASH...

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Staff Union  
Bulletin

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26 April 2002: Visiting firefighters from Geneva and New York hose down the ILO.  
Group photo: SUC Chair Mike Shone (2nd right) with SAFEWORK's David Gold (2nd left) and Jukka Takala (5th right) welcome NY and UK fire brigades union representatives to a special ILO Staff Union reception. Also present: ICFTU's Dan Cummiah (4th right)  
(photos: M. Crozet/ILO; photomontage: M. Crozet)





## Committee Corner

### Treading precariously

Among the eleven key areas of concern in the ILO Staff Union Programme and Strategy for 2002 is “the search for acceptable solutions regarding the situation of colleagues employed under precarious conditions, with a view to the eradication of these practices”.

While this is not the only important issue that the SUC is currently working on, it is certainly the one which is demanding most attention and time at headquarters. And yet this is not just a headquarters problem. Many people in the field find themselves in similar situations and some managers in external offices seem to be much less aware of their obligations with respect to those on “precarious” contracts (see Joint Newsletter No. 5, 17 October 2000).

It is certainly the declared policy of the Office to solve the problem of precarious employment. This has been a commitment in the speeches of the Director General, as well as in Governing Body documents and in statements from the Human Resources Development Department. The Staff Union fully agrees with the view “that the ILO cannot promote labour standards that we’re not prepared to apply ourselves” (Alan Wild, *SwissInfo*, 25 March 2002).

The Staff Union Committee commends the Office for addressing this issue and recognizes the progress that has been made in regularizing a number of staff members who were formerly in precarious employment. We are pleased to record that at the 30 April 2002 JNC meeting, the Office agreed to the Union’s request to extend the deadlines to 31 December 2003 for precarious staff members to be able to apply for competitions regardless of nationality constraints.

However, this is simply not enough. In fact, we are very concerned about other recent developments. We have evidence of serious discrimination against staff members for being or having been in precarious employment and of only half-hearted efforts to regularize remaining precarious staff members who match the needs of the Office. The staff in question find themselves in a genuinely desperate situation at present. Moreover, other staff who in fact have precarious employment dare not come forward to HRD to have themselves included on the official precarious lists.

Because of the seriousness of the situation, the Staff Union Committee has now written to the Director General, reiterating its demand for the Office to immediately:

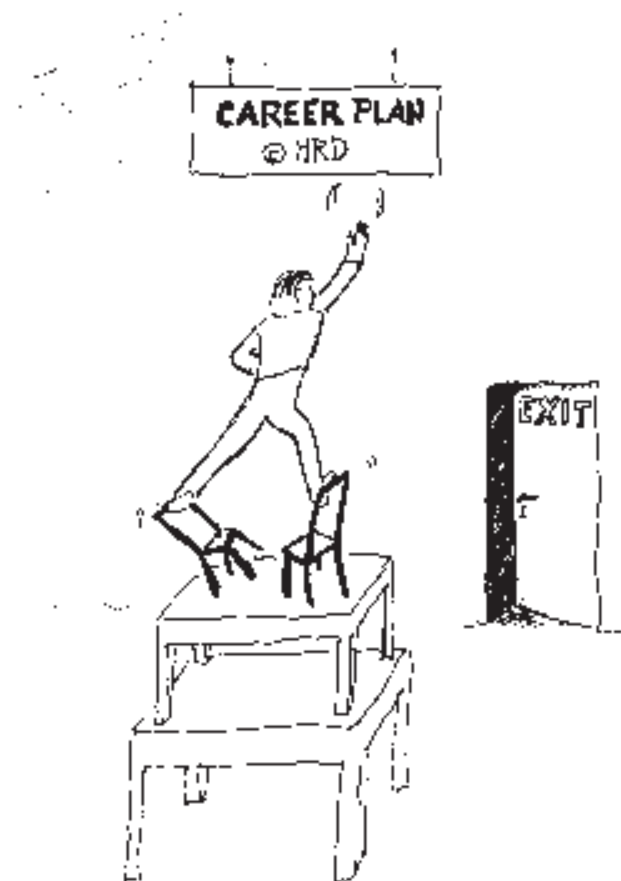
- grant a stay on its decision to terminate the contracts of staff members who have recently received notice;
- take appropriate measures to regularize all staff members on precarious contracts whose skill profile matches the needs of the Office by:
  - facilitating participation of precarious staff in competitions, on an equal footing with other internal candidates;
  - establishing a “mobile pool” of G and P staff from those on precarious contracts and others, to provide them with decent contracts from the Regular Budget and utilize their services to fill temporary vacancies;
- recognize that there are in fact special “humanitarian” cases to be considered amongst those still with precarious contracts and that it act accordingly;
- incorporate all the expressed views of the Union in any Circulars regarding precarious contracts which are about to be released by the Office;

- instruct its managers in writing to ensure that, in dealing with all persons who are or have recently been hired under precarious contracts, such persons are not “black-listed” or discriminated against, notably by denying them short-term or external collaboration contracts;
- present written reasons to the staff member concerned, where it is recognized that a systematic, fair and transparent assessment may reveal that no solution can be found for regularizing his or her employment situation;
- agree to meet with the Union to secure a fair and reasonable compensation package for those unable to find regular posts by 31 December 2003.

Staff members from both the field and headquarters who find themselves in precarious employment situations, and who have not as yet made their case known to the Staff Union, are urged to do so now. Unless we know about your case it is difficult to act on your behalf. Your name will not be communicated to the administration without your consent.

Yet again it is time for the ILO to put its money where its mouth is and to practise what it preaches to others about “decent work” practices.

Staff Union Committee ■



Precarious employment

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*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 possible, 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.

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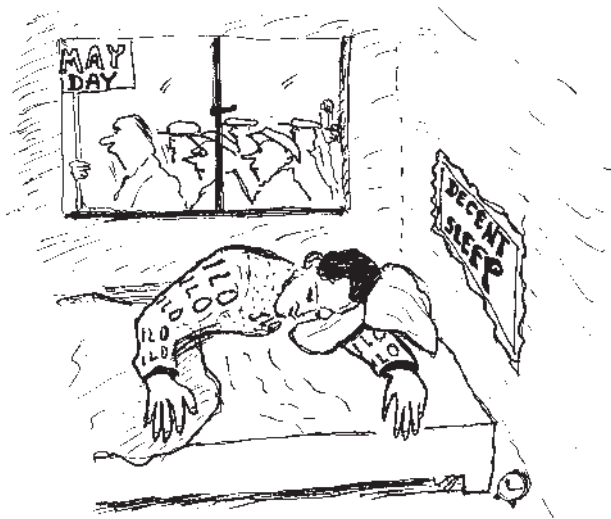
## Las nuevas tareas de las mujeres

Ya es una realidad, en los últimos 25 años la mujer ha pegado un salto de pértiga en el mercado de trabajo, copando espacio a los hombres. Y, esto ¿de qué forma se traduce en la toma de decisiones, en la representatividad? Obviamente, los cánones han ido cambiando al son de los tiempos que tocan... si se desea estar a la altura de las circunstancias, pero queda mucho por recorrer.

La participación de la mujer en ámbitos como por ejemplo los sindicatos —en España, el último Congreso Confederado de la Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), celebrado el 17 de marzo de 2002, ha elegido a seis mujeres de un total de 13 miembros para componer su ejecutiva; en Francia y Bélgica las mujeres ya dirigen sindicatos—, está alcanzando cotas de importancia.

Siendo tan alta su participación en la sociedad, aquélla sigue sin reflejarse en la toma de decisiones acordada a las mujeres. ¿El colectivo femenino recela el cargo o hay demasiada presión social para dirigir un espacio otrora de hombres? Las mujeres siempre han estado encasilladas en tareas de índole privada, pero activas, como eslabones de producción eficaces. Cada vez más y con más fuerza acceden al campo del conocimiento, de la planificación, ya no son simples espectadoras que siguen pautas determinadas. En este orden de cosas, ¿quién y cómo se las representa? ¿Somos conscientes que representamos a un colectivo amplio de la sociedad? Si queremos participar en la elaboración del nuevo modelo social de igualdad y solidaridad, tenemos, por consiguiente, una nueva misión a desempeñar en el futuro del mundo global: ser las promotoras y conductoras de los nuevos planes globales. Para ello, las mujeres tienen que tomar conciencia de que son capaces de realizarla.

Carmen DdC ■



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - GENEVA

Wednesday 1 May 2002 Labour Day

## Salvaging a sinking SHIF?

*In recent years, the management of our ILO-ITU Staff Health Insurance Fund has been the object of much debate, some of it surprisingly bitter. This month Union opens its pages to some of the protagonists. Klaus Samsom and Irene Cross are both elected, titular members of the Management Committee.*

### The future of SHIF: Current issues

Last September the Management Committee of the ILO-ITU Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) reviewed its work programme and identified the issues that it wished to deal with in the next two years. Plenty of work lies ahead.

SHIF has, however, been handicapped by changes in its secretariat. Yannick D'Haene, who had been Executive Secretary since April 1999, took up an appointment in ISSA last year. Formally, he retained his SHIF responsibilities until the beginning of this year, but devoted only part of his time to them. The ILO Director of Human Resources Development proposed the appointment of a part-time Executive Secretary, at the P4 grade, supported by a Deputy Secretary. The entire Management Committee (the administration representatives as well as the elected members) insisted that SHIF needed a full-time Executive Secretary. After much argument – and loss of time – a vacancy notice was at last issued in February 2002 for a full-time Executive Secretary, with the same functions and at the same grade (P5) as before. Pending the new appointment, Satoru Tabusa, of the ILO HRD Department, has been designated Acting Secretary. For many months now, the daily running of the Fund and the meetings of the management organs have depended to a considerable extent on the services of Luca Bormioli, who originally came to SHIF as an intern in 1999 and has been performing more or less the tasks of a Deputy Secretary. That fact has recently been recognized by his designation as officer-in-charge of the secretariat's day-to-day administration. The Committee has urged that, in addition to a new Executive Secretary, a Deputy Secretary should once more be appointed. Such a post had existed in the past, but was abolished in the early 1990s, after the last incumbent was given a "golden handshake". The Executive Secretary has a wide range of duties. In addition to directing the Fund's secretariat, ensuring the correct implementation of the SHIF Regulations and servicing the management organs, he or she has to deal with SHIF members, healthcare providers, the Medical Adviser, the actuary and auditors, ILO and ITU services concerned with finance and investments, information systems and legal questions, and the secretariats of health insurance schemes of other international organizations in Geneva. The management organs also require technical input from the secretariat when considering policy issues. A Deputy Secretary could make a significant contribution in helping to meet these multiple needs.

In its work, the Management Committee has to take account of the Fund's financial outlook. Healthcare costs everywhere continue to increase. In Switzerland (where the bulk of the Fund's members live) there have been particularly steep increases in the past two years, leading to a sharp rise in contributions under Swiss health insurance schemes. SHIF contribution rates have remained unaltered since January 1990 – a remarkable achievement. However, the general increase in costs has also affected the fortunes of SHIF. Whereas every year from 1988 until 1999 the Fund had a surplus on its current operations (i.e. an excess of contribution receipts over benefit payments), in the last two years there has been a deficit. For the time being, the shortfall in contribution income has been compensated by investment income. However, the fact that the surpluses of earlier years have disappeared imposes constraints on the adoption of benefit improvements. An actuarial study now being made will provide a clearer picture of the prospects for the years to come. One must reckon with the likelihood that within a foreseeable future the existing contribution rates will no longer suffice. Some administration representatives have warned us that in an era of zero-growth budgets, governing bodies may not be willing to provide extra funds for SHIF. That

would be a regrettable attitude, punishing the Fund for having lived within its means over a prolonged period. If and when the time comes, the Fund members may have to mobilize to make the ILO (and ITU) conscious of their responsibilities.

Against such a background, cost-containment measures acquire particular significance, both for their own sake and to show governing bodies that efforts have been made to keep down the Fund's expenditures. A working group has been examining these questions since the beginning of 2001. Although it has recommended a number of measures, implementing action has been hampered by the insufficient staff resources in the secretariat. Among the questions considered are the following:

**Cost of drugs.** Efforts have been made to obtain reductions in the cost of pharmaceutical supplies, particularly in the new Swiss system of charges. Members have also been reminded of the significantly lower prices of drugs in France.

**Doctors' fees.** Following the example of CERN, it has been proposed to make available to members of the Fund a list of practitioners in Switzerland whose charges to SHIF members are the same as those made to patients insured by Swiss schemes. This proposal has still to be implemented.

**Stays in hospitals.** It is intended to analyse benefits paid in respect of stays in hospitals (both for accommodation and treatment), in order to review the effect of the existing rules governing the class of accommodation, maxima, etc.

**Coverage of family members.** The working group has been directed to review the conditions under which family members are covered. It will examine the desirability of introducing separate contributions for spouses and children, as in the schemes of other international agencies in Geneva. The Management Committee is anxious in particular to eliminate the anomaly by which a spouse's earnings from the ILO or ITU and any pension received by a spouse from the UN Pension Fund are assessed to contributions, whereas a spouse's earnings or pension from other sources are not taken into account. Within a revised system of contributions, it might also be possible to integrate spouses and children who at present are covered as voluntarily protected dependants (as is already the practice in WHO), with considerable administrative simplification.

**Primary care service.** The working group is looking into the benefits to be derived from the establishment of a primary care service to provide advice and basic services (such as vaccinations and provision of standard drugs) to members and their families. Such a service was recommended by an expert in a cost-containment study made in the 1990s. The Executive Secretary has been asked to submit more detailed proposals concerning objectives, material and staffing requirements, cost and financing. In WIPO, services of the kind envisaged are already being provided to staff and pensioners by that organization's Medical Service.

**Action in cases of suspected fraud.** The operation of SHIF reposes on trust. It is therefore important that, when evidence becomes available of apparent dishonesty in claims on the Fund, the matter be investigated thoroughly and quickly. In the past, the internal auditing services were asked to look into such situations. Where a serving official was concerned, the practice was to refer the case in the first instance to the employing organization, with a view to investigation and consideration of disciplinary measures. SHIF would then consider the imposition of sanctions under its own Regulations in the light of the findings and decision of the employer. In recent years, this procedure has run into difficulties, where ILO officials were concerned, because of inaction by the ILO administration. This has led the SHIF organs in several cases to impose sanctions under its Regulations without waiting further for information from the employer. The Chair of the Management Committee was, how-

ever, instructed to write to the ILO Treasurer to urge that cases of suspected dishonesty affecting SHIF be examined with due diligence.

The Management Committee also remains anxious to improve benefits. Since 1999 its work programme has included study of the question of *long-term care of a non-medical character* in situations of dependency. There have been significant developments in this field in national social security schemes. Relevant measures were also taken last year by the CERN and ONUG schemes. The AAFI/AFICS general meeting in 2001 adopted a resolution calling on the health insurance schemes of international agencies to take action. One aspect that merits attention is the anomaly of difference of treatment of persons whose state of health has made them enter a nursing home and those receiving nursing care at home. Although the maximum benefits payable by SHIF are the same in the two cases, they cover solely nursing care for a sick person at home, whereas in the case of institutional care they cover the cost of the stay generally, including non-medical services. The actuary has been asked

to advise on the cost of extending benefit for persons at home to assistance with hygiene, feeding, mobility, etc., within the limits of the existing maxima.

One question that I first raised more than 30 years ago and have brought up from time to time since then is whether the employer contribution to SHIF should not be double that of members. That is the rule under the WHO scheme. In CERN, the employer and staff contributions bear a ratio of 65 to 35. In the SHIF scheme, a double employer contribution for retirees was introduced in 1990, but for active staff there is still a 50-50 sharing of contributions. In the UN Pension Fund, the payment by the employer of a contribution double that of staff members has been the accepted rule since time immemorial. I can see no reason of principle to justify the difference of approach to health insurance and pensions, two branches of social protection. However, reason and political opportunity do not necessarily coincide. It remains to be seen when the time will be propitious to pursue this issue.

Klaus Samson ■

## Views from the wilderness

I am taking this opportunity to touch base with the electors who voted for me in the November 1999 election to the SHIF Management Committee in order to give them first hand information on SHIF.

First, I stood for election in 1999 because I was uneasy that decisions to increase SHIF benefits were being made with insufficient information on whether the Fund could afford them. Little has changed since then. I am convinced that the Management Committee has not seen the data and the analysis to set my mind at rest for reasonable decisions to be made. For example, no data are available to assess average costs or utilization of new benefits such as long-term non-nursing service at home or abolition of the US\$ 150,000 annual ceiling. The same observation is valid in regard to the ILO Director-General's promise to reimburse 100% medical care costs for AIDS/HIV patients. There has so far been no indication where the money will come from and no case is known to SHIF where the promise has materialized. If this promise is to be fulfilled by SHIF, I think in all fairness the Management Committee would have to consider extending 100% reimbursement for other chronic medical conditions.

So to me, if this information is unavailable, the Management Committee ought to seek expert advice from the outside BEFORE committing to the hardly-reversible new benefits mentioned above.

When I stood for election, I had another concern: that SHIF money had been used to pay administrative costs that, under the Regulations, ought to have been paid by the Administration. Enough debate has occurred over the past two years but none of it has convinced me that this decision was legal or in the interest of the members. Notwithstanding my doubts, I resigned myself to look only at what was given as the reason to justify the allocation of the sum to the ILO administration for this purposes in 1997: the money would be recuperated through cost containment which required completion of the Health Insurance Information System (HIIS). But to this very day no accounts have been given to show how the money was spent or how much of it has been recuperated through cost containment linked to this cost.

HIIS was supposed to provide data capable of giving capacity to establish diagnoses, utilization rates, risk profiling, best practice in regard to preventive medicine, etc. Instead, we still seem to expect miracles in so far as with insufficient data on medical costs, some cost containment measures rely on the goodwill of providers to offer discounts (for example, hospitals and pharmacies with which SHIF has agreements). It would make more sense if SHIF negotiators were to meet providers with their own accurate data on the SHIF population so that discounts could be discussed with knowledge of how much we pay, to whom we pay and what we pay for.

Third, I was concerned about equitable representation. The

elector membership of the Management Committee has long been dominated by retired persons who are the major beneficiaries of the Fund. Precisely because I am myself a retiree I am aware that this group is the one that can least afford a break in trust with the members of their Fund, which could one day propose "no taxation without representation" motions. I regret to report that all efforts (of myself and others) to do something to include the special requirements of both active and retired staff, in Geneva and the field (where around one third of SHIF members reside), have so far come to nought. There appears to be a distinct lack of interest on the Management Committee in the introduction of different eligibility for different groups of members or reducing certain benefits and increasing others in order to redistribute advantages and disadvantages.

Fourth, I was concerned about transparency and accountability. In respect of transparency, after two years' effort the Management Committee agreed that Records of Decisions could be placed on the intranet as from 1 January 2002. However, they do not reflect discussions in committee on the issues raised, a fact to which I have drawn attention on numerous occasions in the Committee to no avail. It has taken two years to get to the insufficient measure of recording the name of a dissenter, but unless the Record contains the reasons given for the dissenting view the record is useless for future reference and the absence of comment in the records is a form of censorship and an attempt to intimidate a dissenter into silence lest s/he be listed as merely a troublemaker. Hardly transparency.

In respect of accountability, the Management Committee has set up a working group to consider changes to SHIF Regulations in order to bring them up to "best practice" in regard to standards in public life, such as equitable representation; introducing a duty of care in the management of the Fund; introducing a new Regulation regarding possible conflict of interest between an appointed member's role as administrator/member of staff and the appointed member's role as member of the Management Committee or between an elected member as member of the Fund/member of staff and the elected member's role as member of the Management Committee. It took a year for my proposal to set up this Working Group to be placed on the Agenda of the Management Committee, and a further ten months for it to discuss the proposal. It is only now (April 2002) that the Working Group will meet.

For information, three issues may be of interest to readers:

- In his periodical audit the ILO External Auditor found certain weaknesses in current audit arrangements for the Fund and has now been appointed to audit the finances of SHIF. In addition he recommended that the ILO should review the legal and constitutional status of SHIF and its relationship with the sponsoring bodies, and that the ILO should continue to keep under review the potential costs and benefits of outsourcing the operations of SHIF (GB280-PFA-4-2001-02-0203-1-EN.Doc).
- Opinion on outsourcing claims processing is divided; some

feel that outsourcing could benefit the work of senior secretariat officers, in that time could be dedicated to conceptual and structural work on behalf of the Management Committee rather than the supervision of the clerks. Others feel that the major beneficiary would be the ILO and ITU if outsourcing were only to reduce administrative costs (which are borne by the ILO and ITU anyway).

• An assessment of the contribution rates that would be applied in SHIF if it adopted a contribution system similar to that of the WHO scheme (i.e. with a distinct contribution per person protected) is being done by the SHIF Actuary. If adopted, such a contribution system would affect the basic principle at the heart of our SHIF – that of solidarity.

Irene Cross ■

## SHIFting the balance

The ILO Staff Health Insurance Fund has up to now remained outside the UN “common system”, despite repeated attempts by some common system organs to seize control of it, as well as of the health insurance funds of other UN agencies. This valued independence seems to be under new threat. An “issue paper” prepared for the Chief Executives Board (CEB) – the coordination committee bringing together the executive heads of all UN agencies – recommends a reevaluation of the whole health insurance programme within the common system. The document proposes two restructuring exercises: one involving the UN, and another merging the seven schemes currently operating in different specialized agencies based in Geneva. The declared purpose of this move is to reduce costs, but the author does not provide any analysis on how this would be achieved.

More importantly, neither the Administrations nor the SHIF Management Committee have seen fit to alert SHIF members of this development; inform them of the arguments raised during the debate that led to the drafting of the proposal; or advise them of its implications. This failure to inform is symptomatic of some problems in SHIF that need fixing before they become a reason (or excuse) to justify invalidating our right to keep our own in-house health insurance scheme. SHIF benefits are an integral part of your terms and conditions of employment, and any changes to them must not be unilaterally decided by the Administrations acting singly or in concert with any common system organs.

SHIF has been functioning under its present structure since 1965. In the first decade since then, the rate of growth in ILO staff was about 10 per cent a year, mostly of young, overwhelmingly international officials with salaries that were well above the Geneva average. There were almost no retirees then, virtually no local field staff, and the episodes of expensive illnesses were few and far between. Largely as a result of this staff structure, SHIF then paid only 40 cents on each dollar it collected in premiums; a premium then lower than now, and with the ILO paying a much lower matching contribution than today.

## Severe financial problem

The structure of SHIF membership has since evolved extensively, with a current composition of roughly 40 per cent international staff spread across different duty stations (costing the fund about \$1.53 for each \$1 paid), 30 per cent retirees (costing about \$4.10 for each \$1 they contribute), and 29 per cent local staff (for whom SHIF does not publish data allowing us to calculate the benefits-to-contributions ratio). The contribution base of SHIF has been eroded by 10 per cent in the past three years alone.<sup>1</sup> This trend is almost certain to continue as the membership ages, international salaries continue to slide in comparison with the Geneva average, pensions remain much lower than salaries, and local salary scales also remain much lower than international scales. The point is that with rapid ageing of its membership base, and a drop in the contribution base, SHIF has a severe financial problem.

Since 1989, the solution has been based on four concurrent measures: the ILO and ITU agreed to increase their share in the financing;<sup>2</sup> the staff agreed to a hike in contribution rates; the benefits were kept essentially unchanged; and the financial management of SHIF was significantly improved, by shifting responsibility for the investment of reserves to professional specialists. There are clear signs that this status quo has been upset in the past two to three years. For one thing, SHIF seems not to have maintained the policy of investing all idle cash: in 1996

this amount was about \$500,000, but by 2000 it had somehow increased more than tenfold, reaching \$7,486,027. The Fund thus incurred a significant opportunity cost in unearned investment income – a cost that could have been easily avoided and one that is larger than the 2000 operational deficit. Policy changes introduced by the SHIF Management Committee over recent years have aggravated costs and may have contributed to the Fund's operational deficit. We are consequently being prepared to expect, and to endorse as unavoidable, another increase in contribution rates.

## Involvement and accountability

This situation suggests that more active – and more inclusive – involvement on the part of the wider SHIF membership in the Fund's management is indispensable and urgent. The alternative is that crucial decisions, such as an increase in our contribution rates, may be made without our ever having been adequately consulted (a form of taxation without representation – but more about representation below). Suffice it to say that the SHIF Management Committee has yet to establish a consultative process to inform and invite the membership to comment on the crucial issues outlined above. In the same vein, but even more worrying, is the sad fact that some members of that Committee have complained to the Union of a dysfunctional work climate; of a Management Committee which refuses to register dissenting minority views in the record of its policy debates while curiously insisting that such a record be withheld from the true owners of the Fund, the members. Attempts by the SUC to discuss these and other issues of concern to the membership with the SHIF management have so far been unsuccessful.

This refusal to allow a legitimate flow of information between members and the Management Committee reflects a painful reality: members' inability to remedy several structural/statutory problems associated with the Fund. The most serious question relates to the representativeness of the Management Committee, referred to above. A very cursory glance at the titular members representing participants on the Management Committee will show the following: *not a single serving member of staff, not a single person from the field, and only one woman!*

This structure hardly represents a fair balance of the wide-ranging interests of the membership across gender, grade, age, duty station, length of service or financial contribution to the Fund. Attempts by the Union to remedy this problem have failed for various reasons. In all fairness, it is important to underline the role evidently played by the seeming lack of interest displayed by serving staff in running for election to the Management Committee. But an election system that also appears to be strongly biased in favour of incumbency over the need for renewal plays its part in ensuring that elections always return the same candidates year in year out, sometimes for decades. This imperviousness to change is worrying in the context of a fund management that may soon be faced with the need to take decisions with substantial financial and benefits implications for staff. Even more so when you consider that it is virtually impossible to reverse Committee decisions through a popular vote, because the rules are such that Committee decisions are granted undue weight over the wishes of members.

SHIF rules are riddled with loopholes, such as those allowing spouses with income or pension from outside the ILO and other UN agencies to get benefits *without paying a single penny to the Fund*. Interestingly, the opposite can also occur, illustrating how there can be different outcomes for different interest groups: serving staff with spouses working in other UN organizations with similarly mandatory health insurance schemes

may find that they have to pay into two schemes and also pay a surcharge to ensure continuous SHIF coverage; this to avoid interruption of coverage should the spouse have a break in employment with the other organization. This would be without any right to choose which fund's benefits they may draw from. The Management Committee is aware of this unequal treatment, but for years has been "considering" if and what should be done about the situation. Last but not least in this catalogue of shortcomings is a management philosophy according to which *the Management Committee itself is never held accountable* for failure to uphold the best interests of its entire membership.

## Your Fund needs you

The Staff Union Committee is worried about this situation. It seeks to have an independent review of SHIF, to enable it to be run more democratically and managed much more soundly. For us, a Management Committee that does not reflect an equitable representation of all members, that is not accountable fully and immediately to the members as a whole, and that

refuses to guarantee full transparency of all its deliberations and decisions is a danger to the long-term future of SHIF. This is more urgent than ever before given the expectation of increasing operational deficits and the need for hard decisions to maintain benefits while containing costs. Other "greying" funds globally face similar problems of costs rising at a greater rate than contributions growth. SHIF, like them, urgently needs an injection of younger blood with newer and innovative ideas. Such an opportunity will arise later this year when elections to the SHIF Management Committee are to be held. It is our fervent hope that serving staff members will volunteer to serve, and that their colleagues will express their confidence in their ability to do so by voting for them.

Staff Union Committee ■

1. From an average contribution of \$1,630.44 in 1998 to \$1,483.32 in 2000 (Source: SHIF Report for 2000).

2. Since 1988, SHIF has been financially viable because the ILO pays about 60% of the total income, at a rate of \$1-to-\$1 for active staff and \$2-to-\$1 for retirees.

## Madagascar

### Les fonctionnaires du BIT dans la tourmente de la crise politique

Plus de quatre mois après l'élection présidentielle du 16 décembre 2001, la contestation des résultats et l'imbroglio politique malgache demeurent. Pendant plus de trois mois, manifestations et grève générale ont ponctué la vie de la capitale et les régions à plus ou moins grande échelle, entraînant des blocages de toutes sortes qui de toute évidence n'auraient pas épargné le personnel du Bureau d'Antananarivo. Par exemple, la fermeture de l'aéroport international dès le mois de janvier a valu aux deux Chargés de programme du Bureau d'être retenus malgré eux en Afrique du Sud alors qu'ils revenaient d'une mission au Bureau régional à Abidjan. Grâce pourtant à la solidarité et à l'efficacité des collègues du Bureau de Pretoria, leur escale de quelques heures qui s'est transformée en séjour d'une semaine a pu se passer dans les meilleures conditions. De même, au mois de février, le Directeur du Bureau, ayant effectué une mission à Addis-Abeba puis à Abidjan, a dû au retour se décider à bifurquer par l'île Maurice et avancer une mission prévue pour plus tard, pour les mêmes motifs.

En raison de barrages institués à la sortie des différents ports, carburants et matières premières, médicaments puis produits de première nécessité manquent ou sont en quantité insuffisante. Les prix connaissent une hausse sans précédent et le marché noir est florissant, particulièrement en carburants. Le gaz manquant pour les cuisinières, certains ont dû se rabattre sur le charbon.

Pénurie de carburants aidant, les déplacements entre différents points et différents lieux de travail sont devenus problématiques. Un système de ramassage du personnel a été institué par le Bureau, à l'instar des autres agences du système des Nations Unies. La pénurie pourtant persiste et une autre solution a dû être trouvée: les fonctionnaires disposant de véhicule particulier, en premier lieu le Directeur et le Directeur adjoint, ont fait valoir la solidarité en instituant le ramassage des collègues habitant la même zone, pour permettre à ces derniers d'échapper au racket des taxis qui affichent ouvertement des tarifs exorbitants, ou d'emprunter des bus trop bondés. La marche forcée constitue une autre alternative pour certains collègues.

Le Comité local du Syndicat a été autorisé à introduire, pour le compte du personnel, une demande d'autorisation d'achat de carburant réglementé pour la circonstance par l'Office malgache des hydrocarbures. Cette opération a été une fois payante quoique le quota accordé suffise pour tout juste une semaine. Une autre demande déposée dernièrement a reçu une réponse insatisfaisante.

Au moment où ces lignes sont écrites, les barrages anti-économiques ne sont toujours pas levés. Entre temps, on a déploré hélas des morts, des dégâts importants suite notamment au

dynamitage de ponts – un sixième a sauté il y a trois jours –, sans parler de l'inquiétude qui gagne chaque jour qui passe le commun des Malgaches et tous ceux qui vivent dans le pays. Et les fonctionnaires du BIT en font partie. L'impact de cette crise ne sera indéniablement pas sans conséquence à long terme sur leur mode d'existence, notamment en termes de ressources déjà amenuisées par les différentes hausses qui s'effectuent et qui ne sont pas près de s'infléchir. Sans parler d'une menace inévitable de dévaluation de la monnaie. Et la grande enquête salariale prévue se tenir pour Madagascar au mois de février dernier est reportée au mois de septembre vu la conjoncture. A nous de voir...

Anne-Marie Ralaivola ■

Représentante syndicale, Bureau d'Antananarivo  
10 mai 2002



Membres du personnel du bureau de l'OIT à Antananarivo (bureau de zone et projets):

Assis, 1<sup>er</sup> rang, de gauche à droite:

VOLAHARISOLOFILANARIVONIRINA E. de B. (APIFM); ROAMISON Dorothe (APIFM); RASETRASON Freddy (HIMO-Routes); RAKOTONIAINA Jean (HIMO-Routes); BONNET Hervé M. (HIMO-Routes); RANDRIAMIHARISOA Célestin (HIMO-Routes); ANDRIANOMENJANAHARY Aimé (HIMO-Routes); RANDRIAMAMPIANINA Alain (APIFM); RANDRIANARISOA Andriambola (BZ; SG Comité local du Syndicat)

Debout, 1<sup>er</sup> rang, de gauche à droite:

RAZANAKOTO Lalo (HIMO-Routes); DAUPHINE-RATSIMBAZAFY Yvonne (BZ; Assist. admin. ppale); HEIN Catherine (BZ; Directeur); RAKOTOMANGA Dominique, Dr (IPEC; Admin. nat. de Progr.); RANDRIAMAHARO Michelle (BZ); RAZAFIARISON Nivo (APIFM); ANDRIAMBALO Monah (APIFM; SG); RALAI-VOLA Anne-Marie (BZ; Présidente Comité local du Syndicat)

Debout, 2<sup>e</sup> rang, de gauche à droite:

RAMAVOARIVELO Dina (BZ); RAMANANDRAIBE Nicolas (BZ); RAKOTONARIVO Voahangy (BZ); RAZANOELINA Jeannine (BZ); RALITERA Stéphan (BZ; Trésorier Comité local du Syndicat); RAFANO HARANA Razoza, Dr (Consultant SIDA); RATOVO Holy (BZ); VOCATCH-BOLDYREV Igor (BZ; Directeur adjoint); RAKOTOARINIA Harivao F. (BZ; Chargé de progr.); RASENDRARIVO Iholy (IPEC; Stagiaire)

Cachées sur la photo: RAJONA Rojotiana (IPEC); RAVAORIMANGA Joséphine (IPEC); RAZAFINDRANGORY Martine (BZ)

Absents sur la photo: ANDRE Bernard (APIFM; CTP); HEITZ Jérôme (IPEC; Expert associé); RABEFIRINGA Paula (APIFM); RANDRIAMANANA Julie (APIFM); RAZAFIARISOA Farah J. (BZ; Chargée de progr.); RAZAFIMAMONJARISOA (APIFM).

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Smoke and mirrors

Lately I've noticed some wonderful tongue-in-cheek journalism in *Union* that has given me a tiny ray of hope that one day there might be some honest freedom of expression in the ILO. Your magazine has even printed many letters expressing employee concerns, albeit in a gentle, diplomatic way. All of this has inspired me to join in the plain talk now emerging in the ILO. After two decades of witnessing ILO's feeble-minded attempts at staff-management relations, I welcome this new era of collective bargaining and the new grading system. How refreshing. I think everyone in the ILO should thank David Dror for this. But, just because new rules have been announced, it certainly does not mean that the players in the game will suddenly undergo a change of head and heart and transform the smoke and mirrors atmosphere which ruined the application of the rules we had in the first place.

I have personally witnessed arrogant negligence, dishonesty and chronic lack of follow-up in my own experiences with Human Resources Development. I don't even need to mention the numerous degrading experiences my friends and colleagues suffered at the hands of HRD, which has proved in many cases to be untrustworthy, two-faced and ineffective. I will not give examples here. This is not a ludicrous preliminary to the useless filing of a tribunal action against someone in ILO management. I don't want to be yet another person "paid off" by an HRD official to keep quiet. I want to see a mechanism in place where I can openly voice my concerns and know they are not falling on deaf ears.

After working here for twenty years I am now rooting strongly for our new Ombudsperson and the Job Regrading exercise, which, up to now and for so many people, has been an exercise in secrecy, slow-motion and short-changing. I am looking forward to the upcoming change in HRD leadership. Of course, it is ironic and unseemly that the Human Resources Development department of the ILO has such a bad reputation, especially when one considers that so many of our previous Directors have been genuinely nice people with good intentions. What is preventing HRD from doing its job honestly and humanely? Just what is the problem? Perhaps it's time for someone to stand up and say "the buck stops here" and actually take some responsibility for providing realistic staff conflict resolution, combined with creative and transparent staff management.

ILO is glaringly exposed as being a high profile employer without a career development policy – job regrading is only a step towards it. Being a General Service employee, I might very well be out of the career development loop. Perhaps there is career development going on all around me. Haven't noticed. As far as I am concerned, the ILO's message on career development can be summarized by: "Hey, we gave you a job: sit down, shut up and get on with it." Oh well, it probably makes speech writing for International Women's Day a lighter task for an ILO official. Whatever the case, wouldn't it just be better to have a straightforward, vibrant career development policy for both men and women, Professionals and General Service staff, and quit waffling? Here's a radical new idea – maybe ILO could become a trendsetter in labour issues and implement a model career development policy that even other UN agencies could follow. Wouldn't that be smashing?

Alas, I am aware of my sad cynicism. The altruism and enthusiasm with which I started my employment at ILO some twenty years ago has been starved and neglected by the prevailing atmosphere. Yet I think there is hope. I await anxiously the potential positive developments of a new Human Resources Development team. I strongly support the work of the new Ombudsperson, and the implementation of a new grading system. No smoke. No mirrors. No more insincere handshakes, empty promises or false smiles. No more lies. Let's hope that the future HRD can function freely and honestly, without the debilitating undertow of secrecy, favouritism and negligence that has plagued so many previous administrations.

Janet Neubecker ■  
30 April 2002

## Hello Laury

Nos cours de yoga au BIT vont prendre fin, pour cette saison, à la mi-mai et ce sera aussi pour nous l'occasion de dire au revoir à un de nos professeurs, Laury, qui nous a apporté tant de choses positives depuis si longtemps. Nous n'oublierons pas son sourire, son calme (bien sûr), et ses petits dictons ou proverbes à la fin de chaque cours, toujours adaptés aux circonstances.

Laury, soyez remerciée pour les très nombreuses années que vous nous avez consacrées (on ne dit jamais le nombre d'années pour une dame, mais ce fut vraiment un très fructueux *long-service record*).

Grâce à vos cours, vous avez contribué à nous faire oublier le stress, la nervosité et toutes ces émotions négatives qui sont malheureusement la rançon du travail dans notre société actuelle.

Goodbye Laury, et bonne chance pour le futur.

Viviane ■  
et toute l'équipe de yoga du BIT



The ILO's long-serving yoga guru Laury Malherbe gets the adepts' alpha waves pulsing one last time



## From ILO Communications

### News you may have missed...

**International Program for the Promotion of Decent Work in the Maritime Industry** SeaQuiz is an interactive game (PC and MAC compatible) about the ILO International maritime Labour Conventions. Click on the following icons to visualize some excerpts of the game. "Want to see this island? Go forward 4 squares" [question posed by bare-chested island woman]. "What should [sic] the maximum number of working hours in any 24-hour period? – 8, 12, 14, 20?"

*mirror/public/english/dialogue/sector/sectors/dwmi/products/seaquiz.htm (8 March 2002)*

**ILO-COMMENT: Is this about sex or teaching grammar? And, under "Practical implementation of the Programme", wouldn't it be a good idea to remove the photo of the NY skyline with the twin towers in the background?**

**First People's Security Survey Conference** Too often, social policies are based on presumptions. For efficient and equitable interventions, reliable facts [as distinct from unreliable facts?] are required. This is the justification [!] for the People's Security Survey. The initial results, derived from detailed interviews with over 30,000 [!] families in 12 ILO member countries, were presented at an inaugural PSS conference, held in the ILO. Social Justice – PSS Findings: 8 out of 10 people in Hungary and over 7 out of 10 in Ukraine believe everybody should have a guaranteed income floor to enable them to survive. [The rest prefer non-survival?] The PSS/ELFS Research Fund: Social scientists wishing to use data from one or more [!] of the surveys will be able [!] to do so, and receive a small honorarium [!] to assist with cost. The Programme reserves the right for first [!] refusal for publication of technical papers.

*IFP-SES Newsletter, 2002/1*

**ILO-COMMENT: What a relief to read the disclaimer: "Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the ILO."**

**The former Internal Audit Section** is re-named Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO). The IAO is also responsible for investigation of financial and administrative misconduct and other irregular activities.

*ILO Circular No. 11 (Rev. 2), Series 2, 1.3.02*

**ILO-COMMENT: Oversight (noun): 1. Failure to see or notice. 2. A careless error or omission (Collins New World Dictionary). What are administrative misconduct and other irregular activities?**

**InFocus programme on Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration** Effective 1 April 2002, a new unit will be created in the Social Dialogue Sector as a result of a merger of the former Government, Labour Law and Administration Department (GLAD) and the InFocus Programme on Strengthening Social Dialogue (IFP/DIALOGUE). The new unit will maintain the InFocus status and will be called IFP/DIALOGUE.

*ILO Circular No. 231, Series: 2, 27.03.2002*

**ILO-COMMENT: Glad Dialogue made it (or was this an April fool?)**

**Other personnel questions** Several organizations of the United Nations common system are paying a Special Operations Living Allowance (SOLA). However, the

schemes established to administer SOLA are very complex and in view of the very small number of ILO officials concerned (currently one) it is proposed to implement SOLA in the Office through a simplified formula.

*GB283-PFA-16-1-2002-02-0026-1-EN.Doc*

**ILO-COMMENT: That's SOLA-powered decision-making.**

A l'occasion du **Salon de l'Automobile à Genève**, les parkings P.2, P.3 et P.4 seront mis à la disposition du public les samedis 9 et 16 et les dimanches 10 et 17 mars 2002.

Les fonctionnaires sont invités à ces occasions à utiliser le parking P.1 qui leur sera exclusivement réservé. Etant donné l'affluence prévisible durant ces deux weekends, les fonctionnaires sont priés de redoubler de prudence ces jours-là.

*Circulaire INTER, mars 2002*

**ILO-COMMENT: Redoubler dans le parking? Très mauvaise idée. Que font ces fonctionnaires au bureau le weekend?**

**World Health Day, "Move for health", 5 April 2002**

You are invited to participate in a WALK. Departure at 12a.m. [sic] from WHO, WALK with "Allez Hop", 13h00 Refreshments, 14h30 Old Town: More celebrations and surprises!! Please note that CABINET has agreed that time spent on the walk itself will be considered as normal working hours. Health Services Unit.

*E-MAIL HRD\_BROADCAST, 4/3/02, 10:55:55 AM*

**ILO-COMMENT: Will there be a rush for "overtime" on the flexi-sheets? Our recommendation: Keep on walkin' – CABINET may be in a sittin'.**

**Judgment No. 2100** The complainant wrote several times to the Administration of the Centre. She is surprised that libellous statements should be described as "normal Union activities". She asserts that she was the first candidate on the short list, but that because of her union activities, the management would never have allowed her appointment as Chief of the Programme. The Director's decision to fill the post by the transfer of a P.5 official – who had not applied for the post – was notified to the complainant. Her main claims are the opening of an inquiry to establish the facts about the psychological harassment and compensation for professional and moral injury. **DECISION:** The complaint is dismissed. **DISSENTING OPINION BY JUDGE XYZ:** In this case, the Tribunal should have declared the complaint receivable and entertained the complainant's pleas.

*mirror/public/english/tribunal/fulltext/2100.htm*

**ILO-COMMENT: Shame!**

**ILO Youth Association** We need your input for the reader's corner and your insights on the house. It would be a good idea to have a drink together once a month in order to meet the newcomers and to chat with one another: The Magneto, Les Pâquis, is a two-floor bar with a dancing space and cheap beer. What's more interesting than information about colleagues? Is your neighbour pregnant? Let the ILOYA know! Did you know this old trick from Italy? Raise the temperature in your flat and call it a sauna party. Light dressing guarantee! For further information ask... Did you know that [name] can sunbathe in her office? [Name removed to avoid a rush to the office in question.]

*ILOYA Newsletter, No. 3, 12 February 2002*

**ILO-COMMENT: Gone to the party.**

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

Faut que je vous explique mon (long?) silence...

D'abord, une sale affaire de reclassification, dont je ne vous parlerai pas vu l'intérêt limité qu'elle représente pour tout autre lecteur que moi-même, mais qui m'a mis de fort méchante humeur et donné l'impression désagréable d'être Charlot broyé dans les puissants rouages inhumains de la machinerie moderne. Je n'y ai pas laissé mon pantalon mais mes illusions déjà bien flétries sur le beau principe de l'égalité de traitement.

Ensuite, mon ordinateur, qui n'arrête pas de me jouer des tours pendables, étant d'un naturel versatile et paresseux. Farceur aussi, puisqu'il m'éjecte régulièrement au milieu d'un travail fastidieux et néanmoins urgent, quand il ne refuse pas tout bonnement de me laisser accéder à mon « environnement » pour cause de routeur défectueux (je ne sais pas ce que c'est au juste, mais ça lâche facilement) ou d'insondables problèmes de réseaux.

Ajoutez à cela quelques week-end pluvieux, le décès prématuré de ma plante verte, la distribution minimaliste du courrier qui m'oblige à des déplacements intempestifs, et vous aurez une idée à peu près exacte de mon état d'esprit.

Heureusement... Il y a parfois dans la vie des petits miracles qui l'illuminent d'un éclat nouveau, sauvant nos âmes du désespoir et notre moral du zéro absolu: on nous a installé des diffuseurs de parfum dans les toilettes. Ça fleure bon l'été généreux, les vacances exotiques, les chants colorés, les fruits mûrs pour le panier. Tout un camaïeu de fragrances délicieuses, d'effluves embaumés. Depuis, je ne vais plus à la cafète, où l'on a pourtant enfin changé de petit noir: je passe mes journées aux toilettes. J'oublie là l'injustice, la hiérarchie, le côté obscur de la force, et le rhume des foins. Là, on s'occupe de nous, on nous chouchoute, on nous aime enfin.

Et c'est pour cela que pour une fois, je ne terminerai pas par la traditionnelle formule:

c.v.t.i.

K\*\*\* ■

### PUBL: LA SAGA CONTINUE...

*Ndlr: Nous avons décidé, afin que nos collègues « parqués » au R1 ne se sentent pas complètement abandonnés, de faire le point de leur situation dans chaque numéro d'Union jusqu'à ce qu'une solution soit trouvée.*

Selon notre correspondant sur le terrain, apparemment rien n'a bougé depuis l'article décrivant l'ambiance délétère régnant à cet étage (voir n° 317). Aucune information précise quant à la réintégration de leurs bureaux et... les stores ne sont toujours pas posés. Nos collègues, ne perdant pas leur sens de l'humour, attendent avec impatience les bienfaits du sauna cet été.

Comble de tout, DCOMM déménagerait au Nord (vous imaginez: déménager le studio radio, la photothèque etc.), cela avant même que nos collègues de PUBL puissent retrouver des conditions de travail décentes.

Pourquoi les priorités dans cette maison dépassent-elles toujours l'entendement?

## CORRESPONDENCE

### ITCOM's patronizing manner

Our friends in ITCOM (in a broadcast e-mail of 22 March) announce the suppression of anarchy in electronic communications, to be implemented on Workers' Day, 1 May 2002. Under new rules, any e-mail item more than nine months old that has not been archived will be deleted (that includes ITCOM's last announcement, circa 2000, which suggested that a year was a long time in cyberspace).

**STOP PRESS: In a last-minute e-mail at 1630 on 30 April, we hear that "ITCOM has decided to delay the suppression date for all GroupWise mails older than 9 months. The date is now set to Monday 6th May 02 instead of Wednesday 1st May 02."** (Was this to allow us to go to work on Workers' Day, 1 May 2002, to clean up our e-mails, rather than join the massed ranks of organized labour in our traditional May Day activities?)

However, some Union members have been asking themselves whether this pronouncement can be challenged under "Protection of the right to organize" and "Elimination of forced labour".

Personally, I am astounded that the circular treats GroupWise users in such a patronizing manner. It assumes that we would all have the time to organize a personal document management system other than GroupWise (could ITCOM perhaps advise why we don't yet have one?).

Perhaps the author of the circular thinks that GroupWise users all have armies of filing clerks and secretaries to do all this?

Or maybe we're meant to print out and file all this stuff ourselves in our "paperless office"? When we've finished doing that forced labour to satisfy the requirements to stagger back into the 20th (or do I mean the 19th?) century, and ordered the appropriate filing cabinets, they will no doubt requisition the cabinets and send them down to DOSCOM because of lack of space in our offices and the neighbouring corridor. For our ILO job, anything not in Registry files will be dumped. For our extra-curricular activities, any filing cabinet labelled "Union" will be sent to SYNDICAT, anything to do with the various Sports & Leisure societies' administration will go to S&L's President, and our right to organize will have been restricted.

And how are we meant to find that missing piece of a jigsaw of e-mails and attachments that relate to our own jobs, to our voluntary activities (Staff Union, Sports & Leisure, ILO Youth Association, etc.), to the "collective memory" of the organization, when the said items have been deleted by ITCOM's Grim Reaper after a mere nine months of gestation in the womb of GroupWise?

I am almost tempted to write a letter to *Union* to complain about it...

Joe Public ■

*(PS: Using this logic, ARCHIVES and SYNDICAT will be shifted to the P4 car park to make space for expansion of ILO programmes, and a new multipurpose Table Tennis, Dance, Chess, Bridge and Yoga room will be built in the P3 car park. New parking spaces will be made available by draining the duck pond – what purpose does it serve anyway?)*

## ÉDITORIAL

### C'est la faute à la mondialisation

Un collègue nous disait récemment, après une absence prolongée au Siège, qu'il ne reconnaissait plus «son» organisation. Beaucoup de nouvelles têtes étaient présentes à la cafétéria le midi et plus particulièrement de jeunes têtes. En passe de devenir vieux croûton lui-même, il s'en réjouissait. Pourtant, il s'était amusé à comparer sur le tableau d'affichage des derniers mois le nombre de recrutements officiels avec son propre décompte, certes approximatif entre la poire et le fromage, mais tout de même le décalage semblait important. Il fut vite affranchi par ses pairs (les purs et durs, entendons-nous).

«Tu ne sais pas que le BIT est entré dans l'ère de la mondialisation à sa façon: les chefs (les nouveaux surtout, apparemment peu soucieux des principes qui régissent la boîte pour laquelle ils travaillent) font désormais ce qu'ils veulent: ils recrutent, ils fusionnent, ils disposent, faisant fi de toutes les procédures et règles de la maison. Et bien sûr avec la bénédiction évidente, puisque silencieuse, du grand ordonnateur...»

Quel paradoxe tout de même! BIT, ta mémoire institutionnelle et ta vocation de service public international foutraient donc le camp au profit de méthodes de travail et de gestion du personnel dignes des plus mauvaises caricatures des films de série B? On fusionne et on ré-organise au mépris de tout respect des personnes concernées? On organise des concours pour trouver des noms à des projets, avec à la clé un ticket repas ou un prix en espèces? A quand le Rookie of the Year?

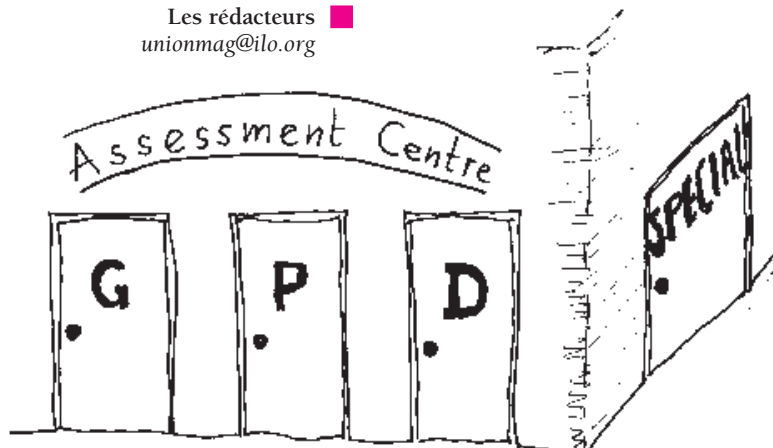
C'est comme si tous les efforts réalisés ces trois dernières années pour mettre en place de nouveaux mécanismes de protection et de motivation du personnel avaient été entachés par le nombre croissant d'irrégularités et d'inégalités de traitement comme aux temps les plus sinistres de l'Organisation.

Le tableau que nous a d'ailleurs dressé la Médiatrice, il y a quelques temps de cela, est édifiant: le nombre de litiges en suspens nous fait froid dans le dos. Aura-t-elle la capacité, la liberté et l'indépendance nécessaires à leur issue équitable? Ces nouveaux mécanismes de règlement des conflits, s'ils ont au moins le mérite d'exister, sont-ils efficaces? A en juger par le nombre de récriminations entendues dans tous les domaines (harcèlements de toutes sortes, commissions indépendantes qui n'en ont que le nom, délais d'attente inacceptables pour une prise de décision, passe-droits provocateurs) il reste du pain sur la planche.

Reste également en suspens la question de la transparence: tous ces cas, une fois réglés, seront-ils portés (du moins statistiquement) à la connaissance de tous (le premier rapport n'est, paraît-il, resté qu'un après-midi affiché dans le bureau de la Médiatrice et a été enlevé sur ordre de l'Administration...)? Les coupables seront-ils mis hors d'état de nuire ou vivra-t-on encore longtemps dans la culture de la victime déplacée dans un autre service?

Nous avons vu très récemment ce qu'il arrive à certaines démocraties séculaires lorsque les pouvoirs en place n'écourent pas suffisamment leurs bases. Nous sommes apparemment au milieu du gué: prenons garde à le franchir rapidement avant qu'une déferlante de protestation n'emporte tous les efforts accomplis.

Les rédacteurs ■  
[unionmag@ilo.org](mailto:unionmag@ilo.org)



## EDITORIAL

### Blame it on globalization

A colleague just back at HQ after a long time away was telling us recently that he hardly recognizes "his" organization any more. In the cafeteria at lunchtime he had seen loads of new faces – young faces especially – and, since he's well on the way to old codgerhood himself, this seemed a most encouraging development. Nevertheless, he couldn't resist checking the noticeboard to compare the official figures for new recruits against his own rough tally. OK, so his was a back-of-the-envelope job, but he found a significant discrepancy. His peers (hardcore to the last) soon set him straight.

"You still don't get it, do you? The ILO has taken a giant leap into the era of globalization. These days, our chiefs (particularly the new ones, who don't give a monkey's about the principles governing the place they work for) can do what they like: hire, consolidate, redeploy, whatever – and the house rules and procedures can take a running jump. All this, of course, with the tacit blessing of you-know-who..."

It's a paradox, when you think about it. Wave goodbye to the ILO's institutional memory and vocation for international public service; say hello to working methods and personnel management straight out of the worst B-movie caricatures. We now cut and paste and reengineer without the slightest regard for the feelings of the people affected. But want to win a cash prize or a slap-up meal? Enter our exciting project-naming contest! And coming soon – ILO Rookie of the Year!

It's as if all that effort over the past three years to set up new mechanisms to protect and motivate staff had been torpedoed by a growing number of irregularities and instances of unequal treatment reminiscent of the Organization's darkest days.

The picture painted by the Ombudsperson a short while ago was instructive: the number of cases outstanding is the stuff of nightmares. Will she be granted the necessary means and independence of action to ensure a just outcome? Of course the existence of new conflict resolution mechanisms is a step in the right direction; but are they effective? Judging by the amount and variety of grievances that we've been hearing about lately (all sorts of harassment, groups that are independent in name only, unacceptable delays in decision making, and blatantly preferential treatment), she will have her work cut out.

Another outstanding question: that of transparency. Once all these cases have been settled, will everyone be informed, even if it's only the statistics? (We hear that the Ombudsperson's first report was posted up in her office for one whole afternoon before it was taken down by order of the Administration.) And will the guilty parties be put where they can't do any more harm, or will we carry on with a culture where it's the victim that gets moved to another branch?

We've seen all too recently what can happen even in the oldest democracies when the powers that be pay insufficient attention to the grass roots. Just now, we seem to be treading water somewhere in mid- (as opposed to main-) stream: so please, let's hurry across – before a wave of protest sweeps away everything we've achieved so far.

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