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Staff Union
Bulletin

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del Sindicato

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Salam dari Jakarta

(photo: I. Indiravitri)



22 April 2002: ILO Jakarta staff members dressed in traditional costume to commemorate Kartini Day. Kartini is the Indonesian heroine who for the first time publicly promoted equal treatment between men and women (left to right): Tan Mega Dewi, Admin. & Finance Officer; Mukda Sunkool, Senior Programme Officer; Ernie Gontha, Secretary, INS/00/MO1/FRA; Sam Buchari, Finance Assistant; Ine Indiravitri, Programme/IT Assistant; Christina Limurti, Secretary to the Director; Anizar Djalil, FS/Meeting Assistant; Gita Lingga, Media Relation/Communication and Information Officer; Budi Setiawati, Librarian/Documentalist; Asuhaidi, Driver/Clerk; Jan Arie Van der Werff, Senior Driver/Clerk

EDITORIAL

Here is the news

As the gorgeous reds and browns of a Geneva autumn cast a mystic glow across what some delegates churlishly refer to as the ILO golf course; as the kids skip joyously back to school and you likewise into the office to read the 973 urgent messages clogging up your GroupWise inbox; as the mountain of unattended paperwork that accumulated while you were away slowly slides off the desk and spreads across your office floor; as the voice of that nice incorporeal American lady intones, "You have 48 new messages"; as the phone starts ringing before you've even removed your raincoat and you see the name of your beloved chief inscribed on the display; and as your holiday tan begins to fade even faster than your chances of a promotion either side of October 2003...

No sweat! We're here to help by filling you in on what's been going on during your absence. Yes, here it is: *Union's* handy, back-to-work, cut-out-and-keep guide to the good news and bad news for ILO staff in September 2002. You want the bad news first? Here goes.

The bad news

- A new deadline has been announced for classification decisions: October 2003.
- GS salaries in Geneva still fail to take proper account of the discrepancy between male and female pay among local employers.
- Plans to roll back the collective agreements become more evident every day.

ILO's site for sore eyes

by our Construction Correspondent

Could it be that the ILO is finally going to build a crèche in its grounds? Or has it heeded the call to provide a replacement for the much-lamented Staff Lounge and Table Tennis Room? Or is it a new set of offices for the Publications Bureau? Or perhaps a multi-storey car park?

EDITORIAL

Oyez, Oyez Braves gens!

Alors que de splendides camaïeux de bruns et de rouges recouvrent petit à petit d'un halo mystique ce que certains délégués dénomment jalousement les greens du BIT, les enfants ont repris joyeusement le chemin de l'école ainsi que vous-même celui du travail, impatient de découvrir les 973 messages électroniques embouteillant votre boîte de réception. Sur votre table, la montagne inattendue de papiers accumulés pendant votre absence est en train de s'écrouler inexorablement sur le plancher de votre bureau; la voix intersidérale de votre copine américaine sortant de la boîte vocale vous informe que «vous avez 48 nouveaux messages»; le téléphone sonne avant même que vous ayez déposé votre imperméable et c'est le nom de votre chef bien-aimé qui s'inscrit déjà sur l'écran; enfin votre teint tout bronzé vire soudainement au gris quand vous apprenez que vos chances d'obtenir une promotion ont été repoussées aux calendes grecques (octobre 2003 pour tout dire).

Pas de panique! Nous sommes là pour vous informer de tout ce qui s'est passé en votre absence. Eh oui, le voilà l'aide-mémoire d'*Union* magazine, indispensable à votre rentrée, et qui a fait le tri des bonnes et mauvaises nouvelles de l'été, pendant que vous vous doriez la pilule.

Commençons par les mauvaises

- Un nouveau délai a été annoncé pour régler les classifications des postes en suspens: octobre 2003.
- Les salaires des services généraux, biens qu'augmentés, ont été indexés sur les salaires des femmes, qui, localement, sont réputés pour être moindres que ceux de leurs collègues masculins.
- Les manœuvres pour mettre à terre les accords collectifs deviennent de plus en plus évidentes chaque jour.

- The ombudsperson has to deal with attitudes and actions that are unworthy of our organization.
- The south side escalators don't work.
- Eight months on, PUBL staff are still obliged to work in unacceptable conditions.
- Because the Staff Lounge is otherwise occupied (see above), all the fitness equipment bought for the new staff gymnasium is rusting away in the bowels of the building.

The good news

- GS staff in Geneva are getting a pay rise – the first this century.
 - Refusing to be discouraged, the ombudsperson is still working away on your behalf.
 - There's no money left to pay for assessment centres – from now on they'll be used only to evaluate external candidates, so no more dumb questions for you!
 - Those hardworking PUBLers now have elegant venetian blinds installed to protect their eyes from the bright winter sun in the futuristic open plan R1 Staff Lounge.
 - ILO language courses are to continue after all.
 - The Staff Union Committee is fighting the October 2003 deadline.
 - By forcing you to walk up from the car park, the escalator shutdown will help you kick-start that autumn exercise programme you'd been planning.
- As the months roll by and the days grow ever shorter (unless you're in the southern hemisphere, of course), we at *Union* will endeavour to keep you informed. Brr! When's the heating coming on?

The editors
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Frankly, I haven't a clue. All I know is that the footpath that leads from the bus stop round the North end of the building and past the tree in honour of Roger Beattie no longer goes towards the IOM car park and the World Council of Churches. It comes to an abrupt and unmarked halt in a building site where foundations have been prepared.

Information about the building site's purpose or suggestions about possible better uses for the site should be sent to *Union*, which may well award a prize to the most innovative suggestion.

- La médiatrice doit faire face à des attitudes et des actes indignes de notre organisation.
- Les escalators au sud ne marchent plus.
- Huit mois plus tard, nos collègues de PUBL sont toujours obligés de travailler dans des conditions difficilement acceptables.
- Le salon du personnel étant toujours occupé (voir point précédent), le matériel de fitness, commandé il y a des lustres, croupit pour longtemps dans les sous-sols du bâtiment.

Les bonnes, maintenant

- Les services généraux ont enfin obtenu une augmentation, la première du siècle.
 - Se refusant à tout découragement, la médiatrice continue à vous coacher lors de vos démêlés avec la hiérarchie, vos collègues, l'administration.
 - Les caisses étant vides, les *assessment centres* sont bien près d'être supprimés pour les candidats internes. Vous n'aurez plus à vous gratter la tête pour répondre à leurs questions.
 - Nos collègues de PUBL auront désormais la chance de pouvoir tirer d'élégants stores vénitiens lorsque le pâle soleil d'hiver viendra illuminer le surréaliste bureau paysager du R1.
 - Les cours de langue du BIT vont apparemment continuer.
 - Le Comité du Syndicat a lancé une action collective contre le délai d'octobre 2003 concernant les classifications.
 - En vous forçant à emprunter les escaliers depuis les parkings, le remplacement de l'escalator vous a encouragé à démarrer votre programme planifié de mise en forme automnal.
- Le temps passe si vite que les jours raccourcissent déjà (à moins bien sûr que vous n'habitez dans l'hémisphère sud, veinards) mais soyez assurés que quelle que soit la saison, *Union* fera comme toujours de son mieux pour vous tenir informés. Gla-gla! A quand le chauffage dans les bureaux?

Les rédacteurs
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Un seul pilier ne suffit pas pour faire une maison...

On compterait aujourd'hui 6000 langues à travers le monde très inégalement réparties, et la moitié de la population mondiale utilise l'une des huit langues les plus répandues: chinois, anglais, hindi, espagnol, russe, arabe, portugais et français.

Pourtant ce patrimoine est en danger, car le phénomène immémorial de naissance et de disparition atteint aujourd'hui un rythme sans précédent, sous l'effet de la mondialisation: modernisation, vitesse et facilité d'utilisation des moyens de communication, auxquelles s'ajoute une utilisation simplifiée d'un langage unique, ont considérablement accru les échanges internationaux.

L'UNESCO, mais aussi l'Union européenne et le Conseil de l'Europe se sont depuis peu attachés à cette question linguistique. Car derrière ce phénomène, massivement financier et commercial, se profile un autre débat: celui de l'uniformisation des sociétés. Langage unique, pensée unique et perte d'identité sont des risques réels qui menacent l'équilibre des sociétés et peuvent faire obstacle à la justice et à la paix sociale.

Ainsi, la résolution adoptée par la conférence générale de l'UNESCO le 6 novembre 1999, évoque «le péril qui menace aujourd'hui la diversité linguistique en raison de la mondialisation de la communication et des tendances à l'utilisation d'une langue unique, avec les risques de marginalisation des autres langues majeures du monde, voire de disparition des langues de moindre diffusion, y compris les langues régionales».

D'ailleurs, le 14 février, lors de la récente rencontre entre Juan Somavia, Directeur Général du BIT, et Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, c'est bien de cela qu'il a été question: mondialisation plus juste et défense de l'identité culturelle. Pour B. Boutros-Ghali «le plurilinguisme est à la mondialisation ce que le multipartisme est à la démocratie. Indispensable.» On ne saurait être plus clair.

Pourtant peut-on affirmer que les organisations internationales, agences de l'ONU ou institutions financières, se préoccupent du pluralisme linguistique? Car, si trois langues – anglais, français et espagnol – sont officiellement prises en compte dans la plupart d'entre elles, les documents de travail ne sont pas pour autant systématiquement distribués dans ces trois langues préalablement aux réunions, afin que les représentants des Etats-membres aient le temps de s'imprégner d'une question à l'ordre du jour et de préparer leur propre intervention.

Sommes-nous tous censés nous exprimer dans un seul et même idiome, coûte que coûte, au risque même de ne pas être compris et de ne pas vraiment comprendre? Et, car c'est bien de cela qu'il s'agit, faute de maîtriser les subtilités d'une langue anglaise, moins simple qu'on ne le pense? Les pièges de la communication sont tels qu'entre la pensée, sa formulation, son écoute et ce qu'il en est retenu... une grande partie du message disparaît et ce, à plus forte raison lorsque l'orateur s'est exprimé dans une langue qu'il maîtrisait mal. Chacun comprend ce qu'il peut... ou ce qu'il veut. De la communication il ne reste alors que la forme. Qui peut déceimment s'en satisfaire?

Un sursaut a toutefois eu lieu et des organisations internationales regroupant des nations de même langue se sont progressivement mises en place dans la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle: *Ligue arabe* (fondée en 1945, avec 22 pays et 250 millions d'habitants), *sommets ibéro-américains* rassemblant tous les deux ans plus de 20 pays et 350 millions d'habitants, *sommets turcophones* qui unissent six Etats (120 millions d'habitants) et, depuis 1996, *Association des pays de langue portugaise* (sept pays, 200 millions d'habitants). Enfin l'*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* regroupe plus de 50 Etats et 500 millions d'habitants. Un peu partout à travers le monde des manifestations culturelles viennent, par la musique, l'image et l'écriture, rappeler la place de la pensée et de l'expression francophone dans les échanges entre les nations.

Le 20 mars a été déclaré Journée internationale de la Francophonie (en commémoration de la création de l'Agence internationale de la Francophonie le 20 mars 1970 à Niamey, sous l'impulsion de trois chefs d'Etats africains, L. Sédar Senghor, Habib Bourguiba et Hamani Diori). L'Afrique, d'ailleurs, n'est

pas en reste dans la production culturelle francophone, et des auteurs comme Kourouma ou Hampaté Bâ illustrent cette extraordinaire richesse culturelle d'un continent où tant de langues sont parlées, au sein d'un même pays, au-delà des frontières, au-delà du clivage imposé par l'histoire coloniale entre anglophones et francophones. Et le cinéma offre une extraordinaire palette que tous les ans les journées du cinéma africain de Ferney-Voltaire font vivre aux portes de Genève, modeste écho du FESPACO de Ouagadougou.

En septembre se tiendra à Beyrouth le 9^e Sommet de la Francophonie avec pour thème le dialogue des cultures. Et l'on retrouvera les valeurs citées par F. Mitterrand dans un entretien accordé en mai 1989 au journal sénégalais *Le Soleil*:

«A Québec (*Sommet de la Francophonie en septembre 1987*) les chefs d'Etat de quarante peuples répartis sur cinq continents ont proclamé que cette communauté était solidaire... Elle est unie par la langue française, langue de culture, de communication et de développement, langue aussi des sciences et des techniques.» Il ne s'agit pas ici d'égrener une liste d'aimables réunions dans lesquelles quelques nostalgiques d'un temps révolu se retrouveraient pour défendre leurs illusions d'un monde qui parlerait français. Le débat est plus profond et plus grave: maintenir et promouvoir la diversité là où la facilité nous pousse à la standardisation sous toutes ses formes. Il s'agit de défendre un droit fondamental: le respect de l'identité. Celui-là même qui permet aux plus démunis d'accéder aux conditions du travail décent. Parce que de la Cordillère des Andes, au détroit de Macassar, en passant par les rives du fleuve Niger, on ne parle pas et on ne lit pas forcément la langue de Shakespeare. Celles de Molière et de Cervantes multiplient alors nos chances de dialoguer avec ceux au service desquels le BIT doit être. Et s'il n'est pas réaliste d'envisager une Conférence internationale du Travail en 6000 langues, veillons à ce que ces trois langues, également traitées, permettent au mieux de refléter les réalités du monde.

PS Comme le dit Yuka... Pour mieux réaliser les efforts que doivent déployer certains pour se faire comprendre au BIT, imaginez que dans les réunions et relations de travail, il vous soit interdit de vous exprimer dans votre langue maternelle... N'est ce pas finalement ce que doivent vivre bien des fonctionnaires du BIT et représentants des pays membres?

Cet article est le résultat d'une réflexion collective, initiée par Patricia Isimat-Mirin (EMAC), en collaboration avec Damien Verguin (IFP/Dialogue social), Yuka Okumura (EMAC).

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Recommendations of Staff Union's Asia-Pacific regional meeting

(Bangkok, 24-27 June 2002)

Preamble

Taking into consideration the conclusions of the Staff Union Global Meeting in August 2001 held in Geneva, and in line with the Union's 2002 strategy, the regional meeting of ILO Staff Union representatives for Asia and the Pacific has put forward the following recommendations.

General principles

The management of field offices should ensure regular consultation and negotiation with the local Staff Union representative on all staff matters and provide necessary facilities to enable them to effectively perform their functions, in accordance with the established principles of freedom of association and non-discrimination espoused in international labour Conventions No. 87 (1948), concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, and No. 98 (1949), concerning the right to organize and collective bargaining.

Human resources development

1. An Assessment Centre should be established for the recruitment and career development of GS staff in the Asia-Pacific region as soon as possible.
2. Qualified internal candidates should be given preference over external candidates for career development.
3. All current cases of inappropriate use of contracts should be reviewed and regularized in order to give staff job security, and such practices should be eliminated in the future.
4. In accordance with the established selection procedure, Staff Union representatives should be consulted in the selection and recruitment of candidates, including commenting on job advertisements and in ensuring that the procedures are followed in accordance with the Collective Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection of October 2000.
5. Exchange of staff assignments should be implemented for GS staff on a rotation basis – these should also include inter-regional, regional and subregional meetings, the ILC, assisting in national workshops and major missions in another country.
6. The Office should provide 5 per cent of the regular budget for training of human resources in accordance with the needs and aspirations of both staff members and the Office.

Salaries and allowances

7. When the Office receives new/revised salary scales for GS and P staff, copies should be distributed to all staff members.
8. Staff members who wish to have salaries paid in a convertible currency should be granted that option and the Staff Union should raise the matter at the JNC.
9. DSAs should be paid to staff members on equal terms.
10. Office Directors and responsible chiefs must ensure that the overtime of GS staff be compensated financially, and when it is not feasible the staff should be given compensatory time off.

Office of the Ombudsperson

11. Asia-Pacific Staff Union representatives fully support the provision of the necessary budget to the office of the Ombudsperson to enable it to fully function, in particular to serve the field offices.

Occupational safety and health and security

12. All staff who find themselves suddenly hospitalized or in need of urgent medical support (including medical evacuation) should be immediately provided with an official letter from the Office guaranteeing that the account will be settled and that the Office will seek recovery of costs from SHIF on behalf of the staff member. (The staff member will be responsible for meeting the difference between the actual and reimbursement costs, which will be deducted from the staff member's salary.)
13. The current security measures in the field offices must be reviewed by the ILO together with the Union to ensure that in case of emergencies, the Office can provide adequate and time-

ly support to all staff in the field, and in particular taking into consideration the needs of local staff.

14. A Local Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee should be established, and the results of OSH assessments conducted in the field offices and priority issues should be discussed and resolved with Union involvement in the field offices.

Training and communications for Staff Union

15. The Staff Union leaders in each office will compile basic materials and references for briefing purposes of new members and comment on the draft Union officers' manual to be distributed shortly.

16. Senior Union members should give comprehensive briefings/orientation for new members.

17. A LISTSERVE among the Staff Union representatives including the substitutes should be established to facilitate better communications.



Regional Meeting of ILO Staff Union Representatives for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 24-27 June 2002 (left to right): Le Thi Lam Nga (Hanoi), Chinda Saengcharnchai (Bangkok), Ramider Bhatia (New Delhi), Kusum Chand (New Delhi), Julita Yap (Manila), Naoko Otake (SUC Regional Substitute, HQ), Basharat Ahmad (SUC Regional Titular, Islamabad), Niamat Ali (Dhaka), David Dror (SUC HQ), Machie Uemura (Tokyo), Ine Indiravitri (Jakarta), Mike Shone (SUC Chair, HQ), Qiaoling Chen (Beijing), Nelién Haspels (Bangkok), Joyce Perera (Colombo), Sue Hudson (HRD HQ), Lalin Chia (HRD Bangkok), Wazeed Hussain (Suva), Marina Rai (Kathmandu).
(photo: I. Indiravitri)



ILO HQ, 1st floor North, August 2002: Artificial intelligence or elephants' graveyard? You decide.

HOW TO MANAGE A PROBLEM BOSS

Part 1. Who's in charge?

As far back as the 1980s, human resources experts realized that improving work life involved, amongst other things, improving one's relationship with one's boss and learning how to handle injustice, discrimination and unfair practices in the workplace. In the experts' opinion, employees' "ability to establish a mutually valuable relationship with their boss is, and will continue to be, a major factor in determining their success or failure at work."¹

In theory, of course, it ought to be your boss's job to manage you, to provide direction, orientation, training – not yours, as an employee. There are many excellent managers who do exactly that. However, there are other kinds of managers, too, and who knows, your boss may be one of them. S/he may have been promoted not so much for a proven ability to manage people, but rather for other reasons, e.g. a high level of competence, excellence, enthusiasm, great vision; or else, possibly, knowing the right people, political affinities, first-rate self-marketing skills, etc. Thus, in some cases, s/he might – unexpectedly – turn out to be incapable of managing you and your work. If you happen to be stuck with such a boss, you could – instead of grumbling and biding your time while looking forward to retirement – reverse the roles and manage him/her.

Love it or loathe it, the art of managing your boss has become even more important, as – following the introduction of new procedures such as the *Collective Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection (October 2000)* and the *Collective Agreement for the Establishment of a Baseline Classification and Grading (March 2001)* in the ILO – a major change has taken place: chiefs at all levels have become all-powerful in matters concerning work content, performance appraisals, keeping a staff member in their service/department, regrading of posts, career advancement, etc.

Let's have a look at a few examples of the managers' increased authority in the ILO and their possible effect on staff career.

Jump through the hoops

For those fortunate enough to have had the support of their boss, the *Baseline Classification and Grading Procedure* was a mere formal exercise. Less lucky colleagues, on the other hand, who wish to have their grading changed, may find themselves trapped in an obstacle race:

- whereas the responsible Senior Director's reasoned reply to the staff member's request for a review of the initial matching/grading of post, if given at all, is taken as sacrosanct, the staff member not only has to carry the burden of proof, but *a priori* does not even have access to all pertinent information and evidence;
- the time limit of 31 October 2001 for the re-examination of cases by the Independent Review Group (IRG) appears to have been a mere declaration of intent. In fact, the initial (interim) decisions taken by the "anonymous" IRG (its composition is not known) were sent out as late as June 2002, and all the baseline review cases are now to be finalized by 31 October 2003 at the latest. The least one can say is that the responsible circles do not appear to be in a hurry for those cases to be resolved in which the result of the job matching for a specific staff member is being challenged;
- the IRG's decisions themselves in some cases appear to reveal a somewhat limited grasp of the actual responsibilities and tasks involved in different jobs. Thus, they sometimes reflect a rather "creative" interpretation of work contents or even a complete disregard for the facts and arguments of the case;
- in some cases, decisions concerning a staff member's career were made before the IRG had any chance to look at the case, such as by opening a competition and appointing someone to a post without regard to the fact that another staff member had claimed to be filling that same post for years and on the strength of that had already requested a regrading – thus creating a *fait accompli*...

Recruitment: An open door to abuse

As to *Recruitment and Selection*, the manager's authority has also been considerably extended. The rights of the Staff Union representative(s) have been limited to being allowed access to reports on technical evaluation, discussing proposals, making comments at various stages, and – in case of any disagreement – informing the Director General. Most importantly, the procedure lacks an "independent opinion" which had been a strong safeguard in the former Selection Board. With the abolition of the Selection Board and its independent members, Staff Union comments now have a merely formal character. This opens the door to the possibility of arbitrary candidate evaluations and decisions.

In some cases, the "rigorous technical evaluation" of a candidate required under Art. 5 of the *Collective Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection* appears to have been carried out by persons not possessing the necessary qualifications. And if the responsible chief is new in his/her post and/or does not directly supervise the candidates' work, there is a risk that the evaluation might primarily take into account the "self-marketing", communication and interview skills of candidates and thus be based on partial and subjective personality appraisals rather than on qualifications and actual work performance.

Consequently, under the new system, how to get on with your boss and enhance your visibility has become one of the most important skills any official aspiring to having job satisfaction and a career in the Organization would be well advised to acquire.

The importance of visibility

There is a feeling of palpable cultural change in the Organization: a shifting away from *substance* (actual work performance, qualifications, previous work experience, timeliness, quality and quantity of output as well as cost efficiency) to *profile* and *appearances* (visibility and self-marketing skills). In the circumstances, basing yourself on performance alone may put you at a disadvantage and you might run the risk of not getting anywhere. Thus, showcasing your accomplishments, competence and capabilities both within and beyond your immediate work environment, and making yourself a name in the eyes of higher-level managers and/or HRD, may have become the determining factor for the recognition of your work results and, eventually, for your career.

Apart from long-established methods of gaining visibility (different work assignments outside your unit, participation in conferences, meetings, writing reports, being introduced to the "right" people, socializing with your boss, etc.), one way to make yourself a name is to join the Staff Union Committee (SUC). Recent experience has shown that being one of the main negotiators of the SUC need not be an obstacle to turning your coat at mid-term and transforming yourself into one of the chiefs on the HRD side, or to, for example, taking a sudden jump from a P3 to a P5 position without meeting all the requirements and in spite of the fact that eminently qualified colleagues at the P4 level applied for that same post.

How to manage your boss

But let's start at the beginning. What is the first and foremost requirement for any employee?

It is, of course, to manage one's own negative emotions and attitude, if any, regarding one's boss. It is imperative that, whatever the situation, you fully accept that your boss is always the boss, that you have to respect the position, a respect that is owed and goes with the job – even in the unlikely event that you find it a little difficult to respect the person.

To begin with, regard the relationship as your responsibility. If there are any problems, make every effort to solve them; otherwise, you'll have to continue living with them. Contacting HRD or senior management may not be the best solution – you and not your boss might be viewed as the problem. At all costs, avoid pressing your boss's "hot buttons": It is your duty to avoid anything that justifiably might set your boss off, such as poor performance, both in quantity and quality; inadequate planning; late arrival at, or absence from, meetings; lack of due respect and dedication; or lack of efficiency and productivity.

(continued page 11)

Love that outfit...

It is advisable to find out what type of boss you have. Do you really have a problem boss or simply someone who “has a personality or operating style that is different from yours or [who] doesn't look or act the way you think a boss should”?² Management styles are as individual as fashions, ranging from “Get on with it; don't bother me” to “Thou shalt do what I command”. You had better become adept at fine-tuning your behaviour correspondingly and try to get onto his/her wavelength. However, keep in mind that “managing upward is the art of consciously improving collaboration with one's boss, to gain the best personal and organizational outcomes. It is not just superficial manipulating and empty praise.”³

Furthermore, don't forget that even your boss is a human being and thus – aside from his/her strengths and convictions – perhaps not devoid of emotions, weaknesses, and human needs, and has to be treated accordingly. In this context, an article written by a former Director of the Personnel Department describing how he joined the ILO is quite enlightening.⁴

Once you have diagnosed your boss's intrinsic character, your next task is to build up trust. Give your boss an incentive to

improve. Maybe s/he needs to learn that hiring intelligent people and actually using them to their full potential is the best strategy for success. Or s/he has to embrace the idea that staff may know more about their own work than their managers do and, if given a chance, find ways to improve procedures and output.

Depending on the type of boss you happen to have, you might try one or several approaches...

Renate Meyer ■
(to be continued)

Ndlr: une version française de cet article paraîtra ultérieurement.

1. Christopher Hegarty: *How to manage your boss*, Ballantine Books, 1985.

2. Mardy Grothe et al: *Problem bosses. Who they are and how to deal with them*, Facts on File, 1987.

3. Patti Hathaway et al: *Managing upward*, Crisp Publications, 1992.

4. Ray Harari: “A tale of greed, arrogance, deceit and desertion”, in *Friends Newsletter*, No. 32, May 2002. (Or see overleaf – Ed.)

Zapatos Limpios: Obsesión o Síndrome

ALERTA el síndrome denominado “zapatos limpios” ha invadido las agencias de Naciones Unidas.

En un principio se creyó que el bajar la cabeza en los elevadores y mirar los zapatos era solo una moda. Posteriormente y al manifestarse esta conducta en al mayoría de los trabajadores de la OIT fue considerada como una obsesión extrema de carácter antisocial.

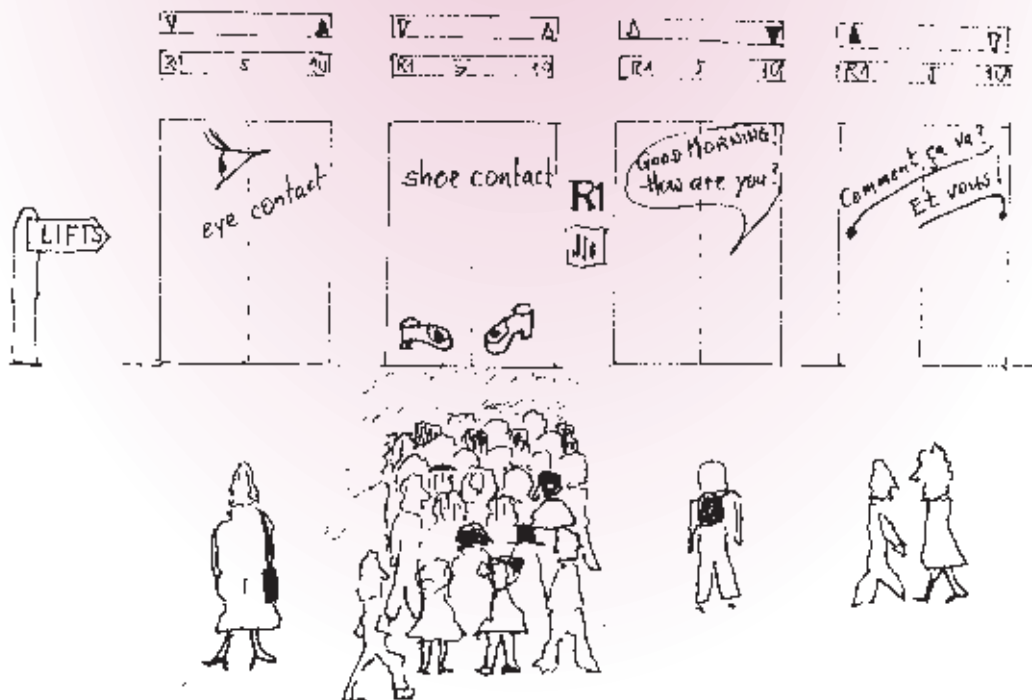
Siendo la OIT un organismo de investigación, se decidió promover un estudio científico sobre esta insociable obsesión. Los primeros resultados del estudio señalaron que debido el clima lluvioso de Ginebra, las personas estaban obsesionadas por estar bien presentadas y sobre todo con los **zapatos limpios**, sin embargo, al analizar estas conductas más de cerca se pudo verificar que las personas ni veían ni observaban sus zapatos ni mucho menos se fijaban si estaban limpios, simplemente adoptaban la postura cabizbaja con su mente enfrascada en los problemas económico familiares o en el informe que se debía haber entregado el día de ayer.

Después de varios estudios analíticos de este raro comportamiento humano, los investigadores decidieron acudir a las diferentes agencias de Naciones Unidas, en las que pudieron comprobar que esta conducta se repetía en cada una de ellas, diagnosticando este comportamiento como un síndrome radicado en las mencionadas oficinas en Ginebra.

Asimismo, estos eruditos señalaron que este síndrome podría afectar la estabilidad financiera del sistema ya que, al adoptar esta postura se pueden producir desordenes físicos, en particular malestares en la columna vertebral, los cuales al pasar de los años se convertirán en enfermedades ocupacionales, incapacitando a las personas de una forma permanente.

Sin embargo y para beneplácito de todos los trabajadores del sistema de naciones unidas, los investigadores señalaron que este síndrome puede contenerse. La cura es muy simple y depende de cada una de las personas afectadas, “cuando suba al elevador diga buenos días a las personas a su alrededor y en el trayecto míreles a los ojos y si es posible sonría”. Después de repetir esta terapia por varios días o semanas notará que no tendrá la necesidad ni el impulso de voltear a ver sus zapatos y por consiguiente menos dolores de espalda.

OJ Durán ■



From ILO Communications

News you may have missed...

How I came to join the ILO This was clearly a job for someone with a legal background for which I had neither the academic qualifications nor, evidently, any experience... I nevertheless sat bravely for the test... I asked... if I could take a break to clear my mind with a cup of coffee and try once more. And what a break it turned out to be! As I was queuing at the old building's cafeteria, I felt a tap on my shoulder... As we sat down, he asked me how I was enjoying the test... he confided in me that he... had taken what was no doubt a sadistic pleasure in devising the little test on home leave and... proceeded to explain all the little legal subtleties that had so frustratingly slipped my keen sense of observation. I may not have much of a legal acumen, but happily I do have a good memory. And so it was that my faultless answer to the legal part of the test, which probably helped me win the competition, was the result of an involuntary deceit. I later found out that Gert had taken an instant liking to me and I suspect that his little coup de main may not have been totally innocent. I started at the ILO on 26 September 1966 at the grand old age of 23 and I have never looked back.

Friends Newsletter No. 32, May 2002

ILO-COMMENT: He recently retired as a D2.

Intl Labour Organisation. A UN organisation to promote employment, improve labour conditions and living standards. Very socialist-oriented and probably creates more problems than it solves.

www.hsletter.com

ILO-COMMENT: If you say so.

ILO launches first "World Day Against Child Labour" The event will be attended by delegates to the International Labour Conference... The event will also feature the launch of SCREAM (Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media).

Press Release ILO/02/27

ILO-COMMENT: Scream in SUPPORT of children's rights? Isn't that like shaking your head to say YES?

ILO urges social dialogue In a review of ILO activities over the past three years, the Director-General said "a fresh breeze of creativity is blowing through the ILO." He cited a host of unprecedented activities undertaken by the ILO since he became Director-General in 1999, including the establishment of new programmes on gender, HIV/AIDS, job creation, technical assistance and health and safety.

Press Release ILO/02/28

ILO-COMMENT: Good to hear! And what about a breeze in the ILO infrastructure blowing through personnel matters and overall management?

Programme and Budget for 2002-03 Management challenges (this includes human resource development, treated separately in the SPF). Intended Outcome: Results-based improvements in effectiveness and efficiency: a better organized and more coherent Office.

GB.283/PFA/2/2, 283rd Session, para. 16

ILO-COMMENT: Oh yes!

ILO Programme Implementation While there is evidence in this report of greater emphasis on the impact of ILO actions, much remains to be done to establish a true performance culture.

Report of the DG, ILC 2002, p. 4

ILO-COMMENT: True!

The inclusion of gender as a cross cutting concern in the ILO's Strategic Policy Framework for 2002-05 has had a significant impact on raising awareness among ILO staff and constituents of gender equality as central to the Decent Work agenda... Another problem could be the vagueness of the term

"cross cutting" coupled with the confusion about what gender mainstreaming actually means.

ILO First Gender Audit, Executive Summary

ILO-COMMENT: Something to do with cross dressing, maybe?

Clothes for the emperor Turning a blind eye to these issues fuels the groundswell of anger and mistrust that ultimately breeds the growing violence around us.

Juan Somavia, International Herald Tribune, 27 August 2002

ILO-COMMENT: Hopefully, no blind eyes swelling the ground on which we sit. Could this have been the cause of that fire?

Decent wok

With the sun beating down on the sealed windows of their offices, hapless ILC 2002 officials found out that the UN had cut off for a month of repairs the aircon and ventilation system in the premises it was renting out for the ILO Conference.

Given the Palais's well-known inability to offer Conference workers food when most needed, sweltering secretaries for the Committee on the Informal Economy, looking to turn a quick profit from the sub-decent working conditions, wondered whether temperatures this side of the plate glass might do for a welcome stir-fry.

Not that such thoughts kept the informal worker (*make that worker*) shown in the photo from polishing off his contribution to the Committee Report in the relative cool of a corridor, peacock cries wafting in through an openable window.



(Photo of Brian Wenk by Odile Léger)

Can I quote you on that? Overheard at the 90th ILC (2)

Travel broadens the mind

Well-controlled economic development remains, whether one likes it or not, the engine that pulls the train of sustainable and fair social development.

The ILO is there to make sure that the locomotive is properly attached to the carriages.

We are committed as a government to moving back towards full employment.

If we do not advance towards globalization, we must necessarily go backwards.

It is imperative that we keep pedalling the bike, otherwise the bike may topple over.

Governments should give full throttle to the job-generating potential of enterprises.

The national responsibilities of the social partners place them all in the same boat in the face of prevailing globalization.

The journey of a thousand miles has begun, and we are all walking in the right direction.

• *Thanks to Enness Jaye (to be continued).*

ILO DIARY

92 days embedded in the mainstream

• If you discount the open plan to invade Iraq (and that's a mighty big discount), the ILO plan to make the ILO open plan has long seemed the most open plan in the history of opening plans. But could it be that senior management is not as united on this one as we thought? Innocently lurking behind a pillar in the multi-storey car park that was once the first floor, Ilote quite by accident overhears a heated altercation. In the grey corner: the Director of the Department that is due to occupy the long-vacant space, apparently giving instructions to some sort of interior designer on how the open plan is to be planned. In the orange corner: a representative of the Bureau responsible for all matters to do with the ILO building, who flatly denies the existence of any plan for open plan. As tempers begin to rise and veiled threats echo across the dusty concrete, the diarist, with the discretion for which this column is justly renowned, tiptoes back to the sepulchral silence of the elevators, and the relative safety of the fourth floor.

• **Which turns out to be even less safe than the first. The hapless diarist is swept along on an irresistible tide of humanity going south. The destination turns out to be a revivalist prayer meeting, addressed by a bearded holy man who denounces the disgraceful editorial published in the June issue of this magazine, which he rightly describes as "that absurd thing". He calls for a minute's silence in memory of the ILO collective agreements. As heads bow, Ilote tiptoes out.**

• Another Conference, another report on ILO activities. This year, every page incorporated an intriguing innovation: a watermark. Not the familiar ILO logo, but a radiant sun, surrounded by the UN laurel wreath. This bright new symbol of what we stand for – namely, to bring a little sunshine into everyone's life – was greeted by uncharacteristic reticence on the part of management. Yet its brilliance surely merited a press release at the very least, perhaps explaining how the ILO, illuminated by the lambent leadership at the centre of its solar system, has long since eclipsed all the gloomy black holes in the UN's universe. Indeed, it inspires in the humble diarist a stirring vision of a brave new ILO world where, at the dawning of each day, the serried ranks of job-matched, centrally assessed, gender-audit-

ed and multicompetenced ILO heliologists stand to salute the ILO flag and sing the ILO anthem ("House of the rising sun" may just shade it over "Cara al sol"). If we are lucky enough to be around to witness that new dawn, we may shake our heads as we think back to the ILO's Dark Ages: to a time before we cast off the unenlightened old ways forever, and stuck 'em where the sun don't shine.

• **It's always nice when people correct their mistakes. That's what the city of Geneva has done with the name plaque for Allée David Morse, the bucolic little path that runs between Route de Ferney and the ILO building. It was opened a few years back by the widow of the eponymous former DG (and, as reported in this column at the time, with then DG Michel Hansenne in attendance even though the city authorities had omitted to consult him about the project). The plaque mistakenly claimed that Mr. Morse had been a Nobel Peace Prizewinner. Actually, of course, it was the ILO itself that had won the prize. The Nobel reference has now been removed.**

• Talking of correcting mistakes, a reader points out that the UN manual that has been out on loan since 8 March 1965, and about which this column made a public service announcement, concerns not population protection but population *projection*. "The UN, unfortunately," he writes, "did not prepare any manuals for protecting the population in 1956 (when this manual was published) or later." Now that's sorted out, perhaps the recalcitrant official who "forgot" to return it will have the decency to do so.

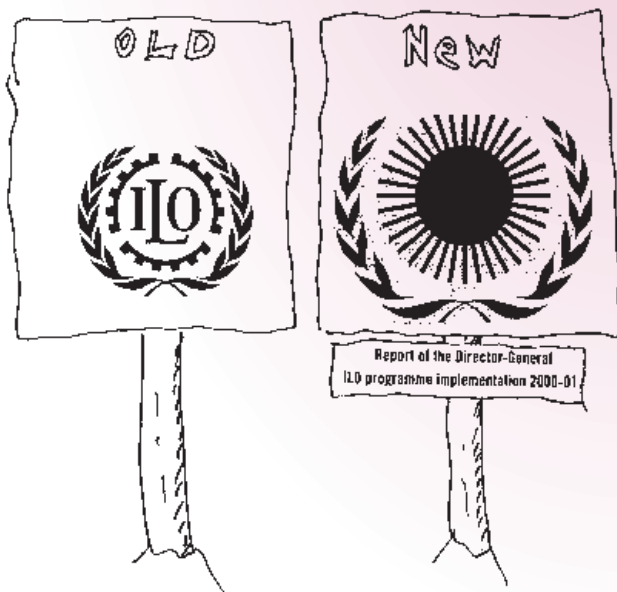
• **Was it wise of our great communicators to fly in rehabilitated child labourers for this year's International Labour Conference? In the case of one child in particular, Ilote hears that a number of staff expressed grave concern about her emotional and mental health and especially her safety, given the potential reaction of her country's government to her presence. Their objections were overruled.**

• Could there be a political curse on the Conference? Within days of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's presentation this year, it was announced that he planned to quit public office. Others who have graced us with their presence in recent years include, in 1998, Rafael Caldera, President of Venezuela, voted out of office later the same year; and, in 1999, Henri Konan Bédié, President of Côte d'Ivoire, ousted in a coup a few months later. But don't blame the ILC for the downfall of Bill Clinton (remember him?): by the time he got here in 1999, he had already been impeached.

• **With the days growing shorter, and nothing else on the box but repeats of ER (stressed-out public servants lurching from one emergency to the next – so nothing like the ILO) and *The X-Files* (stressed-out public servants convinced that the organization they work for is in the grip of an alien conspiracy – so nothing like etc.), couch potato Ilote loves to spend the evening curled up with a cup of cocoa and tuned into *ILO on TV* (<http://mirror/public/english/bureau/inf/videoclips/index.htm>). But sadly, with just eight items spanning nine months, this show's tiny audience ratings are likely to see it cancelled by the major networks before the end of the season. And what will we watch then?**

• Believe it or not, there are readers who doubt the veracity of items that appear on this page. They reckon Ilote is a soft touch for any malicious ILO rumourmonger with a grudge and a fantasy to peddle. O ye of little faith! In truth (love that word), the Diary employs a hand-picked team of experienced fact-checkers who meticulously weed out every canard with a fine-toothed comb. One such load of old cock and bull was a recent absurd story that a garden has been built on the roof at HQ for the personal use of the DG. What's more, the fantasists would have you believe that 42,000 Swiss francs was spent on the project. I ask you – did you ever hear such unbelievable piffle?

"Ilote" ■



(Editor's note: Ilote's ramblings in no way reflect positions adopted by any Staff Union committee. All contributions welcome. Write in confidence to ilote2002@hotmail.com)