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Boletín  
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Staff Union  
Bulletin

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du Syndicat

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/staffun/info/magazine/index.htm>

Fahrenheit 451

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## May Day in...

**Kathmandu:** To mark International Labour Day, 1 May 2004, Staff Union members of the ILO office in Nepal thought of celebrating not only among the staff and ILO constituents but with unorganized porters engaged in their daily work in the vicinity of Kalimati fruit and vegetable market, Kathmandu, who may be unaware of the significance of the day and what the ILO stands for.

Souvenirs like T-shirts and caps with the Staff Union's logo were presented to porters and ILO staff members to campaign on the importance of International Labour Day.

Expressing unequivocal support for the rights of working women and men in Nepal to attain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, the Staff Union members conveyed warm wishes to the workers in a unique manner by publishing best wishes in the national daily newspaper *Gorkhapatra*.



The director of the office, Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, highlighted the importance of education and unionization among unorganized workers. Uddhav Poudyal, Chairperson, SUC Kathmandu, explained May Day and the benefits of making their own union at the local level. At the beginning, some people were surprised but later, when we explained to them why they are highly respected as workers, people started coming forward. All staff members at all levels joined the campaign of observing May Day on the theme of "porters of Nepal".

A message was conveyed to the workers on the importance of the day as well as the support to be provided for the rights, protection and dignity of workers. There was a presence of media organizations, and a special programme on International Labour Day was being telecast by Nepal Television on 4 May, also covering events organized by us.

Everyone enjoyed the day with frolic and merriment, more so because of the very heart-warming morning programme, where



**Islamabad:** With ILO Director Johannes Lokollo breathing down his neck and Staff Union members queuing up to lend a hand, Basharat Ahmad, ILO Staff Union Representative for Asia and the Pacific, plants trees in the lawn of the ILO building in Islamabad for May Day 2004.

we could put across the message to the people for whom ILO really cares and for whose rights we work on a daily basis. All departed with a blissful heart, looking forward to the next International Labour Day and with a hope that the local porters of Kalimati will be organizing and promoting their fundamental principles and rights at work in future.



Geneva: Bastions of the ILO Staff Union disturb the bucolic calm.

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

On ne pouvait déjà plus manger, voyager, et faire l'amour librement, voilà maintenant qu'on ne peut plus cliquer en paix.

Les virus nous ont envahis, insidieusement, s'emparant de chaque espace de notre vie, couvrant de latex nos pusillanimes zizis, nous condamnant frileusement au végétarisme, et entachant nos séjours orientaux d'une ombre pulmonaire. Et aujourd'hui, nous sommes touchés non plus dans nos loisirs et nos plaisirs, mais dans notre gagne-pain même (encore que pour un éleveur moyen, le poulet représente une source de revenus certaine).

Pas un jour sans que vous ne receviez un message courroucé d'un administrateur lointain et complètement inconnu de vous, qui vous somme de ne plus propager le mal informatique, le virus s'étant effrontément emparé de votre nom pour se répandre auprès d'institutions auxquelles vous ne voulez pourtant que du bien. Des messages que vous n'avez même pas envoyés vous sont retournés avec une véhémence très discourtoise et souvent culpabilisante, malgré votre totale innocence. On vous utilise pour contaminer des correspondants alliés, et cela, il faut bien le dire, vous le vivez très mal. Vous qui arrosez les plantes de vos collègues pendant leurs vacances, offrez régulièrement votre tournée à la cafété et des chocolats lors des anniversaires, qui gardez patiemment ouverte la porte de l'ascenseur pour attendre une demi-douzaine nonchalante, et connaissez le nombre d'enfants de la femme de ménage, on vous accuse à présent d'être un terroriste du GroupWise.

Vous vous sentez manipulé, grugé par cet e-mail devenu si incontournable, si convivial, quoi que vous ayez pu en penser lorsqu'on vous a installé le programme (un gadget inutile, avec le téléphone et le fax, pas besoin de ce truc, aviez-vous estimé à cette époque préhistorique). Chaque nouveau nom apparu dans le *notify* vous remplit d'angoisse; chaque en-tête devient suspect, le moindre signe d'attachement vous donne des sueurs froides. Alors souvent, vous vous absteniez de lire et effacez sans délai, n'osant vous aventurer dans les contrées dangereuses de ces courriers pleins d'incertitudes. Et vous vous retrouvez une fois de plus rempli de l'immémoriale peur de l'Autre, et vous vous barricadez, blindez, confinez, devant sans faiblir vous protéger d'une nouvelle agression de ce monde terifiant vecteur d'ennemis virtuels et microbiens...

Mais je m'emballer, et je vais réfréner ma juste consternation pour, classiquement, constater que cette fois-ci, vraiment, c.v.t.i.

Ka

# AROUND THE CORNER

## COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMITTEE

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*Union is the press organ of the ILO Staff Union. Its editorial stance and contents are determined by its Editorial Board. The communications of the Staff Union Committee, which is the executive organ of the Staff Union, are identified as such whenever they are published in Union.*

## Comments concerning the ILO grade structure

Document GB.289/PFA/18, 289<sup>th</sup> Session of the ILO Governing Body Geneva, March 2004, § 46:

*“The Director-General made a commitment at the March 2003 session of the Governing Body to control overgrading and to return the Office to a balanced, rational and justified grading structure.”*

A review of grade structure has to be related to considerations on career development, job grading exercises, selection and recruitment procedures, and organizational patterns.

In the ILO, staff do not view the above as fair, transparent or positive:

- reorganizations are conducted haphazardly;
- Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are put into jeopardy even before they are widely implemented and no alternative mechanism is being proposed;
- the Independent Review Group (IRG) is lagging behind schedule;
- Assessment Centres are not used to assess but to eliminate;
- recruitment and selection remain dominated by external appointment at career levels, based on individual preferences by uncontrolled managers;
- no succession planning is undertaken, while the demographics of the period would provide a golden opportunity to do so (153 of the 385 officials at grade P5 and above are aged 55 years and more, i.e. 40%);
- ongoing staffing reviews are conducted without questioning the organization charts (or absence of organization charts) of the sectors and units reviewed;
- the once successful Young Professional scheme is put into jeopardy by apparent lack of the political commitment required to earmark the necessary resources;
- field staff are confronted with a chronic underestimation of the importance of the tasks they actually perform as a direct interface between the ILO and its constituents, as well as being under threat of a revision of standard job descriptions for comparison purposes – already on the agenda of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) – while the versatility expected from technical specialists often acting on behalf of a whole sector or pillar of Decent Work is not taken into account when deciding on grade for a position, etc.

In the ILO the fundamental principle according to which pay levels should depend on grades linked to duties and therefore subject to review was put on hold for (officially) five years before the grading procedure became accessible again through a systematic review, where allegedly there was full delegation of responsibilities to line managers. It is no surprise after such a long period of non-grading that the exercise resulted in a certain number of promotions.

Meanwhile, external recruitment continues, according to new procedures also delegating almost full responsibility to line managers, far beyond the “regularization” of a few improper contractual situations for P staff. There were 52 external recruitments in 2003 in the Professional category, of which 35 were at P4 and above, and 31 were males (60%). Staff should

not be accountable for mismanagement, and mismanagement should not justify the flouting of basic principles.

The ILO Staff Union has long been advocating one single grade structure, as exists in the World Bank – or indeed the US civil service and other national civil servants’ grade structures – which is in no way incompatible with different ways of computing salaries or ensuring respect for quotas concerning recruitment. This option was never seriously considered by the Administration, which hides behind the common system reluctance to consider it, instead of pushing for changes to the common system – and does not seem to realize that one way of increasing the proportion of P staff at lower grades is to fill suitable vacancies through promotion of competent senior G staff, providing when necessary for the required technical training. The grade structure as such cannot be an objective. It should result from an organization chart. The ILO in fact has no organization chart with corresponding hierarchical (i.e. grade) levels, only a table listing units with names and grades attached to them.

The ICSC interferes systematically in the grading process, for G staff as well as for P staff. Simultaneous attacks by the ILO and the common system focusing on grades will result in a double penalty for staff: no career prospects, decreases in salaries, arbitrariness in establishing levels for take-home pay. This should not be ignored by the Administration: the ILO is not a stand-alone actor in the area of grading.

Comparisons with the outside world, not to mention the reproduction of outside patterns, have no legitimacy if not fully justified. When considering common system data concerning the advancement of women in the various organizations, one immediately notices that the ILO lags behind other members of the UN family.<sup>1</sup> Manipulating the grade structure will not contribute to the ILO catching up with such blatant deficiencies – the glass ceiling, particularly opaque, will become even more difficult to break in our organization, where indeed 72 of the 96 recruits at grade P5 and above between 1998 and end 2002 were male (75%).

Some professions – indeed, almost all professions or “job families” – are composed of different grade levels all based on the same core job description, where progression in responsibilities is associated with years of experience. This should be taken into account for career development. It is not at all what happens within the ILO – although it could easily be organized with a minimum of rationalization in the recruitment and selection processes.

From what is known, the way the ILO approaches the issue of grade structure falls short of two key elements: a commitment by the Administration to conduct its HR policy in full respect of the principles of fairness and equity in grading and pay levels that should characterize any civil service; and career development for serving and future staff – in order to balance internal rationalization measures (structure, work organization, job descriptions) and outside threats (from ICSC and other Agencies) with at least some orientation that staff might consider positively.

<sup>1</sup> See in particular document ICSC/58/R.9 of 17 February 2004, *Statistical review of gender balance in the organizations*.

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# AUX QUATRE COINS

## COMMUNICATION DU COMITÉ

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*Union est l'organe de presse du Syndicat du personnel du Bureau international du Travail. Son Comité de rédaction détermine la ligne éditoriale et le contenu du journal. Les communications du Comité du Syndicat, qui est l'organe exécutif du Syndicat, sont identifiées en tant que telles dès lors qu'elles sont publiées dans Union.*

## Commentaires sur la structure des grades au BIT

Document GB.289/PFA/18, 289<sup>e</sup> session du Conseil d'administration du BIT, Genève, mars 2004, § 46:

*«Le Directeur général s'est engagé lors de la session de mars 2003 du Conseil d'administration à maîtriser le phénomène de surclassement et à revenir à une structure des grades équilibrée, rationnelle et justifiée.»*

Une révision de la structure des grades doit s'effectuer en rapport avec des considérations liées à la planification des carrières, aux exercices de classification des emplois par grade, aux procédures de recrutement et de sélection ainsi qu'aux schémas organisationnels.

Au BIT, le personnel ne considère pas que ces mécanismes sont justes, transparents ou positifs:

- les réorganisations sont menées au hasard;
- les Plans de Développement Personnel (PDP) sont menacés avant même d'entrer complètement en vigueur, et aucun mécanisme alternatif n'est proposé;
- le Groupe d'examen indépendant a accumulé un retard considérable;
- les centres d'évaluation ne sont pas utilisés pour évaluer, mais pour éliminer;
- la sélection et le recrutement sont toujours dominés par des nominations externes à des niveaux des carrières, et sont basés sur les préférences individuelles de responsables techniques qui ne sont soumis à aucun contrôle;
- aucun plan de renouvellement des cadres n'est engagé, alors que les données démographiques du moment offriraient une opportunité en or de le faire (153 des 385 fonctionnaires de grades P5 et supérieurs sont âgés de 55 ans ou plus, ce qui représente 40% d'entre eux);
- les réexamens en cours de la dotation en personnel sont menés sans remise en cause de l'organigramme (ou de l'absence d'organigrammes) des secteurs et unités concernés;
- le programme des Jeunes Professionnels, naguère une réussite, est mis en péril par l'absence apparente de l'engagement politique nécessaire pour dégager les ressources requises;
- les collègues sur le terrain sont confrontés à une dévalorisation systématique de l'importance du travail qu'ils accomplissent, alors qu'ils assurent la liaison directe entre le BIT et les mandants. Ils sont, en outre, sous la menace d'une révision des normes de description des emplois utilisées avec les comparateurs déjà inscrite à l'ordre du jour de la Commission de la Fonction Publique Internationale (CFPI) – alors que la polyvalence attendue de spécialistes techniques qui agissent souvent au nom de tout un secteur ou d'un pilier du Travail Décent n'est pas prise en compte pour décider du grade d'une position, etc.

Au BIT, le principe fondamental selon lequel le niveau de salaire dépend de grades qui sont liés aux fonctions, et par conséquent sujets à révision, a été suspendu pendant (officiellement) cinq années avant que la procédure de classification des emplois ne soit à nouveau accessible par le truchement d'une révision systématique, où les supérieurs hiérarchiques avaient prétendument pleine délégation des responsabilités. Il n'est pas surprenant qu'après une aussi longue période d'interruption de la reclassification l'exercice ait abouti à un certain nombre de promotions. Ceci étant, le recrutement externe se poursuit, selon de nouvelles procédures déléguant également pratiquement toute la responsabilité aux supérieurs hiérarchiques, bien au-delà de la «régularisation» de certaines situations contractuelles incorrectes du personnel de grade P. On a ainsi procédé à 52 recrutements externes en 2003 dans la catégorie professionnelle, dont 35 au grade P4 et au-dessus, et 31 de sexe masculin (60%). Le personnel ne devrait pas être tenu pour responsable de la mauvaise gestion, et la mauvaise gestion ne devrait pas justifier la négation de principes de base.

Le Syndicat du personnel du BIT prône depuis longtemps l'instauration d'une structure unique des grades, à l'instar de la Banque Mondiale – et d'ailleurs de la fonction publique américaine et d'autres structures nationales de classification des fonctionnaires – ce qui n'est en aucune façon incompatible avec des différences dans le mode de calcul des salaires ou le respect de quotas en matière de recrutement. Cette option n'a jamais été considérée sérieusement par l'Administration, qui se cache derrière les réticences du système commun pour entrer en matière, au lieu d'agir de manière dynamique afin d'impulser des changements au système commun. L'Administration ne semble en fait pas se rendre compte qu'une façon d'augmenter la proportion de personnel de grade P aux plus bas échelons serait de pourvoir les postes vacants par une promotion des cadres supérieurs compétents du personnel G en leur dispensant, le cas échéant, la formation technique nécessaire.

La structure des grades ne peut pas être un objectif en soi. Elle devrait être le résultat d'un organigramme. De fait, le BIT n'a pas d'organigramme avec la structure hiérarchique correspondante, c'est-à-dire les niveaux de grades, mais uniquement un tableau énumérant des unités avec les noms et les grades qui y sont rattachés.

La CFPI interfère systématiquement dans le processus de classification des emplois, tant pour le personnel G que pour le personnel P. Les attaques simultanées du BIT et du système commun se concentrant sur les grades auront pour conséquence une double pénalisation du personnel: pas de perspective de carrière, une diminution des salaires, la détermination arbitraire des niveaux de salaire net.

Tout cela ne devrait pas être ignoré par l'Administration: le BIT n'est pas un acteur autonome en matière de classification des grades.

Les comparaisons avec le monde extérieur, et plus encore la reproduction de schémas tiers, ne sont pas légitimes si elles ne sont pas totalement justifiées. Lorsqu'on considère les données du système commun en matière de promotion de la femme dans les différentes organisations<sup>1</sup>, on remarque immédiatement que le BIT est à la traîne des autres membres de la famille de l'ONU. Ce n'est pas en manipulant la structure des grades que le BIT rattrapera des déficiences aussi flagrantes – le plafond de verre particulièrement opaque deviendra de plus en plus difficile à briser dans notre organisation, où, de fait, 72 personnes sur les 96 recrutées aux grades P5 et supérieurs entre 1998 et fin 2002 étaient des hommes (75%).

Certaines professions – en fait, presque toutes les professions ou «familles d'emplois» – sont composées de différents niveaux de grades tous basés sur la même description de poste, avec une progression dans les responsabilités associées aux années d'expérience. Cela devrait être pris en compte pour la planification de la carrière. Ce n'est pas du tout ce qui se passe au sein du BIT – alors qu'il serait facile de l'organiser, avec un minimum de rationalisation dans les processus de recrutement et de sélection.

Pour ce qui en est connu, l'approche à la structure des grades au BIT omet dès lors deux éléments cruciaux: l'engagement de l'administration à mener sa politique en matière de Ressources humaines dans le respect total des principes de justice et d'équité pour la classification des grades et les niveaux de salaire qui devraient caractériser toute fonction publique; la planification de carrières pour le personnel actuel et futur – afin de contrebalancer mesures de rationalisation interne (la structure, l'organisation du travail, les descriptions de postes) et menaces extérieures (de la CFPI et d'autres agences) par, au moins, certaines orientations dans lesquelles le personnel pourrait se reconnaître.

<sup>1</sup> Voir notamment le document ICSC/58/R.9 du 17 février 2004, *Statistical review of gender balance in the organizations*.

## Comentarios sobre la estructura de grados de la OIT

Documento GB.289/PFA/18, 289ª Sesión del Consejo de Administración de la OIT, Ginebra, marzo de 2004, para- 46:

*“El Director General se comprometió en el Consejo de Administración de marzo de 2003 a controlar la sobreclasificación y devolver a la Oficina una estructura de clasificación de los puestos equilibrada, racional y justificada”.*

Una revisión de la estructura de clasificación tiene que estar vinculada a consideraciones sobre el desarrollo de la carrera, los ejercicios de clasificación, los procesos de selección de personal, y a la estructura organizacional.

En la OIT, los funcionarios no perciben que lo anterior se haga de forma justa, transparente o positiva.

- Las reorganizaciones se realizan al azar.
- Los Planes de Desarrollo Personal (PDP) están en peligro ya antes de que se hayan podido poner en práctica de forma generalizada y sin que se haya propuesto ningún mecanismo alternativo.
- El Grupo de Revisión Independiente (GRI) lleva retraso con respecto a lo planeado.
- Los centros de evaluación no se utilizan para evaluar sino para descartar candidatos.
- Los procesos de contratación y selección siguen dominados por las contrataciones externas basadas en las preferencias individuales de directivos sin control.
- No hay planes de reemplazo del personal, cuando los datos demográficos proporcionan una oportunidad de oro para hacerlo (153 de los 385 funcionarios de nivel P5 y superior, es decir, el 40% de ellos, tienen 55 años de edad o más).
- Los análisis de personal (*staffing review*) continuos se están llevando a cabo sin cuestionar el organigrama (o la ausencia de él) de los sectores y unidades revisados.
- El Programa de ingreso a la carrera para jóvenes profesionales, que llegó a tener éxito en su día, está en peligro por la aparente falta de compromiso político para destinar los recursos necesarios.
- El personal del terreno se enfrenta a una infravaloración crónica de la importancia de las tareas que realiza como eslabón directo entre la OIT y los constituyentes, bajo la amenaza de una revisión de las descripciones de los puestos con fines comparativos que ya está en la agenda de la Comisión de la Función Pública Internacional (CFPI), al tiempo que la versatilidad que se espera de los especialistas técnicos, que a menudo actúan como representantes de todo un sector o como pilar del trabajo decente, no se tiene en cuenta al determinar el grado que se asigna al puesto.

En la OIT el principio fundamental bajo el cual los niveles de remuneración deberían depender de los grados vinculados a las tareas y por ello, sujetos a revisión, fue suspendido (oficialmente) 5 años antes de que los procedimientos de reclasificación fuesen de nuevo accesibles mediante una revisión sistemática, en la cual había supuestamente una total delegación de responsabilidades a los directores. No es de sorprender que tras un período tan largo sin reclasificación, el ejercicio resultase en un gran número de promociones.

Mientras tanto, conforme a los nuevos procedimientos, la contratación externa se delega casi totalmente en los directores, mucho más allá de la “regularización” de algunos profesionales con situaciones contractuales incorrectas. En 2003 hubo 52 contrataciones externas en la categoría profesional, de los cuales 35 fueron al nivel P4 y superior, y con 60% de hombres (31 contrataciones). El personal no debería ser responsable de la mala gestión de la dirección, y la mala gestión no debería justificar la negación de principios básicos.

El Sindicato de la OIT ha venido defendiendo desde hace ya tiempo el establecimiento de una única estructura de grados, como ocurre en el Banco Mundial o en la administración pública de los EE.UU. o de otros países, lo que no es de ninguna forma incompatible con las diferentes formas de cálculo de salarios o el respeto de las cuotas en la selección del personal. Esta opción no ha sido nunca considerada seriamente por la administración, postura que esconde detrás la reticencia del sistema común, cuyos cambios no son impulsados. La Administración parece no darse cuenta de que una forma de aumentar la proporción de personal profesional en los grados más bajos es cubrir las vacantes a través de la promoción de personal G competente con experiencia, proporcionando la formación técnica adecuada cuando sea necesario.

Una estructura de grados no puede ser un objetivo en sí mismo, sino el resultado de una estructura organizacional. De hecho la OIT no cuenta con un organigrama con los correspondientes niveles jerárquicos y sus grados, sino un simple cuadro en el que se enumeran las unidades con los nombres y los grados atribuidos a las personas.

El CISC interfiere sistemáticamente en el proceso de establecimiento de los grados tanto para el personal de nivel G como el de nivel P. Los ataques por parte de la OIT y el sistema común al mismo tiempo tendrán como resultado una doble penalización para el personal: ausencia de perspectiva de carrera, disminución salarial, arbitrariedad en el establecimiento de niveles de sueldo neto. La Administración no debería ignorar el hecho de que la OIT no es un actor autónomo en el área de estructuración de los grados.

Las comparaciones con el mundo exterior, y aun más la reproducción de modelos externos, carecen de legitimidad si no están totalmente justificadas. Cuando se consideran los datos del sistema común relativos al progreso de las mujeres en las respectivas organizaciones uno se da cuenta inmediatamente que la OIT está por detrás de otros miembros de la familia de las NU1. La manipulación del sistema de grados no contribuirá a que la OIT reduzca estas deficiencias tan flagrantes – el techo de cristal especialmente opaco será aún más difícil de romper en nuestra organización, en la que de hecho 72 de las 96 contrataciones con nivel P5 y superior entre 1998 y finales de 2002 fueron hombres (75%).

Algunas profesiones, de hecho, casi todas las profesiones o “familias de laborales” se componen de diferentes niveles de grado todos ellos basados en la misma descripción profesional básica en la que la evolución de las responsabilidades está asociada a los años de experiencia. Esto debe tenerse en cuenta para el desarrollo profesional. Esto es todo lo contrario a lo que ocurre en la OIT, aunque podría organizarse fácilmente con un mínimo de racionalización en los procesos de contratación y selección.

Por lo que se conoce, la forma en la que la OIT enfoca el tema de la estructura de grados carece de dos elementos clave: un compromiso por parte de la Administración de llevar a cabo su política de recursos humanos con total respeto de los principios de justicia y equidad en los grados y en los niveles salariales, que debería caracterizar cualquier administración pública, y el desarrollo profesional para el personal actual y futuro, con el fin de equilibrar las medidas de racionalización internas (estructura, organización del trabajo, descripciones de los puestos) y las amenazas externas (del CISC y otras agencias) con al menos cierto grado de orientación que el personal pueda considerar positiva.

<sup>1</sup>. Ver principalmente el documento CISC/58/R.9 del 17 de febrero de 2004, *Statistical review of gender balance in the organizations* [Revisión estadística del equilibrio de sexos en las organizaciones].

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# Our health insurance: How are we doing?

In December 2002 you elected the undersigned to a three-year term as your representatives to the Management Committee of the ILO/ITU Staff Health Insurance Fund. After one year in office, it is appropriate to inform you of where we stand and what the current situation and prospects of the SHIF are.

## The SHIF management committee

The SHIF provides access to the best available medical care world-wide, based on free choice of practitioners and health-care providers, within the limits of the current schedule of benefits. These benefits are available to all staff and former officials of the ILO and ITU as well as to their dependants at a reasonable cost. Our objective is to maintain the long term financial viability of the mutual insurance fund and improve on the levels of benefits when desirable and possible. The SHIF is managed by a bipartite committee composed of eight members (six from ILO and two from ITU) representing the insured persons and an equal number representing the administration. The current chair of the committee is Jacques Bacaly, insured member representative from ITU.

## Administration of the SHIF

The position of executive secretary of the Fund has been vacant since 2001. A competition was finally opened in early 2003. Regrettably, the person selected after a lengthy process decided at the last moment not to accept the position. We have repeatedly insisted that the Human Resources Department expedite selection and recruitment procedures, and will continue to do so. Current arrangements are only interim and hence not satisfactory. The daily operations of the Fund are affected by the absence of a full-time executive secretary.

## Financial situation

The year 2003 ended with an operational deficit of over 3.7 million dollars (12 per cent of total benefits paid), the second only annual deficit since 1994. The well-endowed Guarantee Fund will absorb this deficit. There is no immediate threat to the financial viability of the SHIF, but certainly cause for concern. An actuarial evaluation is currently underway. It should provide elements to assess future options. Contribution rates have remained unchanged since 1990 at 5.6 per cent per insured person, paid half (2.8 per cent) by each contributing member and half by the employer. There is no comparable health insurance fund with unchanged rates for such a long period.

A major cause of the 2003 deficit is the sharp increase in benefits paid to former officials compared to previous years. Health expenditures tend to increase with age, but the SHIF operates on a solidarity principle which also runs from serving to former officials. The surprise in 2003 however lies in the rate of increase of benefits paid to former officials. The ratio of benefits paid per dollar contributed jumped to 1.54 in 2003 against an average of 1.3 for 1999-2002, an increase of 18.5 per cent. This compares with the lower ratio for serving members (0.84 in 2003) which increased by 7.7 per cent over the same period.

This is not the consequence of an increase in the share of former officials in total membership (a stable 31 per cent of total membership of 12,085 in 2003). In addition, the ratio of dependants to contributing members has been improving and is in 2003 just below unity (0.99) from an average of 1.035 over 1999-2002.

The answer lies essentially in higher health care consumption and expenditure, particularly in the Geneva/France area which concentrates close to 80 per cent of total SHIF expenditure.

Higher health care expenditure is not necessarily the result of an increase in the price of health services. The Geneva consumer price index increased by 0.9 per cent in 2003 (December to December), and 1.2 per cent for its health services component (the May 2000 = 100 index stood respectively at 103.3 and 101.8 in December 2003). Greater health consumption and new higher-priced health technology are the two essential explanations of higher health expenditures. This is a reflection of healthier and longer lives to which we all aspire.

Another adverse factor has been the weakness in the US dollar (the dollar/Swiss franc exchange rate moved from an average of 1.58 in 2002 to 1.35 in 2003). Contributions are paid in dollars, but close to 80 per cent of the expenditures are made in either Swiss franc or Euro. The weak dollar has therefore increased expenditure automatically by over 10 per cent as well as diminished benefits for members in areas with a rising national currency/dollar exchange rate. The Management Committee is considering a number of measures to maintain real benefit levels in the face of adverse exchange rate movements. For example, the maximum approved expense for daily accommodation in a hospital in Switzerland has been raised to its North America level.

## Improving benefits

The benefits for long-term nursing services in an institution have been improved in 2003, with a higher ceiling maintained over the benefit period. A revision of long-term nursing services at home is also in preparation. Whenever possible, care at home as an alternative to care in an institution is an option we wish to encourage. Further improvements in benefits are under discussion. The financial impact of any such measures is assessed carefully prior to any recommendation to the management committee.

## Cost containment measures

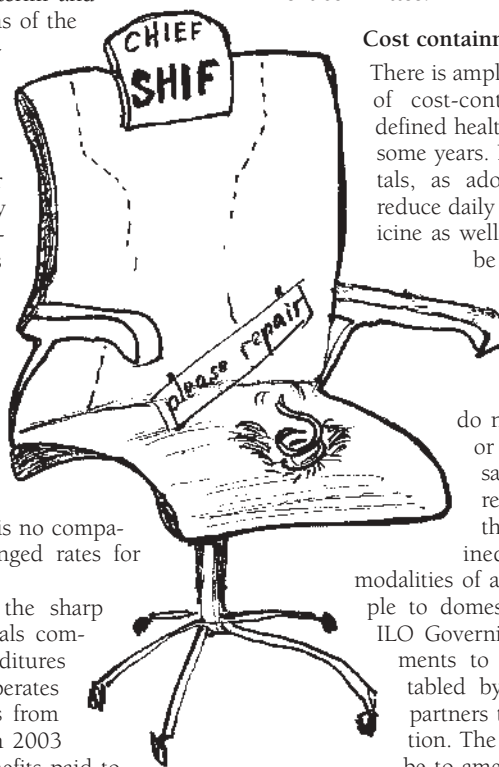
There is ample scope for vigorously pursuing a range of cost-containing measures. Agreements with defined health care providers have been in effect for some years. Direct payment of major bills to hospitals, as adopted by WHO, would considerably reduce daily costs. Incentives for lower priced medicine as well as for preventive measures could also be a consideration. Responsible behaviour on the part of members needs to be rewarded.

## Equality of treatment

Serving officials with dependants who do not qualify as spouse under either ILO or ITU Staff Regulations (non-married same or opposite sex couples) are currently denied SHIF benefits. We raised this matter in May 2003 and have examined with the Management Committee modalities of applying the non-discrimination principle to domestic partners as recommended by the ILO Governing Body in November 2001. Amendments to SHIF regulations have recently been tabled by ILO. These would enable domestic partners to benefit from SHIF voluntary protection. The more direct and preferred route would be to amend the Staff Regulations. Pending this, SHIF should take the lead. A final decision would require approval of members.

At and in between meetings of the management committee, your representatives are actively pursuing all the above issues and many others, including the regrettable occurrence of cases of fraud. These find no sympathy from us.

The SHIF is an essential part of our employment contract. Under present arrangements it serves its purpose well. We would like to keep it so. Achieving that will require some reforms in order to maintain its essential characteristics. Should you have any suggestions or comments regarding the management of the SHIF we would welcome these.



# Happy Birthday!

(A dual celebration for the ILO, May 2004)

“Labour is not a commodity; freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress; poverty everywhere constitutes a danger for prosperity everywhere.” These are the introductory statements in the Declaration of Philadelphia, the text of which is now annexed to the ILO Constitution. This Declaration was adopted on 10 May 1944 by the International Labour Conference at its 26th session. Edward Phelan from Ireland was then Director-General of the Office. An exhibition of historical documents on the Montreal period and events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Philadelphia marks that historic date in this, the Organization’s 85th anniversary year. Through *Union* it is an occasion to share birthday greetings, to reflect on the present, look to the future and reiterate our belief in the values and ideals that are relevant to the ILO in progress towards its centenary.

The ILO has played a significant part in creating a fundamental charter of human rights in the field of labour. The Declaration of Philadelphia indeed preceded the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which, otherwise, might not have included as many references to workers’ rights as it actually does. Learned and lengthy volumes representing the vast ILO body of work have been written and translated into many languages and disseminated throughout the world. They cover the the Organization’s great social and technical achievements. The Office archives and records are rich in material and precious historical documents from its founding through the early years; its unique tripartite characteristics; the wartime upheaval when it was evacuated to Montreal; its institutional and structural problems; its survival through politically perilous and financially hard times; not to mention profiles of its many personalities and devoted staff who have made their individual and collective contributions to the work of the Office over the years and worldwide.

## The ILO and the world of work

The International Labour Organization was created in 1919, at the end of the First World War, by the treaty concluding the Peace Conference which convened first in Paris, then at Versailles. It is also the oldest specialized agency of the United Nations. The need for such an organization had been advocated in the 19th century by two industrialists, Robert Owen (1771-1853) of Wales and Daniel Legrand (1783-1859) of France. The initial motivation was humanitarian but it was accompanied by political and social needs. The condition of workers, more and more numerous and exploited with no consideration for their health, their family lives or their advancement, was less and less acceptable. This concern appears clearly in the Preamble of the Constitution of the ILO which cites “conditions of labour... involving... injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people”. The ILO’s raison d’être is clearly set out there and can be summed up in few words: to contribute to universal and lasting peace through the promotion and development of social justice. Its values have been fundamental to the international recognition and authority of the Organization.

The unique feature of the ILO is its tripartite structure. Wherever people are at work, their problems are in some way the concern of the Organization. Since its founding, the ILO has brought workers’, employers’ and government representatives together to devise measures to improve the conditions and welfare of working people all over the world. The dialogue which the ILO stimulates among the three constituents is the source of its authority. Three main bodies enable the ILO to accomplish its work: the International Labour Conference (ILC), the Governing Body (GB) and the International Labour Office. To accomplish its task, it uses three complementary methods of work: setting international standards and supervising their observance; extending technical cooperation in the field to member States; conducting research and collecting and disseminating information.

## International recognition

On the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the ILO in 1969, the President of the Prize Committee stated: “Have the fine words in a solemn document come true, or were

they merely writing in the sand, a remote vision glimpsed by unpractical dreamers? As we look around at the everyday world around us today, we are compelled to admit that many of the aims that the ILO set itself have been achieved in many parts of the industrialised world. Working earnestly and untiringly the ILO has succeeded in introducing reforms that have removed the most flagrant injustices in a great many countries.”

In keeping with its universal mandate, the ILO has taken a public stand on many political and social issues affecting the world of work and has received many heads of State and international dignitaries who have addressed the ILC, held annually in June. The ILO influence reaches the highest levels of spiritual organizations, including the churches.<sup>1</sup> For example, the encyclical *Laborem exercens* issued by Pope John-Paul II on 15 September 1981 is essentially devoted to human work and, even more, to man in the vast context of the reality of work, making explicit reference to the ILO. (On 15 June 1982, Pope John Paul II addressed a special sitting of the Conference.)

Concerns expressed by such spiritual authorities actually coincide with those of the ILO. The pope’s encyclical talks of the world being “on the eve of new developments in technological, economic and political conditions which, according to many experts, will influence the world of work and production no less than the industrial revolution of the [19th] century”. Whether the economic system is capitalist or socialist, he states, “it is always man who is the purpose of the work.” The pope discusses just remuneration for work, the rights of unions, the rights and responsibilities of management, roles of women, multinational corporations, workers with disabilities and other labour questions. “There is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading



of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger.”

Two ILO publications, *Dossiers I* and *II* (ed. by Louis Christiaens, 1992), cover the social writings over historical periods on themes within the ILO core mandate. In French only, they encompass a collection of scholarly texts with extensive references on social and moral teaching that relate to the ILO. They include extracts from statements and debates from many of the tripartite meetings and conferences highlighting crucial issues that continue to pose challenges for the Organization, its head, and staff of the Office into the 21st century.

## The Staff Union and the International Labour Office

Almost as soon as the ILO was created and started recruiting staff, the latter organized as a union. The 85th anniversary of the ILO will be the 84th for its Staff Union. It exists to defend and promote the professional, economic and social interests of all persons in the employment of the ILO. Laid down in the Preamble to Union Rules, its fundamental orientations are not at odds with those of the Organization:

“1. To uphold the principles of accountability, transparency and equal opportunity in all the structures and activities of the Union.

2. To pursue and promote the creation and operation of collective bargaining mechanisms within the ILO and in the United Nations system, with a view to improving conditions of employment and work through collective agreements.
  3. To improve the principles of democracy and solidarity among the staff of the ILO and among the staff unions and staff associations in the United Nations system.
  4. To defend the independence, status and safety of international civil servants.
  5. To defend the fundamental rights and principles embodied in the Constitution of the ILO and the Declaration of Philadelphia.”
- The Staff Union and its representatives play an important role in promoting staff-management relations within the Office. This role is recognized in the Staff Regulations and confirmed in the Recognition and Procedural Agreement between the ILO and the Staff Union. The documents governing the Staff Union and protection of its elected representatives are contained both in Union Rules and in Office Circular No. 448 (Rev. 1), Series 6, both revised in late 2003. A very interesting brochure published in 1973, *The Staff Union of the International Labour Office: Its origin and the commencement of its activities*, provides illustrated explanations on how the ILO principles of collective bargaining, workers’ rights and freedom of association started being implemented for staff in the ILO as early as 1920. The archives of the Staff Union and its magazine *Union* are a precious source of information relating to its work for those who have served as representatives and elected Staff Union Committee members over the years. *Union* is the official organ of the Union, published by the Committee, with the collaboration of an Editorial Board.

The International Labour Office in Geneva is the permanent secretariat of the ILO. Its head is the Director-General who is appointed by the tripartite GB. Since 1919, nine men have led the ILO. Following Albert Thomas, sociologist and wartime French cabinet minister (1919-32); Harold Butler, UK (1932-38); John Winant, US (1939-41); Edward Phelan, Ireland (1941-48); David Morse, US (1948-70); Wilfred Jenks, UK (1970-73); Francis Blanchard, France (1974-89); and Michel Hansenne, Belgium (1989-99), on 23 March 1998 Chile’s Juan Somavia was elected by the GB to serve as the ninth Director-General. His five-year term of office began on 4 March 1999, when he became the first representative from the southern hemisphere to head the Organization. In March 2003, he was re-elected for a second five-year term to take effect from March 2004. Since taking office, Mr. Somavia has taken up the challenge presented by the rapidly changing economy. In 1999, he submitted his Decent Work Agenda to the ILC, and it was subsequently endorsed by the GB and the Conference. It is significant that in receiving a second five-year mandate, Mr. Somavia called the vote for his re-election an endorsement of the Organization’s ongoing efforts to deliver dignity to workers and decency to work. He pledged to “work together for a new social contract based on decent work for all and a globalization that leaves no one behind.” It would make a splendid Happy Birthday and a dual celebration for the ILO in May 2004.

**Ita Marguet** ■

<sup>1</sup> A recent ILO publication explores some of these issues: *Philosophical and spiritual perspectives on Decent Work* (2004), ed. by Dominique Peccoud.

## HIV/AIDS and the ILO workplace: Among the world’s most affected populations

According to a UNAIDS discussion paper, the prevalence of HIV among UN workers is estimated at 5 per cent. This makes the UN system among the most affected populations in the world. As the paper says, “If the UN were a country, it would be among the 30 most-affected nations, trailing closely behind Haiti and Uganda.” In February 2004, a group representative of the UN system, comprising around 38 organizations, met in Geneva and heard ILO present a report on HIV/AIDS personnel policies and staff programmes in the UN workplace and their compliance with the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work.<sup>1</sup> The inter-agency group on HIV/AIDS had designated the ILO as the lead agency to look at the UN’s own practices and how they measure up, taking into account such questions as contract status, gender equality, occupational safety and health, social dialogue and training. The exercise forms part of the Secretary General’s programme for UN workplace reform, and his promise to make the UN a good and responsible employer.

### “Business as usual” inadequate to deal with HIV/AIDS

The compliance report found that while the UN system has a policy on HIV/AIDS and has committed itself to a rights-based response, in line with the ILO code, in fact many gaps remain. Monitoring and accountability are poor or non-existent; and information is often unavailable to staff, especially on issues perceived to represent the greatest concern, like the situation of uninsured, subcontracted and precarious workers. No indicators are in place to monitor effectiveness, no system-wide evaluation of the impact of HIV/AIDS has been undertaken, and there has been no review of the implications for the overall human resources framework. While an HIV/AIDS focal point now exists in HR and the development of core indicators for monitoring is underway, addressing HIV/AIDS is a catalytic as much as a bureaucratic exercise since it raises (to adapt a phrase from the ILO Gender Audit) many “beyond HIV/AIDS” issues. These have a wide relevance for the organization and staff bearing on workplace culture, human resources and management practices. “Business as usual” is manifestly inadequate.

Yet too often HIV/AIDS is still seen as an obscure issue. A recent learning needs assessment survey was undertaken on HIV/AIDS

in the UN workplace covering almost 8,000 staff members – about 10 per cent of the entire UN system – from 82 country and headquarters locations; about a third were international Professionals, a third General Service and a fifth national Professionals. In the field, 89 per cent of respondents were based in capital cities and 11 per cent in other locations. Seventeen per cent reported that they do not fully understand what HIV is, 74 per cent said they do not understand the basics of treatment, and only 25 per cent said they have ever been tested, either inside or outside the UN. While 5 per cent reported knowing that they are HIV-positive and being unwilling to reveal this for fear of losing their job or being treated differently, 41 per cent said that they don’t know their HIV status but worry that seeking this information might be perceived negatively. Overall, 95 per cent agreed that people with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to work at the UN, although numbers varied by agency and by job category, with as many as 11 per cent of some categories disagreeing.

The issues have come to a head in some country offices. The UN has been attacked by the activist group, Global AIDS Alliance, for the failure of its office in Nairobi to meet minimum standards for its workers, in particular with regard to the protection of the rights of people with HIV/AIDS and “indirect” workers. It pointed out that while the UN encourages employers to promote good business practices and provide for both direct and indirect employees, it engages in a double standard on its own premises. The Alliance put forward some proposals for safeguarding these rights. These include clauses in procurement contracts that compel employers making tenders to the UN to ensure that their employees have appropriate HIV/AIDS-related benefits and to meet minimum standards.

A solution has been found at that office. The UN office in Nairobi will now require contractors to provide an eight-point health and welfare package, including the provision of anti-retroviral drugs, to any staff members who work at least half the week at the UN campus in Kenya.<sup>2</sup> The programme represents the first of its kind for the UN. Under the new agreement, the UN will require contractors to offer healthcare cover, including antiretroviral drugs, to 390 workers. The agreement also calls for contractors to increase wages, subsidize transportation and provide four months of maternity leave.

Klaus Toepfer of the UN office in Nairobi said, “The UN takes its responsibility in its host countries seriously and we sincerely believe we have come up with a fair and balanced package that reflects the social, health and economic realities of Africa. We

hope the new pay and conditions that will affect all future contracts with the UN here in Kenya will become a blueprint for improved terms and conditions for employees of UN contractors across Africa and the developing world.”

#### Time to act

It's clear that HIV/AIDS is not an isolated issue but goes to the heart of Decent Work. The ILO has its own personnel policy on HIV/AIDS, issued in 2001 and based on the ILO Code of Practice. The compliance report sets out the gaps in implementation and proposes practical steps to ensure that the rights of those in the UN workplace are protected in line with the employer's responsibilities and the exigencies of a modern workplace. It's now time to act.

In order to hasten and make concrete the implementation of the ILO personnel policy, the Staff Union has consulted widely to draw

up a collective bargaining agreement on HIV/AIDS proffered in 2001. This has not, however, been signed. The point is that the UN must live up to agreed standards – and beyond that, to its own obligations and aspirations – when it comes to being a good employer.

Sonia Smith ■

<sup>1</sup>. Copies of the full report and its annexes are available from the ILO/AIDS programme

<sup>2</sup>. Quoted from kaisernetwork.org Daily Reports (25 July 2003), “UN Office in Kenya Calls for Contractors to Provide Health Care Coverage, Including HIV Care, to Workers”:

[http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily\\_reports/rep\\_index.cfm?DR\\_ID=18965](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=18965)

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Collective disagreement

I refer to a mistaken (?) statement made by the SUC in your last issue, which I think requires a clarification.

**The statement.** “It may well be of interest to note that when the first agreement on grievances was concluded in September 2000, the staff was informed through a joint Union-HRD bulletin six weeks after the agreement had been signed.”

**The facts.** The SUC presented the objectives and principles to be incorporated to all the agreements at the January 2000 AGM:

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1237.htm>;

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1233.htm>.

It published several calls to the membership interested in work within the Union working groups:

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1236.htm>.

The texts of the draft agreements were submitted to the shop stewards before finalizing the negotiation and initialling the

texts; a Joint Bulletin was issued together with HRD providing more details as the basis for the future agreement:

<http://mirror/intranet/english/bureau/pers/news/per-news/2000/hrd.htm>.

A Staff Union bulletin was published –

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1251.htm>

– when it was initialled for entry in force on January 2001.

The issue was raised again at the October AGM –

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1253.htm>

– and again in the address of the Chairperson to the PFA:

<http://mirror/public/english/staffun/info/bulletin/b1255.htm>.

I think it would be reasonable to say that if anyone had opposed the text or the content of the agreement, s/he had several months to make it known to the SUC and to the membership.

I hope this clarifies the issue.

Fraternally,

Fernando Peral

Former SUC member ■

## FAHRENHEIT 451

### Un jour...

En lisant son journal, on pourrait apprendre que des banques annoncent des bénéfices record tout en ne voyant pas la nécessité de s'encombrer de poids morts telles des bibliothèques.

On pourrait se lever, allumer sa radio et apprendre qu'un pays a envahi un autre en se gardant d'empêcher le saccage de ses musées et bibliothèques.

Dans une Organisation internationale, on pourrait être convoqué dans le bureau de son/sa chef(fe) pour apprendre que cette personne a été informée d'une décision déjà prise de transfor-

mer et d'occuper les locaux d'une bibliothèque unanimement considérée comme unique en son genre.

Le cas échéant, on serait amené à considérer qu'il y a un changement radical dans la philosophie de cette Organisation. En effet, si elle se plaisait à claironner que la seule richesse dont elle dispose est de nature intellectuelle, comment pourrait-elle expliquer sinon le démantèlement, du moins l'affaiblissement de la structure d'appoint à cette production intellectuelle?

Est-ce à dire que la MÉMOIRE est devenue superflue dans ce siècle où un click de souris peut effacer toute une mémoire? Vous voyez bien qu'on est en pleine fiction. Continuez donc à ronronner.

Wisler Frédéric ■

## De hechos y de palabras

Todos estamos atónitos, consternados, no hay palabras para expresar la sorpresa de la decisión que se ha tomado con la invasión de la Biblioteca. ¿Qué deben estar sintiendo sus muros ocupados, sin pedirles ni voz ni voto? ¿Cuántos recuerdos se evaporan en el largo deambular de su pasado? ¿Y quién va a explicar al mandante trabajador, empleador y gubernamental que SU Biblioteca se reduce? ¿Se destapa un santo para vestir a otro?

La Biblioteca es una referencia esencial de la OIT, es lugar de encuentro, de distensión, de diálogo, como nuestra sala de estar, familiar, donde cada cual encuentra su propio rincón, realizando investigaciones, leyendo la prensa, preparando informes, consultando la vasta documentación y el servicio de Internet, en una palabra encontrándose cada cual consigo mismo. ¡El espacio! el espacio define lo que somos y nos identifica con él. Este espacio se reduce, y se reduce ¡sin consultar a sus propios usuarios! ¿Se han sopesado los efectos? ¿Cuáles son los objetivos verdaderos que esconde la iniciativa tomada?

No se trata de que se tenga necesidad o no, pues de todos es claro

que siempre hay necesidades, y ¡de última hora! que precisan tomar decisiones rápidas, pero, ¡por favor! que sean consecuentes.

Se trata del principio, de las formas, del procedimiento, y sobre todo tratándose de donde vienen, de una institución como la OIT, nuestra organización, centro neurálgico donde se defienden los principios de la participación, la negociación y las consultas. ¿Cómo es posible menospreciar la existencia de los que están implicados en tal decisión? ¿O es que se sabe ya de antemano que no se actúa bien y se decide actuar unilateralmente?

Las prisas, las dificultades en la toma de decisiones no deben soterrar principios que son pilares fundamentales, pero parece ser que los que los defienden luego no los ponen en práctica. Las personas no son cosas, no son productos de usar y tirar. Desgraciadamente, la tendencia, en los tiempos que corren, es la de no respetarse a sí mismo, y por ende no respetar a los demás.

¡La justicia social debe estar llorando amargamente, acurrucada, en cuclillas, aislada en un rincón de SU Biblioteca, por ver con impotencia cómo se desvanecen sus esfuerzos con esta última intervención a corazón abierto en su propio seno!

DdC ■