

# Organising for global union growth



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Call centre organisers from around the world gathered in Nyon, Switzerland for a three-day seminar

## Organising

## Joint mission to build union strength

The future of trade unions depends on growth - reaching out to new members and creating new agendas.

The role of a global union like UNI is to help national unions grow in the multinational companies - and help spread best recruitment and organising practices from country to country. UNI Development helps build the expertise and resources that unions in developing countries need while UNI Women and Youth focus on the needs of these fast growing contingents of the global workforce.

Giving low pay the red card to help janitors



UNI has set up a global organising fund and sectors have become global unions in their own right with their own organising targets.

Union alliances bring together unions across the world who deal with the same multinational and many are currently negotiating or campaigning for global agreements with these companies to ensure labour rights wherever they operate.

Quebecor unions have new colleagues in Chile and Peru and a neutrality agreement with management in the USA.

Nordic unions are helping to organise commerce workers in the new European Union members in Eastern Europe.

US unions are helping to organise property workers in Europe, Africa and Asia - and to prepare commerce unions in Wal-Mart's new target countries.

Media and entertainment unions - long used to representing freelance and casual workers - are expanding in new countries.

New services are being developed - often IT-based - to cater for the growing number of independent professionals.

And unions are being launched or stimulated in the new IT centres and back offices of India and in the fast growing logistics companies like DHL.

"In a global labour market we have a global mission. It means the well organised helping the less organised and local actions producing global strength," says UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings.

# Report



## Action month focus on stress

Stress was the focus of this year's Call Centre Action Month, coordinated by UNI global union.

The campaign slogan was "stop the BOSS" (Burn-Out Stress Syndrome) and followed UNI's first ever conference for call centre workers in Athens in October 2005, which identified stress as a major

issue for customer service professionals around the world.

Anti-stress kits were produced for the action month with an introduction to yoga, a stress ball, herbal tea and even a CD with relaxing music.

About 40 union organisers in call centres also attended a three-day seminar to look at ways to improve union membership and organisation.

There was a discussion with the International Labour Organisation and global union the ICFTU over building global standards for the industry.

The seminar looked at ways to build union networks in the emerging giants of the call centre industry.

It was agreed to set up new union e-alliances in Transcom, TDC and SNT and to expand existing union alliances in Telefónica and Vodafone.

UNI will facilitate these alliances and will produce a guide to the conventions and instruments of the International Labour Organisation on labour rights that could help unions in their organising work.



Call centre workers protest in Kuala Lumpur at Telekom Malaysia's move to outsource their jobs without negotiations

There was a strong call for more information to be pooled between unions organising call centres in different parts of the world.

UNI plans to set up a database on the call centre multinationals.

"Growing the membership is important so that unions can tackle the problems call centre workers face and put their issues on the bargaining agenda," UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings told the media.

Activities around the world included:

**USA:** leafleting and the CWA published its latest report on conditions in call centres jointly compiled by unions in the US and India and Jobs with Justice.

**India:** UNI-launched UNITES plans to negotiate HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in call and back office processing centres in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation.

**Germany:** ver.di brought together call centre reps for a conference.

**Belgium:** LBC-CNE press launched a leafleting campaign in Belgian call centres.

**Brazil:** SINTETEL repeated its successful formula of training seminars aimed at young women workers in the call centre industry.

**Philippines:** unions are drawing up an action plan and training programme in conjunction with the ILO.

## Organising the atypical worker

Unions at the UNI ICT Forum in Barcelona in June were urged to reinvent themselves to become more relevant to independently minded IT workers and to the growing number of freelance workers.

They were urged to adopt best practices from a whole range of initiatives by unions around the world to reach out to the new workers and to tailor new services to their needs.

"We can't sell a company for life but we can sell a trade union for life," said UNI's Gerhard Rohde.

The biggest provider of MBAs in Australia is a trade union - APESMA - and half their membership is not covered by collective agreements.

### NEWS FLASH

UNI-Americas Women's Committee heard of organising successes among finance workers in Brazil, call centre workers in Peru, contract workers in the Caribbean and Chile - and developing links to women in Processing Zones in Nicaragua.

Unions like SIF Sweden and Connect UK provide career counselling and help members write CVs and job applications.

UNI has helped launch new worker organisations in India in response to the growth of hi-tech industries there and offshoring of jobs from the USA and Europe.

The IT Professional Forum movement has established itself in a number of Indian cities and UNITES - aimed at call centre and back office workers - has already signed its first agreement.

In Japan finance and other unions are playing an active role in the campaign to bring part time workers and those working in subsidiary companies into unions.

In March Japanese affiliate NWJ hosted a major conference to step up the recruitment of professional and managerial staff.

Unions in UNI's media and entertainment global union - UNI MEI - have long organised freelancers.

They are pressing to remove legal restrictions on freelancers negotiating collectively and in Latin America are currently supporting the launch of collecting societies to ensure payment for the use of their work.

# Building a global Wal-Mart alliance

Retail trade unions from around the world met in Berlin at the end of June to launch an Alliance Against Wal-Martisation.

There is growing cooperation between unions organising in Wal-Mart and it reflects a heavy focus by UNI Commerce on the key multi-nationals.

Global deals with Carrefour, H&M and Metro have already emerged and targets in the industry for new agreements include the UK's biggest retailer Tesco which now employs 50,000 workers overseas and is moving into the USA.

In Poland and Hungary UNI Commerce has helped broker favourable social partnership agreements with Tesco, modelled on the Usdaw example in the UK.

Wal-Mart is not just viciously anti-union on its US and Canadian homebase - closing the Jonquière store in Canada after its workers won legal recognition for the UFCW-Canada. Wal-Mart also undermines competitors and fuels a global race to the bottom in wages and conditions.

UNI Commerce global union's campaign aims to make Wal-Mart recognise core labour rights (including the right to join unions and bargain collectively) wherever the world's biggest retailer operates.

The Berlin meeting reinforced the drive for greater global cooperation in the face of Wal-Martisation that was sanctioned at Chicago in August 2005.

Many of the unions who attended are organising in Wal-Mart and some have already succeeded in negotiating collective agreements. In Argentina and Brazil FAECYS and SEPROSCOS are well represented among the company's workforce, they are organising actively and have negotiated collective agreements.

In Japan JSD is present in Seiyu Wal-Mart. In the UK GMB and Usdaw have considerable membership in Asda Wal-Mart. A recent strike threat by distribution workers prompted the company to agree a structure for national consultations between staff and managers. In Germany ver.di has strong membership but relations with the departing Wal-Mart management were never easy.

The company is fast expanding globally but is pulling out of Korea and Germany after heavy losses.

It has a chain of stores in China and has been forced to accept unions there under China's labour laws.

The corporate giant is also eyeing India, Russia and Turkey.

UNI Commerce and the US commerce union UFCW have been active in helping to prepare unions in these likely venues for a Wal-Mart arrival.

"There will be reception committees, wherever the company goes," says UNI Commerce's Jan Furstenberg. "Not even in China have they been able to keep union structures out - and the UNI network and the new alliance will definitely also stretch there."

## report

## Organising



Quebecor workers in Recife, Brazil win recognition. It coincided with World Action Day at Quebecor supported by graphical unions around the world.

## Action Days bring unions together in Quebecor

Health and safety has been one of the focuses for World Action Days in print giant Quebecor.

Talks over a global agreement with the company have stalled, although Quebecor signed a neutrality agreement with our US affiliate the Teamsters which should assist in organising.

UNI Graphical and the alliance of Quebecor unions are playing a leading role - with unions winning recognition this year in Recife, Brazil and in Peru.

Also this year UNI has signed global agreements with two graphical sector companies - South Africa-based Nampak and Dutch-based Euradius.

The Nampak deal extends to subsidiaries, incorporates labour rights and provides union access to members.

Regular dialogue between the company and UNI Graphical and unions is built into the agreement.

The Euradius agreement was signed by UNI and FNV KIEM to cover the expected expansion of the Dutch print company into Asia. UNI Graphical played a key role in the creation of CONATIG in September 2005 - the unification of seven graphical federations in Brazil. The new confederation has set organising as a priority, with its main targets women and young people and workers in the multinationals. In Argentina UNI Graphical and employers agreed a declaration on union rights and collective bargaining.

### NEWS FLASH

A union in Quebecor World, Peru has won legal recognition and FGP has made its first contact with local management. On 3 September an international delegation from UNI Graphical and graphical unions from Canada, Brazil and Chile visited.

On 13 September cleaners around the world showed their solidarity with 20,000 cleaners in South Africa, on strike for six weeks in support of a 12% pay rise.

UNI Property Services global union spotlighted the wealthy multinational corporations who are content to keep cleaning jobs low paid.



## NEWS FLASH

CWU South Africa has organised more than 400 workers in Vodacom, South Africa. Vodacom is a joint venture between Telkom SA and Vodafone UK. It employs 4,100 workers in South Africa and also operates in Lesotho, Mozambique, Congo DR, and Tanzania.

## Drive in Property Services to organise and end low pay

UNI has launched a drive to raise the working conditions of property service workers worldwide by tackling building owners and pension funds with a Responsible Contractor policy. They are being pressed to sign up to a model statement that recognises the rights of the vital people who clean, guard and look after their buildings to have a living wage, labour rights and health and safety protection. The targets include major financial institutions, big corporations and the investors who own many of the prestigious corporate buildings around the world. In the UK unions are pressing for the global record of companies seeking lucrative contracts for the 2012 Olympics to be taken into

account before any jobs are awarded. And the Red Card to Low Pay focus of this year's International Justice Day further highlights the need for organising and action to eradicate the endemic low pay of the industry.

At their meeting in March Property Service unions watched the signing of a global agreement with Securitas which provides for labour rights and access to workers for unions. UNI Property Services global union launched a Global Organising Committee in 2005 to provide field assistance and industry research as well as organiser and researcher training for key campaigns.

UNI Property Services - with SEIU - are helping unions with cleaners in The Hague and security workers in Hamburg and Warsaw. In India the Security Workers Organising Council has been launched to target the fast growing presence of global giants in the sector like Group 4 Securicor, ISS and Securitas. G4S is also a target in South Africa.

■ UNI Property Services helped take cleaners from a number of European Parliaments to London to help in the campaign to raise the wages of contract cleaning staff in the UK Parliament - a campaign which was finally successful.

## Lift off in Hong Kong for DHL organising

UNI has launched a two-year project to organise up to 3,000 workers at logistics operator DHL's Asia hub in Hong Kong. The project is being backed by ver.di which is well organised at DHL's European hub in Leipzig and in the logistics company's parent, Deutsche Post World Net.

The Teamsters are organising DHL's US hub in Wilmington, Ohio.

UNI is working closely with fellow global union the International Transport Workers Federation to build organisation in TNT - and help workers there through the uncertainty caused by the decision to sell off the logistics operation.

Cooperation between unions across the world and their global unions is vital as the postal sector faces massive change with de-regulation globally and the emergence of new logistic giants.

Hong Kong is also a key opportunity for democratic and independent unions in China to expand their organisation and influence.

A UNI development and organising centre - a UNIdoc - is due to be opened in Hong

Kong to back the DHL project and other projects are under consideration in other sectors. These could include property service and Disney workers in Hong Kong and casino workers in Macau (where legal gambling accounts for 50% of GDP).

On July 7 a UNI team met DHL's Hong Kong management at Chek Lap Kok airport to discuss the developments.

DHL operates in more than 200 countries with 238 gateways and 170,000 workers worldwide.



Ver.di's Rolf Büttner and Cheuck Shing Tak Thomas of Hong Kong's postal union at the launch of the DHL project