



The Quarterly Magazine of the
International Metalworkers' Federation

No.4 / 2008

METAL WORLD



U.S. ELECTION: HOPE AND CHANGE

IMF NEWS

IG Metall Reaches
Wage Deal



SPECIAL REPORT

Mechanical Engineering:
Fundamental to Most
Branches of Industry



www.imfmetal.org



DEMANDING A NEW WORLD ORDER

THE GS'S CORNER

Marcello Malentacchi / IMF General Secretary
mmalentacchi@imfmetal.org

The financial crisis sweeping the world is profoundly affecting the lives of workers and families everywhere. In November the IMF Executive Committee discussed the crisis.

Unions from every corner of the world reported on the enormous challenges people are facing including job losses, loss of purchasing power, devaluing of pensions, foreclosures on home loans and a very uncertain future.

The Executive Committee then adopted a statement that focuses on the three major points that we believe must be undertaken to overcome the crisis.

First, finance must be put at the service of social justice, economic stability and sustainable development and not determine the economy and take over the role of the State. The measures taken so far by governments to bail out the banking system with tax payers' money must be matched by new rules to govern the international financial system and to put it under democratic control.

Second, we are demanding major investment programmes in infrastructure, housing, education, health and safety, social services and the environment to create stable and well paid jobs, stimulating demand nationally and globally.

Third, measures have to be taken to boost the purchasing power of workers and their families. Purchasing power has declined everywhere in the world despite economic growth and large profits for most of the companies and financial institutions in recent years. It is outrageous to see that managers, through bonuses, shares, pensions, insurances and other benefits, have increased their incomes so that today they can earn 520 times more than the average American worker.

Trade unions all around the world have been saying that speculation must be stopped and financial resources must be used for investments in manufacturing industries that help people to have access to basic and necessary goods and also create jobs where they are most needed.

The world needs a new order based on equality and fairness and on a multilateral system of rules that work everywhere.

For this to be possible there is one condition that must be fulfilled: the application and respect of fundamental human and trade union rights everywhere around the globe.

The IMF will do its part of the job to make sure this happens.

METAL WORLD

Published four times a year in English, Russian and Japanese by the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)

IMF
54 bis, route des Acacias
CH-1227 Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 308 5050
Fax: +41 22 308 5055
Email: info@imfmetal.org
Website: www.imfmetal.org

Opinions expressed in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of the IMF.

President: Jürgen Peters

General Secretary:
Marcello Malentacchi
mmalentacchi@imfmetal.org

Editor: Anita Gardner
agardner@imfmetal.org

News editor: Kristyne Peter
kpeter@imfmetal.org

Web publishing: Alex Ivanou
aivanou@imfmetal.org

Contributors to this issue:

Aaron Hudson/USW
Arunasalam/IMF
David Moberg
Dieter Wesp/IG Metall
Gerald Fernandez/USW
Hyewon Chong/KMWU
Jana Adams/IG Metall
Jenny Grice/NUMSA
Jim McKay/USW
Jörg Köther/IG Metall
Lesley Stodart/USW
Lucie Studnicna/OS KOVO
Makiko Takashiro/IMF-JC
Mark Slay
Owen Herrstadt/IAM
Rick Sloan/IAM
Robert Steiert/IMF
Sudharshan Rao/IMF
Valeska Solis/IMF
Valter Bittencourt/CNM-CUT
Wayne Ranick/USW

Cover photo: David Moberg

Design: Nick Jackson
www.creativelynx.ch

Printed by: Drukkerij Lannoo
www.lannooprint.com

CONTENTS



IMF NEWS / Page 9

IG METALL REACHES WAGE DEAL

After a week of warning strikes, IG Metall reached a wage deal on November 12, securing a 4.2 per cent raise for some 3.6 million German metalworkers.

FEATURE / Page 12

U.S. ELECTION: HOPE & CHANGE

Barack Obama's decisive victory as the next president of the United States inspired hope among working people both in America and abroad. In battleground states, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, more than 100,000 trade union volunteers took time off work to help convince Americans to vote for change.

SPECIAL REPORT / Page 18

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING: FUNDAMENTAL TO MOST BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY

Mechanical engineering is of central importance to most other manufacturing sectors and yet, until now, its organizing potential and strategic role was frequently overlooked by trade unions.

PROFILE / Page 24

GAB-DEUK JUNG

Arrest and imprisonment has not deterred Gab-Deuk Jung, president of the Korean Metal Workers' Union, from fighting for industry-wide collective bargaining and protecting the rights of workers to form unions.



International Metalworkers' Federation

The International Metalworkers' Federation represents the collective interests of 25 million metalworkers from more than 200 unions in 100 countries.

The IMF represents blue- and white-collar workers in industries such as steel, non-ferrous metals and ore mining, mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, automobile, aerospace, electrical and electronics.

The IMF aims to improve metalworkers' wages, working and living conditions and to ensure that metalworkers' rights are respected.

The head office is in Geneva, Switzerland, where worldwide activities are co-ordinated with a network of offices located in:

AFRICA OFFICE
156 Gerard Seketo (corner Gwigwi Mrwebi)
Newtown Johannesburg SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 11 492 0301
Email: esao@imfmatal.org

SOUTH ASIA OFFICE
Linz House, 159-A, Gutam Nagar
New Delhi, 100 049 INDIA
Tel: +91 11 2653 7125
Email: sao@imfmatal.org

SOUTH EAST ASIA OFFICE
No. 10-3 Jalan PPJS 8/4
Dataran Mentari, Bandar Sunway
46150 Petaling Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan MALAYSIA
Tel: +60 3 56 38 7904
Email: seao@imfmatal.org

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN
Avenida 18 de Julio N°1528
Piso 12 unidad 1202
Montevideo URUGUAY
Tel: +59 82 408 0813
Email: fitimalc@adinet.com.uy

CIS OFFICE
Room 211. Str. 2, d 13, Grokholsky per.,
129010 Moscow RUSSIA
Tel: +7 495 974 6111
Email: pocis@imfmatal.org



PRECARIOUS WORK / Page 4

COLLECTIVE ACTION / Page 6

IFAs / Page 6

HUMAN & TRADE UNION RIGHTS / Page 7

BARGAINING / Page 8

MEXICO / Page 10

HEALTH AND SAFETY / Page 10

CHINA / Page 10

IMF NEWS / Page 11

PRECARIOUS WORK

Metalworkers demand end to precarious work

GLOBAL From small workplace meetings to large scale national protests, thousands of metalworkers spoke out against precarious work in a series of actions in 49 countries around the world during September and October.

“Precarious work is rapidly becoming the biggest obstacle to the respect of workers’ rights. Every day, more and more workers find themselves in precarious jobs where they have no right to join a union, let alone to bargain collectively with their employer,” said IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi.

“The rise in precarious forms of employment is a direct result of the same policy failures that have led to the current financial crisis the world is facing. These policies must change,” said Malentacchi.

“The mass mobilisation of metalworkers around the world is a clear statement that temporary, insecure employment must stop and a greater emphasis should be placed on providing secure and decent jobs,” he said.

Actions included holding workplace meetings, seminars, publishing materials, holding public meetings, staging media events, meeting with government and employers’ representatives and large scale protests.

For more details and photos of the actions taken go to:

www.imfmetal.org/precariousworkactionstaken

“There is now an urgent need to strengthen regulation and supervision of banks, rethink the rules and governance of international finance...and implement a comprehensive and coordinated recovery program”

IMF Executive debates financial crisis / page 11

Secure jobs for a secure future...

IMF Congress

24 - 27 May 2009
Gothenburg, Sweden



Precarious work and the ILO

GENEVA As part of the global campaign against precarious work, Global Union Federations raised with the International Labour Organization (ILO) secretariat their concerns about the devastating erosion of workers' rights through the rise in the number of temporary, casual and contract jobs.

At the meeting, representatives of global unions outlined the impact of precarious work and called on the ILO to address this growing problem that undermines the very basis of international labour standards - the employment relationship.

Manfred Warda, general secretary of the International Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union (ICEM) and chair of the meeting said, "The issue of precarious work is fundamental to the very essence of the ILO. The erosion of employment structures robs workers of the will and capacity to join unions, and it gives families a permanent feeling of insecurity."

IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi said, "For the union movement, collective bargaining holds the key to both determining the circumstances under which non-permanent or outsourced employment is justified, and ensuring that wages and conditions of precarious workers are equal to those of regular workers. The best hope for precarious workers to improve their situation is to unionise."

Czech Republic: OS KOVO hosts seminar on precarious work with unions from Austria, Hungary Germany and Slovenia.

Photo: OS KOVO



Japan: IMF- JC at a national meeting and rally calling for the return of human work for everyone.

Photo: IMF-JC



South Korea: KMWU distributing leaflets and information about precarious work.

Photo: Kristyne Peter/IMF



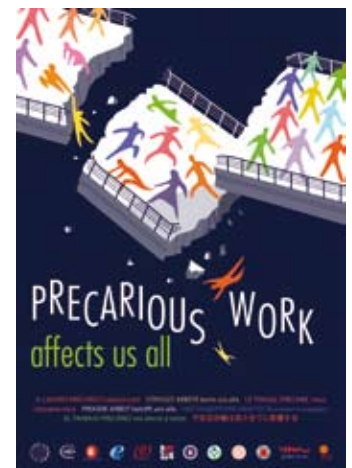
Indonesia: A second big rally in Indonesia, this time held by Lomenik.

Photo: Arunasalam/IMF



Russia: National and regional demonstrations against the rise of precarious employment.

Photo: Vladim Borisov/IMF



COLLECTIVE ACTION

Unions protest redundancies at HP-EDS group

EUROPE On October 21 trade unions from Germany and Italy protested against public restructuring plans of the group HP-EDS. According to the announced restructuring program, the company is going to reduce 7.5 per cent of its workforce around the globe within the next three years, which means a possible loss of 24,600 jobs.

In Germany the European Works Council (EWC), the trade union Ver.di and IG Metall held a "joint lunch" in front of EDS headquarters in Rüsselsheim, to protest the company's plans.

Unions in Italy called for a tripartite meeting with the Italian Ministry of Economic Development aimed at discussing industrial strategies, production and the assets of Italian-based EDS and HP operations. Following EDS's refusal to suspend cancelling previously achieved agreements IMF affiliated unions held a national strike for all EDS and HP workers in Italy on October 21.

The redundancies were announced as part of a global restructuring program following Hewlett Packard's acquisition of the business group EDS at the end of August 2008.

Polish workers strike Dong Yang Electronics

POLAND Members of NSZZ Solidarnosc who work at Korean-owned Dong Yang Electronics moved into the fourth week of strike action in November after management terminated labour contracts with strikers and hired replacement workers.

About 200 Dong Yang Electronics workers in Mława, Poland have been on strike since October 16 demanding better wages and compensation. Management illegally terminated the labour contracts of some 180 strikers, including the union shop steward, and has hired replacement workers.

Management has refused to negotiate with the union and workers, despite many attempts and involvement of the local authorities and Ministry of Labour as mediators.

Workers held a demonstration on November 14 calling for:

- basic wages to be increased by 9 per cent for all the workers in the company and the minimum wage in the company to be set at 1500 PLN gross (400 euros);
- the increase should be retroactive to March 2008; and
- reinstatement of all workers fired for striking.



More than 2,000 workers from Bulgaria's largest steel plant, Kremikovtzi, staged massive protests in October following the government's failure to assist the plant in the payment of delayed salaries.

Photo: Metalicy

Bulgarian steelworkers hold mass protests

BULGARIA More than 2,000 workers from Bulgaria's largest steel plant, Kremikovtzi, staged massive protests for a fourth time in two weeks in October following the government's failure to assist the plant in the payment of delayed salaries.

Workers launched a three-day protest beginning October 29 following the news of the pending closure of the Kremikovtzi mill which employs roughly 5,000 steelworkers represented by metal unions Metalicy and the Federation of Metallurgy, both affiliates of the IMF.

On October 31, Peter Dimitrov, the country's Minister of Economy and Energy, announced that the government had made a plan for an eventual bail out package and that all unpaid salaries would be paid by November 7.

Kremikovtzi workers, who have not been paid since July, called on the Bulgarian government, which owns a 25 per cent stake in the plant, to intervene to ensure that:

- August and September salaries are paid immediately;
- the plant is rescued from closure and liquidation; and
- that no workers are dismissed.

IFAS

IFA signed with Aker

NORWAY Aker ASA, a renowned shipbuilding company, signed an International Framework Agreement (IFA) with the IMF and its Norwegian affiliate Fellesforbundet in October for the development of good working relations in companies that are part of Aker.

The agreement reflects the company's commitment to respect basic human and trade union rights in the community.

The agreement includes provisions on freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, discrimination, forced labour, child labour, health and safety, living wages, employment conditions, working hours, HIV/AIDS, environmental issues and skills training, referencing the standards as established by the core labour conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The agreement relates to all parts of Aker and states that the company will use its influence to secure compliance with the standards set out in the agreement with its subsidiaries and third party business associates, with non-compliance ultimately resulting in potential termination of a contractual relationship.

For more information go to:

www.imfmetal.org/ifa



TV news coverage on the NSZZ Solidarnosc strike at Korean-owned Dong Yang Electronics in Mława, Poland.

Photo: NSZZ Solidarnosc

Unions press for IFA with Fiat

ITALY Union representatives of Fiat workers in Italy, Poland, Brazil, Serbia, Spain and Turkey met with the IMF and European Works Council in Turin, Italy in September to initiate discussion about negotiating an International Framework Agreement with the Italian automaker.

Italian autoworkers are calling for a “globalisation of rights” for the more than 185,000 workers employed by the Fiat Group worldwide.

Organised by Italian metalworkers’ unions FIM-CISL, FIOM-CGIL, and UILM-UIL together with the IMF, the meeting is a first step in ensuring that workers’ fundamental rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as the prohibition of child labour and forced labour are respected throughout the Fiat Group.

For more information about IMF International Framework Agreements go to:

www.imfmetal.org/ifa

HUMAN & TRADE UNION RIGHTS

Police raid strike at Kiryung Electronics

KOREA/USA Riot police stormed a peaceful demonstration on October 15, resulting in the arrest of twelve members of the Korean Metal Workers’ Union and injuring many after attempting to remove Kiryung Electronics workers outside the company’s gates who have been on strike for the past three years.

The workers, all of them women who were hired through a subcontracting labour agency, joined the KMWU in July 2005 to fight for equality on the job and basic worker protections at Kiryung. Soon after, the company began threatening them with dismissal for forming a union, resulting in the workers going on strike.



Members of KMWU on strike at Kiryung Electronics for three years. Strikers have been repeatedly beaten by company-hired thugs.

Photo: Kristyne Peter/IMF

Kiryung Electronics is a key producer of Sirius Satellite Radios, radio receivers installed in automobiles, boats and stereos sold in the United States.

Kiryung Electronics has refused to negotiate in good faith with the KMWU Kiryung branch and instead has employed tactics of abuse, harassment and intimidation with support of the government. The recent violence comes just months after the International Labour Organization’s Committee on Freedom of Association issued stern recommendations to the Korean government regarding the rights of Kiryung workers urging the government to “take all necessary measures to promote collective bargaining over the terms and conditions of employment of subcontracted workers in the metal sector, in particular at ... Kiryung Electronics.”

On October 16, a delegation of KMWU Kiryung workers travelled to New York City to request a meeting with Sirius management after attempts for resolution with Kiryung broke down. Sirius has thus far refused to meet the delegation.

For more information on the workers complaint to the ILO, go to: www.imfmetal.org/Skirregularworkers

Arrests of Korean trade unionists continue

SOUTH KOREA Following a wave of strikes, the South Korean government has unleashed a massive attack against the Korean Metal Workers’ Union (KMWU) targeting more than 75 of the union’s key leaders for arrest or investigation.

The government crackdown stems from the union’s participation in a general strike on July 2, called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and the KMWU’s subsequent strike action in demand for national-level industrial collective bargaining.

Currently KMWU President Gab-deuk Jung is facing criminal charges of “obstruction of business”, a widely used abusive provision in Korea’s criminal code that allows employers to seek the incarceration of union leaders and bankrupt unions through lawsuits. In addition to President Jung,

Hyundai Motor Branch First Vice-President Kim Tae-gon, KMWU First Vice-President Taek-Gyu Nam and KCTU leadership have also been arrested and are awaiting trial. Police forces have surrounded the building where KMWU and KCTU headquarters are located and the government has launched audits of the two legal centres used by the union federations.

The IMF sent a representative to monitor the trial of President Jung and to meet with union leaders arrested and in hiding. The IMF is working closely with the KMWU to push forward their case with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association and to mobilise IMF affiliates in support of the union.

Russian union leaders attacked

RUSSIA The leader of a Russian autoworkers’ union affiliated to the IMF has twice been targeted by violent assailants who don’t like his union’s success in standing up for workers.

Alexey Etmanov, Interregional Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA) co-chairman and chairman of the ITUA primary organization at Ford enterprise in Vsevolozhsk,



Alexey Etmanov, Interregional Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA) co-chairman has twice been targeted by violent assailants who don't like his union's success in standing up for workers.

Photo: Masha Kurzina/IMF

was assaulted on the evening of November 8 when he returned home from the second shift at the Ford plant. He parked his car and was walking home, when three assailants armed with brass knuckles ran towards Etmanov and without a word assaulted him.

Originally, Etmanov believed these were ordinary robbers. However the next day the union received a call and was alerted that the night incident had no

relation to a robbery. "You were softly scolded. But if you continue to create obstacles for us, we will take away your life," threatened the anonymous caller.

Earlier, on June 24 and July 26, Alexei Gramm and Sergei Bryzgalov, activists of the ITUA primary organization at Taganrog enterprise OAO "TagAZ" producing Hyundai cars, also became victims of assault after their participation in a picket at the entrance of the

enterprise. Gramm and Bryzgalov were trying to get information about wages and compensation as well as demanding recognition of their union.

IMF is urging affiliates to send letters calling for an immediate and transparent investigation into these attacks. For more information go to:

www.imfmetal.org/attacksonitua

BARGAINING

Machinists Ratify New Boeing Contract

USA After 57 days of strike action, members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) voted by 74 per cent to ratify a new 4-year contract with Boeing Company.

The new agreement covers 27,000 IAM members, including electricians, painters, mechanics and other production workers at Boeing facilities in Washington, Oregon, Kansas and California.

Contract gains include:

- general wage increases of 15 per cent over the life of the agreement;
- pension increases;
- a lump sum payment of 10 per cent of the previous year's earnings or \$5,000, whichever is greater;
- contract language to protect thousands of jobs at risk in the material handling classification; and
- unchanged health care costs.

IAM members went on strike on September 6. The walkout was the union's longest in 13 years and the fourth at Boeing in 20 years.

"We warned Boeing when the strike began that when they take on the IAM, they take on the world's metalworkers," said IAM International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger. "The many letters and other expressions of international solidarity that our members received during the strike proved it."

Agreement reached at Siemens in Prague

CZECH REPUBLIC An agreement was reached in August between Siemens AG and IMF affiliate OS KOVO on redundancy provisions for workers at the Siemens SKV plant in Prague, which is planned for closure next year.

The agreement includes provisions on severance pay should the plant close, and a special bonus to employees that remain with the plant until such time. The agreement also includes a monthly bonus amounting to 35 per cent of the average monthly wage, increasing by five per cent each month until June 2009.

Siemens SKV will ensure the qualification of employees and agrees to regularly consult the trade union during the process of selling the plant.

The agreement followed a warning strike by the workers and international solidarity support



Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) voted by 74 per cent to ratify a new 4-year contract with Boeing Company reached after 57 days of strike action.

Photo: IAM

from unions with members in Siemens elsewhere in Europe.

IG Metall reaches wage deal

GERMANY On November 12 IG Metall, Germany's largest labour union, and Gesamtmetall, an employers' association representing over 23,000 enterprises, reached agreement for a 4.2 per cent pay rise in the southern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

While the agreement currently only applies to workers in Baden-Wuerttemberg, union branches in the rest of Germany are expected to quickly ratify the deal as well. The contract runs for 18 months until April 30, 2010.

Hundreds of thousands of industrial workers across Germany had staged warning strikes since the start of November in an effort to press home their demands for better pay.

Germany's metalworkers will receive a 2.1 per cent pay rise for the period beginning February 1, 2009 until April 30, 2009 and an

additional increase of 2.1 per cent for the period of May 1, 2009 until April 30, 2010. Companies can decide to push back the second 2.1 per cent increase by up to seven months.

Additionally, workers will receive a one-time bonus of 510 euros per person for the months November 2008 until January 2009 and a lump-sum payment of 122 euros in September 2009.

The agreement will cover 3.6 million workers once all regions ratify the contract.

Alstom agreement in Croatia

CROATIA After a year of negotiations, the Metal Workers' Trade Union of Croatia concluded a collective agreement with ALSTOM HRVATSKA in July.

The agreement sets the lowest contractual wage at Alstom at 4,050 kuna, which is about 560 euros. It is agreed that wages will increase annually based on annual inflation and includes an extra wage increase depending



Hundreds of thousands of industrial workers across Germany staged warning strikes since the start of November in an effort to press home their demands for better pay.

Photo: IG Metall Süd-Niedersachsen-Harz

on productivity in the previous year. In addition, workers will receive a one per cent annual wage increase for each year of service, which is applied as of April 1, 2008.

The agreement covers 678 workers from July 1, 2008 for an indefinite period and also stipulates what the employer must pay as Christmas bonuses, welfare payments, travel expenses, per diems and field allowances.

USW ratifies new contract with ArcelorMittal

USA By secret ballot, members of the United Steelworkers (USW) overwhelmingly voted in favour of a new, four-year contract covering some 14,000 hourly production, maintenance, office and technical employees at 14 ArcelorMittal plants in the U.S. Contract details include:



British metal union Unite joined forces with Canadian United Steelworkers (USW) members outside the Potash Corporation's 2008 Analyst Meeting in London on September 23 in an effort to urge the company to return to the bargaining table. USW members in Canada were on strike at Potash Corp for 14 weeks before reaching agreement on November 12.

The steelworkers handed out leaflets outlining Potash Corp's performance since the strike began and informing analysts and investors about the dispute.

Photo: Unite/USW

- A one-time \$6,000 cash payment, \$1 an hour general wage increase retroactive to September 1, and four per cent wage increases to come into effect in years two, three and four of the contract.
- Improvements in existing medical, prescription drug, dental, vision, life insurance and Sick and Accident benefits for all eligible employees and continued funding to provide benefits for retirees who have lost their healthcare coverage in bankruptcy court under previous employers.
- Premiums for all retirees will be reduced by approximately 35 per cent and will remain fixed for the term of the proposed Agreement.
- ArcelorMittal will make significant capital investment in its U.S. plants and provide for an “Energy Efficiency and Carbon Emissions Task Force” where the union and company will work jointly for the benefit of the industry and the environment.

MEXICO

“It is feasible to reopen Pasta de Conchos mine”

MEXICO In an interview published in the August 26 edition of the Mexican daily newspaper *Excélsior*, José Luis Fernández Zayas, the technical officer who produced the post-explosion report on the Pasta de Conchos mine, said it would be feasible to reopen the mine to recover the bodies of the 63 miners who died on February 19, 2006.

José Luis Fernández Zayas, a researcher at the Institute of Engineering of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) said that the company manipulated the report to its own advantage and used it to claim the mine was too unsafe to reopen.

He said that Grupo Mexico and the Labour Secretary have distorted what the technical report actually says and used it to refuse to reopen the mine to recover the bodies.

Zayas says it is possible to recover the bodies. However, all normal safety measures would have to be taken in the mine before doing so. The problem was that the company “closed the case”.

After the interview was published in the press, the Mexican Miners’ Union distributed copies of the article in Mexico City, including to the United States, Canadian and Spanish embassies, the UN offices in Mexico, the Senate and Chamber of Deputies and to the Presidential Palace.

The tragedy at Pasta de Conchos started a dispute between the mining union and the government and Grupo Mexico that resulted in the union’s leader, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, going into exile.

For more information go to:

www.imfmetal.org/mexico

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety at ArcelorMittal

KAZAKHSTAN The Joint Global Health and Safety Committee of ArcelorMittal met in Kazakhstan during the first week of October to assess conditions at the local facilities and discuss the implementation of the global agreement on health and safety that was signed on June 3, 2008.

In 2008, five fatalities occurred in ArcelorMittal’s Kazakhstan steel

plant and a further 38 in the local coal mines making it the most hazardous operations of the company.

The committee met with local union representatives and management and toured the steel plant and a nearby coal mine as part of its visit. The committee noted that some improvements have been made at the site, such as the establishment of a local union health and safety committee and an equipment modernisation program, but that overall the rate of change could be quicker.

The Joint Global Health and Safety Committee of ArcelorMittal was established through a global agreement on health and safety and is made up of union representatives from north and south America, European Metalworkers’ Federation, IMF and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions (ICEM) and senior company management representatives.

Improving health and safety in the Balkans

BALKANS The IMF started implementation of a two-year occupational health and safety project for its affiliates in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

This project targets the steel and non-ferrous sectors and aims at training health and safety shop-

stewards and promoting health and safety at the workplace. Generally in this region awareness about health and safety risks is low, accidents are frequent and labour inspection is weak or non-existent. Non-compliance with legal provisions is another major problem that workers and trade unions are confronting continuously.

The first phase of the project, carried out in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina in September, focussed on the legislative framework and the relevant European and international instruments concerning occupational health and safety, including international framework agreements (IFAs) which contain provisions in that field.

The next step will deal with risk analysis and prevention techniques. Health and safety materials in the local language will also be produced.

CHINA

China: Foreign companies must have unions

CHINA Foreign companies operating in China must unionise by September 30 or face penalties says the country’s official trade union body, the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

The ACFTU predicts that 80 per cent of the top 500 global corporations operating in China will have unions. When it announced the organising directive in June, less than half of the so-called “Fortune 500” subsidiaries in China had recognised trade unions, compared with more than 73 per cent for all foreign-owned firms in China. The Fortune 500 is a list published annually by Fortune magazine that ranks the top 500 U.S. corporations.

Most recently IBM and Volvo announced that they would allow workers to organise in their Chinese manufacturing operations. The two join other multinationals such as Wal-Mart, Sony, Canon, FedEx, Intel and Toyota, many of whom actively oppose union organising at their operations in



Sixty-five miners were killed in a methane gas explosion in the number eight shaft of the Pasta de Conchos mine owned by Grupo México in the Northern Mexican state of Coahuila on February 19, 2006. Sixty-three of the miners remain buried in the mine.

Photo: Kristyne Peter/IMF.

other parts of the world.

Unions outside of the ACFTU are illegal and workers who have attempted to organise independent unions face two to three year sentences at forced labour camps or heavy jail time, including life imprisonment.

IMF NEWS

IMF Executive debates financial crisis

GENEVA Executive Committee members of the IMF met in Geneva in November to discuss the global financial crisis and develop an international collective strategy for steps forward.

"There is now an urgent need to strengthen regulation and supervision of banks, rethink the rules and governance of international finance and institutions, and implement a comprehensive and coordinated recovery program that is able to steer the world economy onto a path of equitable and sustainable development and with full employment as a main policy goal," announced the IMF in a statement unanimously passed by members of the Executive Committee.

In addition to greater regulation of financial institutions, the IMF is calling for major investment programmes in infrastructure, housing, education, health and social services and the environment.

The executive also adopted a resolution in solidarity with global autoworkers calling for urgent remedial actions, but not at the expense of workers. "Provision of loans to the automotive sector with public and employment safeguards are a necessary measure to address immediate financing needs for automotive companies during a period of extreme credit market dysfunction," the resolution stated.

Steel unions agree to global environmental strategy

GLOBAL Affiliates of the IMF from both the developing and developed world reached an historic agreement to develop a global response to climate change in the steel industry.

Metal unions from Australia, Brazil, India, Russia, UK, Japan and the U.S. met in November as part of the IMF Steel Action Group Meeting to discuss ways in which unions and the IMF can contribute to an international strategy for the steel industry in an effort to tackle the growing problem of global warming and its impact on workers.

As part of the agreement, unions have committed to develop policy positions on climate change issues that link environmental and economic sustainability, advocate the agreed position with governments and collectively

bargain with employers for environmental representatives.

Concrete steps the IMF will take include establishing a network of key affiliates to work on climate change issues, further development of the climate change policy document and production of practical materials for distribution.

For a copy of the agreement go to: www.imfmetal.org/steelclimatechange

2008 purchasing power report released

GENEVA The International Metalworkers' Federation released its 2008 edition of the "Purchasing Power of Working Time" report, examining metalworkers' purchasing power worldwide, based on net hourly earnings in 2007.

The publication surveyed the purchasing power in more than 61 countries and shows the working time needed for the purchase of a range of consumer items including clothing, food, rent and other basic expenses.

The report addresses the differences in standards of living between workers performing the same quantity and quality of work, differences resulting from the gaps in the purchasing power of their incomes.

"The Purchasing Power of Working Time 2008," is printed in English, French, German and Spanish. To download Pdf-versions in these languages, go to:

www.imfmetal.org/publications



A memorial to the 38 coal miners killed in Kazakhstan earlier this year.

Photo: Rob Johnston/IMF.



CALENDAR 2008-2009

DECEMBER

09 - 11

IMF Working Party on Trade, Employment and Development and joint seminar with other Global Union Federations
New Delhi, India

09 - 11

Gerdau Global Committee meeting
Houston, Texas, USA

19

APREC Coordinating Committee meeting
Jakarta, Indonesia

19 - 20

Asian & Pacific Regional Conference - APREC
Jakarta, Indonesia

FEBRUARY

17

Rules Committee meeting
Geneva, Switzerland

18

Action Programme Committee meeting
Geneva, Switzerland

19

IMF Executive Committee meeting
Geneva, Switzerland

MAY

21

IMF Executive Committee meeting
Gothenburg, Sweden

22

Women's conference
Gothenburg, Sweden

23

IMF Central Committee meeting
Gothenburg, Sweden

24 - 27

32nd IMF World Congress
Gothenburg, Sweden



FEATURE



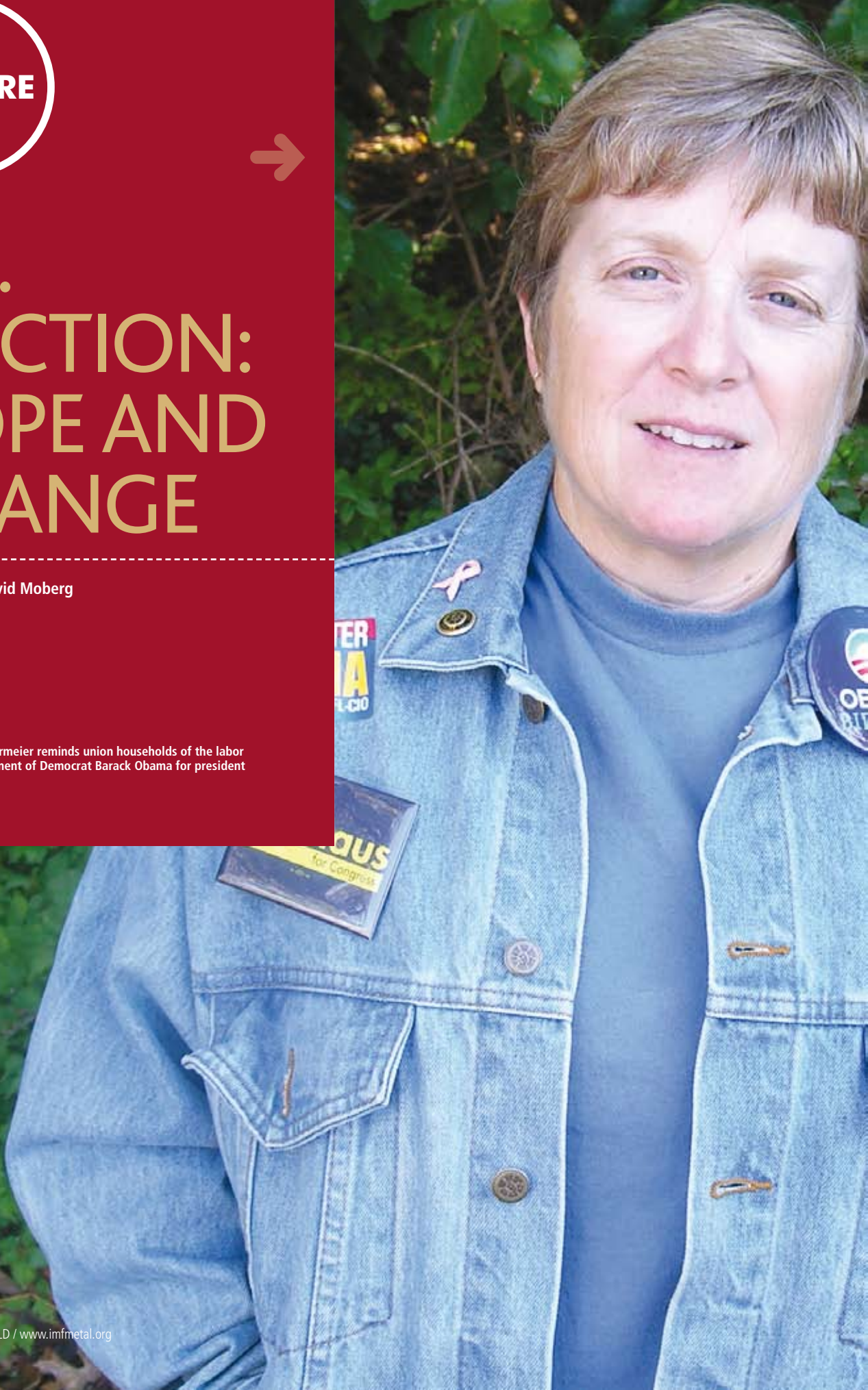
U.S. ELECTION: HOPE AND CHANGE

Text & Photos / David Moberg



Machinist Rainey Rohrmeier reminds union households of the labor movement's endorsement of Democrat Barack Obama for president of the United States.

Photo: David Moberg





Barack Obama's decisive victory as the next president of the United States inspired hope among working people both in America and abroad. In battleground states, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, more than 100,000 trade union volunteers took time off work to help convince Americans to vote for change. →





Rohrmeier participates in a labor planning meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Photo: David Moberg



On a beautifully sunny October morning, Rainey Rohrmeier parked her car in a hilly, wooded suburb of Cincinnati, an old industrial city in the southwestern part of Ohio. Wearing a blue denim Machinists union jacket emblazoned with Obama buttons, she began knocking on doors of union households, reminding them of the labor movement's endorsement of Democrat Barack Obama for president of the United States.

This year Ohio, a state with a delicate balance between urban and rural, northern and southern, progressive and conservative voters, was once again a critical battleground in the contest for the presidency. And political strategists counted on union members like Rohrmeier to make a difference. Unions are still relatively strong in Ohio, despite the loss of nearly a quarter of its manufacturing jobs during the administration of George W. Bush – the worst record since the Great Depression.

The already troubled economy, plunged into a deep financial crisis in the months before the November 4 elections, tipped many voters towards Obama's call for "change". Ray Lampin, 57, a retired electrical worker didn't need much convincing from Rohrmeier. "I'm going to vote all Democrat," he explained, expressing hope for a new boost to the economy through eco-friendly jobs in wind and solar power. "I think Obama is the best thing that could happen to this country."

But not all union members in this Republican-leaning, virtually all-white suburb were such ready supporters. A normally Republican retired union member of the AFL-CIO, the nation's biggest labor federation, remained undecided. "If Obama did everything he said he would do, I'd vote for him," Frank Homer said. "But I think he's not that experienced. Yet I'm afraid of McCain. He'll go to war." Angry at overpaid executives and disappointed with Republicans, a 50-year old, unemployed and undecided engineer also partly blamed his troubles of finding a job on affirmative action for minorities. Rohrmeier politely made her case for Obama as better for working people's economic interests, then left union leaflets contrasting the stands of the two presidential candidates.

Ultimately the work of well more than 100,000 union volunteers, contacting members repeatedly with tens of millions of phone calls, door knocks, mailings, worksite fliers and internet messages, paid off. Obama won the presidency, in part by also winning Ohio and Pennsylvania (and by narrowing the typical Republican edge in suburban counties).

Obama's 53 to 46 percent victory over McCain, who could not shake his ties to a deeply unpopular Bush and the economic crash, primarily reflected Democratic gains since the last election among young voters, women, voters with a post-graduate education, and Latinos (and other people of color). Although white voters chose McCain by 56 to 43 percent, Obama, the first African-American to be elected president, received a slightly larger share of white votes than Democrat John Kerry did in 2004.

UNION MOBILISATION

Labor also shaped the outcome. Union members, about 12 percent of voters, gave Obama a decisive 67 percent of their votes, compared to 30 percent for McCain, according to an election night poll by Peter Hart Research for the

"...free trade agreements never come with labor protections for workers in other countries. We want workers in other countries to get a fair shake. To me, it's the same fight for all of us."

Matt Clark, CWA-IUE Ohio state political co-ordinator for the election

AFL-CIO. And although McCain led Obama by 8 percentage points among all voters 65 or older, older union members favored Obama by 46 points. By a 16 point margin white men chose McCain, but white men who belonged to unions voted for Obama by 18 points.

The United States labor movement was slow to embrace Obama. Unions were so split, mainly among Sen. Hillary Clinton, former Sen. John Edwards and Obama, that they either remained neutral or split their endorsements, with many not backing Obama until he had clinched the nomination in June.

In the subsequent general election, unions had to win over ardent backers of Clinton, who narrowly lost the nomination after strong showings among white working class voters in such states as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Clinton's blue-collar showing raised the question: Would all of those same white Democrats (and Democratic-leaning independents) support a black candidate for president?

Unions decided that they had to confront race directly as well as to focus members' attention on economic issues. "I'm pained to see race is an issue," Steelworkers president Leo Gerard said. "If we look at working family issues or union issues..., you could come up with 100 reasons to vote for Obama," Gerard said. "The message is simple: If you let the color of a person's skin interfere with what's best for

you, your kids, and your grandkids, then shame on you."

Ultimately evidence of strong racially motivated voting against Obama showed up mainly in some regions of the South and Appalachia. But union voters' stronger preference for the Democratic presidential candidate compared to the general public vote was nearly the same this year as in 2004 among white men and even stronger among white women.

The successful mobilization of union voters for Obama owed much to local union members and leaders who took time off from their work to campaign, people like Machinist Rainey Rohrmeier, Steelworker Mike Munger, and CWA-IUE member Matt Clark.

"A RESPONSIBILITY TO GIVE BACK"

On her first day of work for the autumn political season, Rainey Rohrmeier joined in an anti-McCain labor press conference, knocked on doors of union members, and participated in a labor planning meeting seeking, among other things, more labor volunteers (especially white men) and more Obama bumper stickers to put on pick-up trucks. Over the coming weeks, she leafleted factories, telephoned members, organized rallies, and helped get people to the polls on election day.

Rohrmeier, 53, an electrician at a large General Electric aircraft engine factory near Cincinnati, briefly taught physical education and health but soon turned to her father's trade, becoming an electrician at a time when few women were entering industrial work. In recent years, she has held several elected offices, worked on political campaigns, and, fittingly, given her past encounters with sexism, chaired the women's committee.

"What drives me to do this?" she said. "My feeling about being involved is that we all have a responsibility to give back. I have reaped the benefits of people before me, and I take seriously the responsibility to the next generation."

But she was also driven by frustration with the direction her country was going. "This whole Bush administration drives me nuts," she said. "I think we're moving backwards. Employers find it's cheaper to pay overtime than hire more workers. So we have a few people in great jobs instead of more people in good jobs. Look at the minimum wage. And kids are working. And there's still an equal pay issue [for women]."

During the Democratic primary, Rohrmeier, like her Machinists union, vigorously supported Clinton but envisioned "no problem voting for Barack Obama". But at work she found many McCain supporters, including strong abortion opponents, gun owners, and advocates for more military spending, who thought that would secure their jobs. But only one man said he wouldn't support Obama because he was black. "I said, 'You've got to be kidding. Some point in time we've got to get over this. He is qualified to do the job. He's for working people's issues,'" she recalled. "But what do you do with people like that?"

On election night, when both Obama and a local Democratic challenger for Congress won, she concluded that her work made a difference. She joined fellow union volunteers at a local pub to watch television reports on voting returns. "When Ohio went for Obama, we all shouted, 'Yay!'" she said. "Our country made this wonderful step forward. I'm so proud to be an American. We needed this."



IAM International President Tom Buffenbarger addresses a trade union rally in Louisville, Kentucky. The IAM's "Wall Street Got The Gold Mine, We Got the Shaft" tour also visited Ohio and Pennsylvania encouraging members to vote for their economic interests. IAM members received direct mail, telephone calls and leaflets at plant gates in a massive effort to turn out votes for Presidential nominee Barack Obama.

Photo: IAM



Steelworker Mike Munger, making pro-Obama signs for a rally, has seen the local economy lose at least 20,000 well-paid manufacturing jobs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Photo: David Moberg



GRASS-ROOTS ACTIVISTS

In the 31 years he has worked for Wheatland Tube, a leading steel pipe manufacturer in the Shenango River Valley area northwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mike Munger, 55, has seen the local economy lose at least 20,000 well-paid manufacturing jobs making railroad cars, pipe, transformers and other metal products. Wages for many remaining workers have been frozen or cut. Unlike even a decade ago, houses everywhere are for sale.

Now president of his shrinking local United Steelworkers union, Munger, known as "Goose", shared a bleak outlook at his office in the simple union hall, decorated with photos of factories and union and political leaders from decades ago when unions had more power.

"This country is in bad shape," he said. "I've never seen it this bad, and I think it's going to get worse. Every election people say it's the most important in our lifetime, but this time I mean it."

Global forces have transformed the local economy. The union has confronted both low-priced Chinese pipe imports and shifting ownership – although a Russian plan to buy Wheatland from the Carlyle private equity group has stalled.

Especially in the new global economy, Munger sees the importance for workers to have a union voice at work and in politics. "Over the years, especially the last eight, it seems like the country is getting greedier, the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer," Munger said, wearing his blue "USW activist" shirt and looking somber but good-natured as usual. "I'd like to see changes. That's why I want Obama. I don't know how many times he said the middle class needs help. McCain talks about freezing government spending. What do you freeze? Health care? Unemployment compensation?"

A LACK OF GOOD JOBS

"I think it's George Bush, myself, [who's responsible for the growing inequality]," he continued. "He is the worst president we've had in history. He's lost more jobs than any time since the Depression. He took care of his friends and rich people, and they made out – and the working man has lost for the last eight years."

Munger, like his union's leaders, first supported Edwards. Then he backed Clinton. But eventually he switched to Obama. "Obama wants to change things, build the economy, help the middle class," Munger said. "I like that he said everyone should have a right to health care that's as good as members of Congress like him have. And I think he will try to create jobs in his country." The lack of good jobs hits home. His son, for lack of a good alternative, is planning to enlist in the military, troubling Munger, who opposed the war in Iraq.

Only a few local union members told Munger they couldn't vote for Obama because he was black. "I'm looking at issues, not color," he told them. "I'm looking for somebody in there for me. And his ideas are more in line with what I want than McCain." And when it comes to black athletes, he adds, "you'd stand in line for an autograph, and you cheer for them. But you won't vote for him for president? It doesn't make sense."

Like his union members, Munger hopes Obama can stimulate the economy, develop alternative energy, and protect pensions and social security. But "I don't expect miracles," he said. "He can't turn around in a year what Bush did in eight years."

And despite its demands, he enjoys political work, from organizing volunteers for phone banks and neighborhood walks to answering questions of a visiting Japanese television crew. "There's always something you can do," he said. "Sometimes it's hectic, and you put in long hours. But it beats work. It's exciting when you can get somebody undecided to come your way. Some of these people I'd just like to shake some sense into them."

On election night, he joined fellow volunteers in a few celebratory beers at the defeat of a local Republican member of Congress and stronger support in the county for Obama than Kerry drew four years ago. "I'll miss the work," he said, "but it's time to get back to real life."

"TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE ANYTHING"

While waiting for Barack Obama to take the stage in the middle of Dayton, Ohio's minor league baseball field, Matt Clark didn't waste a minute as he pulled out his cell phone to call potential supporters. Clark, 28, is shop chairman for his CWA-IUE local union at the DMAX engine plant, a joint project of General Motors and Isuzu. Trained at college as a television editor, he switched to DMAX four years ago for better pay.

But with Dayton, once a center of innovation in aircraft, auto, business machine and other technology, losing 47,000 factory jobs over the past seven years, Clark's manufacturing career is uncertain.

Clark, a state political coordinator for this election, thinks that union members will fight politically for their interests, especially if they hear from familiar local leaders and activists on issues all year round. "Union members



Matt Clark, CWA-IUE state political co-ordinator for the election, goes door-knocking in Dayton, Ohio to convince working people to vote for change.

Photo: David Moberg



trust what their peers tell them," he said. Sometimes management helps spur activity. When DMAX managers began wearing McCain buttons, even politically uninvolved union members asked for Obama buttons to wear at work.

Exposed to progressive and labor ideals while growing up, Clark was active in an anti-racist group as a student, and he brings his earlier passion to his union work. "A topic that's raised its ugly head is race," he said, waiting for Obama to speak. "I hear it a lot. It's disheartening to hear, but it's especially staggering in a labor organization. There's

simply no place for racial discrimination in a union. Sure, John McCain is a white guy, but he's all about screwing the working person regardless of the color of his skin. I can't figure out why any working class person would vote for McCain. He's just in it for the rich and business."

Like many younger voters, Clark favored Obama from the beginning, partly because Obama had been an early opponent of the Iraq war. "We're spending \$10 billion a month on a war we don't need," he said, "but we can't afford to give kids or everyone in the country affordable, accessible health care or adequate help to displaced workers."

American metalworking union members like Clark are particularly wary of more global trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement. "We want to maintain the jobs we have, like any other country," he said. "But one problem is these free trade agreements never come with labor protections for workers in other countries. We want workers in other countries to get a fair shake. To me, it's the same fight for all of us."

At the end of a long day, he said that "what keeps me going is that fear of waking up the day after the election, John McCain is president, and I'd blame myself for not doing enough." But as he watched election returns at the union hall with his wife and children a wave of relief and joy swept over him, as it did for Munger, Rohrmeier and the many thousands of other union political workers.

"The amazing thing was to watch everyday people work their hind ends off to get this guy elected," Clark said. "The lesson I learned is the old union lesson: I may be one voice, but together we can change anything. It's been a long time, but the American people stood up and said we've had enough and went into the polls and did the right thing. The United States has shown the world that we can be progressive for ourselves and the world."



Presidential nominee Barack Obama addresses the United Steelworkers' 2008 Constitutional Convention in Las Vegas by satellite link. USW fielded over 10,000 activists during the election campaign. The volunteers in the field visited thousands of homes and worked phone banks around the country, encouraging members to vote for change.

Photo: USW



**SPECIAL
REPORT**



MECHANICAL ENGINEERING: FUNDAMENTAL TO MOST BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY

Text / **Robert Steiert**
Translation / **Mark Slay**



Mechanical engineering is of central importance to most other manufacturing sectors and yet, until now, its organizing potential and strategic role has been frequently overlooked by trade unions.

When we speak of mechanical engineering, many people think of the giant presses that could be seen in the press plants of most auto manufacturers. Wikipedia, the well-known Internet encyclopedia, defines mechanical engineering as one of the oldest engineering disciplines.

Mechanical engineering is one, if not the, fundamental industry without whose products production in other industries would simply be impossible. The auto, aircraft, electric and electronics industries, to name a few, all need the products, that is the machines, of the mechanical engineering industry.

In contrast to industries like electronics or information and communication technology, many people regard mechanical engineering as part of the "old economy". But that classification does not fit the actual situation of the industry.

A brochure of the German Mechanical Engineering Association (VDMA) published in 2001 contains the following description on the importance of the industry: "Old Economy? Wrong! To be sure, mechanical engineering does have a long tradition, but it is inseparable from the history of determination to achieve constant innovation and improvement. For that reason, today, knowledge of machines and processes are being constantly expanded through the application of intelligent technology. Even the way mechanical engineering firms see themselves has changed. From producers they have become service providers: once producers of problem-free technical competence, with the courage to innovate and develop customer-oriented system concepts, they have become this so-called 'old' new high-tech industry."

This description is clearly demonstrated by the products of many companies in the industry. For example, a steam-roller – known today as an earth compactor – still looks the same as it did 50 or 80 years ago. While in the old days it was the weight of the roller that determined the quality of compaction of the soil, nowadays it is the vibration of the roller. The rollers are equipped with sensors which constantly measure the condition of the ground and automatically adjust the vibrations of the roller. The driver monitors the vibrations on his or her instruments, but does not feel them as they are not transmitted to the driver's cabin. In extreme cases these machines can even operate without a driver, being controlled by Global Positioning Systems.

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING IN "THE TRIAD"

For many years three countries – the United States, Germany and Japan – were the leaders in mechanical engineering, measured on the basis of annual sales. In 2006 the U.S. led with sales of 272 billion euros, followed by Japan with 174 billion euros and Germany with 167 billion euros. They were followed distantly by Italy, France and the United Kingdom (see figure 1, page 21). But if one takes the countries of the European Union all together, with annual sales of 456 billion

euros and a total of more than 2.5 million employees, the EU is number one. In the mean time, China with some 150 billion euros has risen to fourth position.

Within Europe, Germany dominates with almost 40 per cent of production and 34 per cent of employees, followed by Italy and France.

The mechanical engineering industry also plays an important role within the Triad countries. In the U.S. and Germany in 2006 more workers were employed in mechanical engineering than in the auto or electric industries. Only in Japan was the number of workers in the auto industry higher than in mechanical engineering, but even in this case more workers were employed in mechanical engineering than in the electric industry (see figure 2, page 21).

STRUCTURE OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

The structure of mechanical engineering differs considerably from other metal industries such as auto, electric, ship building, steel and aerospace.

Mechanical engineering is not a uniform sector characterized by a particular product like cars, aeroplanes or ships. Official European Union statistics distinguish among 24 sub-industries. The German Mechanical Engineering Association distinguishes among no less than 40 specialized groups which make up the mechanical engineering sector. These include machines for the production and use of mechanical energy (not counting engines for aircraft and motor vehicles), pumps, compressors, fittings, gear systems, sprockets, lifting devices, conveyors, forestry and farming machinery, machine tools, construction machines and mining machines.

While the auto, aerospace and some other industries are dominated by a few big transnational companies, in mechanical engineering small and medium-sized enterprises with a few dozen to a few hundred employees predominate. A study for the European Union has shown that in countries like France, Belgium and Italy, but also in the new EU members in Eastern Europe, most firms have fewer than 20 employees. In Germany and Switzerland firms with between 50 and 250 employees form the biggest block. Statistics list more than 11,000 mechanical engineering firms in the U.S. In Japan there are more than 8,500 and in Germany around 6,000.

The production processes in the sector are just as diverse as its products: large-scale mass production such as in the auto industry exists only in some sub-sectors, for instance earth compactors. There are also a few major companies with production locations around the world such as SKF, INA-Schaeffler and Timken, but even those multinationals are relatively small enterprises in terms of turnover as compared to auto or aircraft companies.

Many areas of mechanical engineering are dominated by small-scale production and even individual, custom-



Photo: Bomag

made production of machines which are often developed and produced to solve a specific problem or for a specific product at the customer's request.

UNIONS AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

In many unions, mechanical engineering and its employees have often had a rather second-class status. The degree of union organization in the three countries of the Triad has often been well below that of the "classic" sectors of the auto, steel and shipbuilding industries.

In Germany the proportion of organized employees is estimated at around 35 per cent. In Japan, according to official statistics, it is 24 per cent. There are no reliable

figures available for the U.S. Given that for private industry in general in the U.S. the level of unionization is under 10 per cent, the level for mechanical engineering is unlikely to be any higher (see figure 3, page 21).

There are many reasons for this. For instance, many unions concentrate more on organizing blue-collar rather than white-collar workers. And even among the blue-collar workers, due to conditions in their countries, they concentrate overwhelmingly on semi-skilled and unskilled workers rather than on highly trained employees such as engineers. But many employees of mechanical engineering enterprises have a relatively high level of skills. "Traditional" workers' unions often find it difficult to gain access to that group of employees.

The higher skill level of mechanical engineering employees in many countries has also led to the situation where companies in the sector are desperately seeking workers but cannot find them, while there are no longer enough jobs for workers with a lower skill level.

The small and medium-size of companies in the industry also implies a higher input of resources by the unions to organize workers in those companies and to continue to serve them once organized. In addition, many of these small and medium-sized firms are scattered all over the country and are not necessarily in the areas of industrial concentration in which assembly plants of the auto industry, for example, are located. Since the unions' local offices are also often located in areas of concentration, that means longer travel time for the unions – and often to organize a mere 10, 30 or 200 employees rather than the thousands to be found in an auto plant.

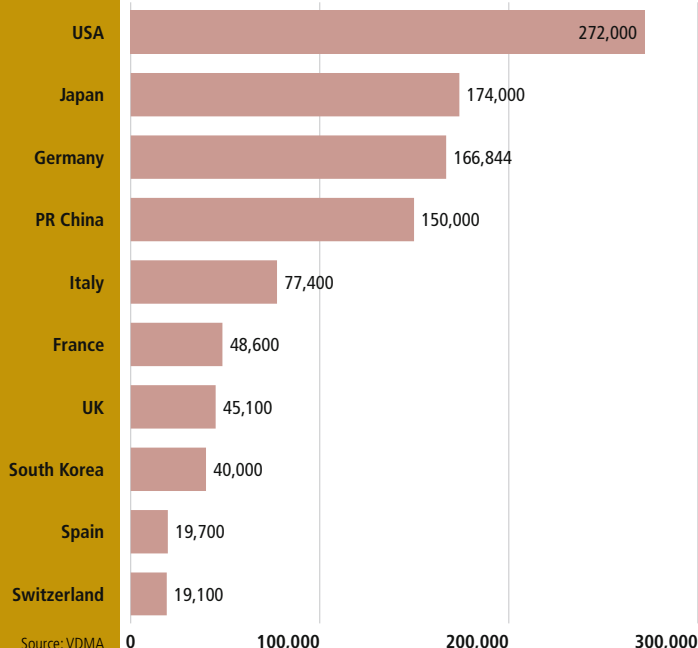
The percentage of union organizing as described above probably also applies proportionally to other countries besides those in the Triad, and they show that there is substantial potential for winning members in the industry. In view of the declining number of employees and



Photo: SKF Archive

FIG.1: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING 2006: TURNOVER OF SELECTED COUNTRIES

(MILL. EURO)



Source: VDMA
All values are estimations of VDMA except for Germany

hence, often, of members in the “classical” industries, consideration should be given to strategies that can realize this potential.

IMF ACTIVITIES IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

In the International Metalworkers’ Federation (IMF), for many years mechanical engineering has been somewhat neglected compared to other industries. Activities were long dominated by sectors in which the major member organizations had a substantially higher degree of organization than is the case in mechanical engineering. Activities geared to enterprises also played an important role. Since only a few major transnational groups were active in mechanical engineering, there were few potential targets for activities at the enterprise level. Only in recent years, following the increasing globalization of the world economy, have mechanical engineering firms established subsidiaries in foreign countries in order to open up new markets. Previously production had been concentrated mostly in the companies’ home countries.

One exception here is SKF, the Swedish ball-bearing company, which has long had production sites scattered around the world. For that reason as early as the 1970s the Swedish unions were pressing for enterprise-oriented activities in the IMF devoted to that group. Starting in 1975, meetings were held every four years, and in 1995 they led to an agreement between the company and the IMF on the founding of a “World Union Council” to meet every year.

However, the IMF, like the European Metalworkers’ Federation (EMF), has recognized the importance of the sector and they have both drawn the appropriate conclusions for union work. Several years ago the EMF set up an ad hoc working group for the sector. By decision of the last EMF Congress held in 2007 in Lisbon, Portugal, the importance of that sectoral work was upgraded and the working group was converted to a sectoral committee. The IMF is closely linked and coordinating its work with that sectoral committee.

After years of neglect, the IMF reactivated its work on the mechanical engineering sector at a conference held in the U.S. in 2004. Although the conference concentrated on the three countries of the Triad, it was also open to unions from other countries. A small steering group was established at the conference. In 2007 that steering group held a workshop with Japanese colleagues, which was continued in April 2008 in Germany and reported to the IMF Executive Committee in May 2008.

Another conference on the mechanical engineering sector is planned for 2009, involving the three Triad countries and unions from other countries that have an interest in the sector. At the conference the possibility of breaking down activities into working groups of particular sub-sectors will be discussed. Those sub-sectors could be: machine tools, construction and construction material machines; and the sub-sector of elevators (lifts) and conveyors.

There are a number of topics and problem areas which affect the sector as a whole, for example qualifications and advanced training of employees, the shortage of specialists, the increasing number of temporary workers and increasing trends toward the transfer of component manufacturing to so-called low-wage countries.

FIG.2: SIGNIFICANCE OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING IN THE METAL SECTOR

(EMPLOYMENT FIGURES FOR 2006, ROUNDED)

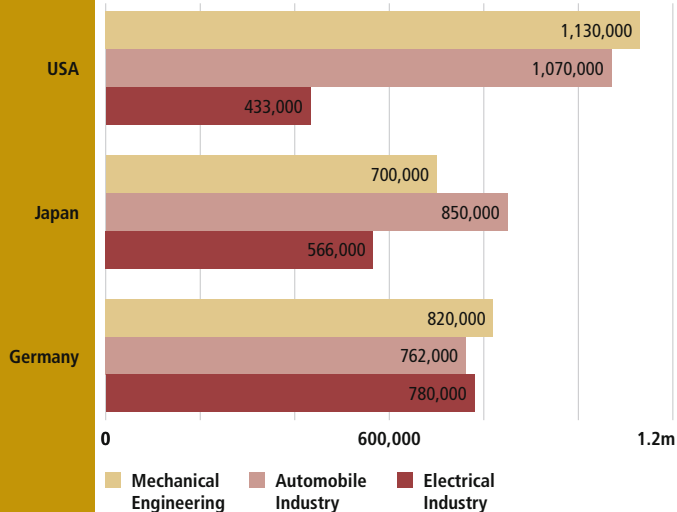
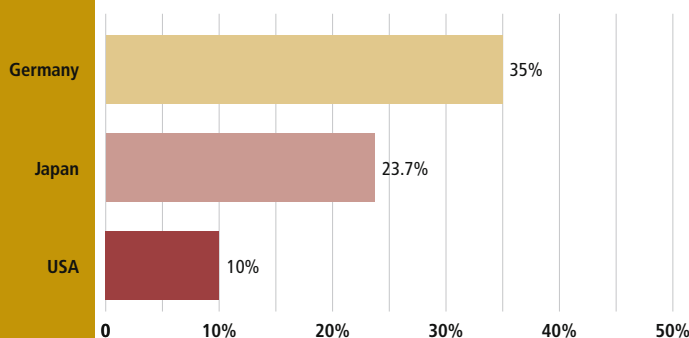


FIG.3: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING / UNIONISATION



PEOPLE



IN MEMORIAM ELENO BEZERRA

Eleno Bezerra, President of the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Metalúrgicos (CNTM), died aged 52 in a traffic accident on September 20.

Born in north-eastern Brazil, Bezerra travelled to São Paulo in search of training and employment at the age of 18. First employed at Metalúrgica Deca in 1975, Bezerra became a trade union and political activist in 1978 before being sacked in 1979 for participating in a metalworkers' strike. Later he took an active role in the union and the political battle for democracy in Brazil.

He was first elected to the executive of the São Paulo Metalworkers' Union in 1987 and helped implement a range of union campaigns. In 1996, Bezerra became the union secretary and in 2003 union president, co-ordinating the annual collective bargaining, winning significant pay rises for workers. In 2005, Bezerra was elected president of CNTM.



Photo: Bomag

In addition, however, there are many specific topics which are only relevant to their respective sub-sectors and for that reason they imply a breakdown of union activities, not only at the national, but also at the international level. For those sub-sectors IG Metall in Germany has already done some preliminary work with national working groups, and partly also with the EMF at the European level; work that can be taken up and extended at the global level by the IMF.

CONCLUSIONS

Mechanical engineering is of central importance for many other sectors since it produces products which enable those other sectors to produce.

According to a study by the Deutsche Bank, that importance will only increase, since mechanical engineering occupies a central position in the development and manufacture of products on which great hopes are placed for the age after oil. Solar energy, photovoltaics, wind power – all of those products were developed and made competitive by mechanical engineering.

The energy crisis can be solved and a climatic disaster avoided only if the global energy mix follows the laws of sustainability more closely. Mechanical and equipment engineering occupies a key position here, because it can generate the solutions that can ensure better energy supply in the future, impose less of a burden on the climate and prevent the cost of energy from further skyrocketing.

As a developer and supplier of “enabling technologies”, machine and equipment engineering is involved in all three segments and will play a special role in the necessary modernization of the global power plant park, efficiency revolution in all fields of energy use in industry and by consumers and the development and marketing of new technologies for renewable energies.

The sector's central importance within the economical structure should also be reflected in the work of European and international union confederations. The beginnings for that have already been established – they need only to be taken up and expanded.

One of the most important tasks here will be to intensify union organizing in the sector. Present-day figures show that there still exists sufficient potential. It will not be easy, if only because of the varying structure of mechanical engineering, divided as it is among small and medium-sized enterprises. But not to take up the challenge would mean excluding a large number of employees, including highly skilled employees, as potential members. That certainly can not be in the interest of the unions or their representation of the workers.

To meet that challenge, new strategies must be developed, strategies which may also make discussions on a restructuring of international union work necessary.



**IN MEMORIAM
FRANCIS LUNNEY**

Francis Lunney, former director of the United Steelworkers of America's International Affairs Department, died in August aged 88.

Lunney joined the USWA as a union negotiator in 1953. After his election, USWA president Lloyd McBride established the international affairs department in the late 1970s and Francis was appointed its director. In this role Lunney served on the IMF executive committee from 1980 to 1987.



**IN MEMORIAM
RAVI CHANDRA ARYA**

Ravi Chandra Arya, former member of the IMF executive committee and a representative at the International Labour Organization, died in August aged 68.

Arya was active in the trade union movement for more than four decades. As President of the Steel Workers' Union in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, he was responsible for bringing a large number of workers under one umbrella.

Arya also served as Organizing Secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress and as Deputy General Secretary of the Indian National Metalworkers' Federation for many years.



KOICHIRO NISHIHARA

Koichiro Nishihara, 55, was elected President of the Confederation of the Japan Automobile Workers' Union (JAW) and inaugurated as President of the Japan Council of Metalworkers' Unions (IMF-JC) in September and is now a member of the IMF executive committee.

Nishihara began working at Nissan in 1976 and was selected as a shop steward in the following year. He was at the forefront of collective bargaining and labour-management negotiations after he became a full-time union officer in 1985.

While at Nissan, Nishihara made every effort to improve the job security and working conditions when the company was faced with a financial downturn in the 1990s.



HIDEYUKI WAKAMATSU

Hideyuki Wakamatsu, 55, was elected General Secretary of the Japan Council of Metalworkers' Unions (IMF-JC) at its National Convention in September.

Wakamatsu was first employed in Toshiba Shibaura Electric Corporation in 1972 as a systems engineer of heavy electrical equipment. He became a full-time union officer in 1984 and served as a General Secretary

of the Head Office Branch of the Toshiba Workers' Union from 1988, becoming President of the Branch in 1994. He was active in local union activities in Tokyo as well as collective bargaining and labour management negotiations in Toshiba.

He joined the IMF-JC in 2002 as an Assistant General Secretary, responsible for Labour Policy and Organization & Administration.



CEDRIC SABELO GINA

Cedric Sabelo Gina, 37, was elected President of the National Union of Metalworkers' of South Africa (NUMSA) at its Congress in October.

Gina began working as an apprentice at Murray and Roberts in Richards Bay in 1993. Qualified as a boilermaker in 1996, he started working at BHP Billiton where he was elected shop steward in 1997 and then shop steward chairperson. In 1998 Gina was elected Regional Finance Committee member of NUMSA's KwaZulu-Natal Region and in 2004 was elected Second Deputy President of NUMSA.



IRVIN JIM

Irvin Jim, 40, was elected General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers' of South Africa (NUMSA) at its Congress in October.

Jim was active in the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC) in Port Elizabeth and began his employment at Firestone Tyre in 1991 where he was elected as a full-time shop steward.

In 1994, he became the Eastern Cape Region's provincial chairman, serving in that post for six years, becoming NUMSA's Eastern Cape Regional Secretary in 2000. He has proven to be a strong regional leader, speaking on behalf of striking workers and against the use of labour brokers.

He won election over incumbent Silumko Nondwangu by gaining 58 per cent of the votes of delegates.



CECLIA FAHLBERG

Cecilia Fahlberg, 48, was elected President of Unionen at its Congress in October, taking over from Mari-Ann Krantz. Fahlberg comes from HTF, the Salaried Employees Union that merged with SIF in 2007 to form Unionen. Born in Gothenburg, she studied business administration and marketing at Stockholm University.

Fahlberg worked five years at Transwede Airways and was elected trade union representative in 1995. At HTF, Fahlberg was national union officer in charge of collective bargaining from 1998-2003, member of the executive board from 2003-2006 and vice-president from 2006-2007. She held the position of Unionen's second-vice president before being elected President. Fahlberg speaks Swedish, English and Spanish.

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IS AT THE CENTRE OF KOREA'S LABOUR STRUGGLE

Arrest and imprisonment has not deterred Gab-Deuk Jung, president of the KMWU, from fighting for industry-wide collective bargaining and protecting the rights of workers to form unions.

Text / **Kristyne Peter**
Photo / **KMWU**

Under the stare of guards at the Young-Deng-po Correctional Justice facility on the outskirts of Seoul, prisoner Gab-Deuk Jung, President of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU), appears relaxed despite a potential three-year jail sentence hanging over his head.

Jung, who is facing criminal charges of "obstruction of business", was arrested on September 18 following a series of strikes demanding industry-wide collective bargaining and protesting U.S. beef imports.

The stakes are high, should a judge decide that the strikes Jung called are illegal, not only will the union lose its President to imprisonment but lawsuits filed against the union by some 90 companies, totalling in billions of wons for alleged damages, could bankrupt the KMWU, setting a dangerous precedent for future labour struggles.

"If I am found guilty [of organising illegal strikes] I fear the three rights [right to collectively bargain, right to strike and right to form a union] will be greatly compromised so I hope people outside of Korea will press for a positive outcome," said Jung while being interviewed in prison.

Jung points out that what is at issue is the employers' resistance to industry-wide collective bargaining. "By saying that the strikes are illegal they argue that industry-level bargaining has nothing to do with workers' wages and conditions, that it is political."

Born in 1958, the year of the dog, Jung has a reputation for meeting

adversity with decisiveness and courage, a quality many Koreans remark is common among men who share his birth year.

Jung started out at Hyundai Motors in 1984 when independent trade unions such as the Hyundai Motor Workers' Union (HMMU), now the Hyundai Motors Branch, were forced to operate underground. He went on to serve as president of the HMMU twice, and later became the eighth president of the Hyundai Group Trade Union Federation, one of three precursor organizations of the Korean Metal Workers' Federation (now KMWU). In 2007, Jung was elected as KMWU President.

For most Korean trade unionists, serving jail time for participating in strike actions is part of the job. Jung is no exception. In the 1990s he was imprisoned twice for his involvement in massive strikes over restructuring; in 2002 he was jailed for demonstrating against the GM/Daewoo takeover; and imprisoned again, then released on bail, following last year's protests against a KOREA/US Free Trade Agreement. Charges for obstruction of business related to the KOREA/US FTA are still pending.

"The repression in Korea is getting more sophisticated," says Jung referring to employers' widely used provision in Korea's criminal code that allows companies to seek damages and incarcerate union leaders for obstruction of business. "The capital forces and the government are not abiding by the law. On paper, workers are entitled to form a union, but in reality there



GAB-DEUK JUNG

Country / **Republic of Korea**

Position / **President**

Union / **Korean Metal Workers' Union**



Gab-Deuk Jung, President of the Korean Metal Workers' Union, faces possibly three years imprisonment for organising strikes calling for industry-wide collective bargaining rights



is no freedom to join a trade union. We have the legal foundation but we are not guaranteed the protection of these laws," Jung said adding, "Korea is the only country among the OECD members to arrest labour union leaders for obstruction of business."

Jung also noted that prison sentences for labour leaders have become more severe. "With the strike against the KOREA/US FTA, putting it into perspective, it was only a 14 hour strike, yet the prosecution asked for two to three years of imprisonment as the sentence. In contrast in the early 1990s, we had a goliath struggle – we had tens of thousands of

workers demonstrating in the street, cars were set on fire, and a large number of people back then were arrested, and at that time they only asked for one-year sentences."

Jung argues that the government's neoliberal economic policy is the reason for the growing repression against unions in his country. "Only the super rich minority is benefiting at the cost of workers and ordinary people. So we cannot help but resist it and we will continue to struggle against it."

One month after the interview was conducted, Jung was released on bail. He is currently awaiting trial.

