

# METAL WORLD



THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL METALWORKERS' FEDERATION



## Getting a grip on white-collar workers

SPECIAL REPORT, PAGE 18

No.2  
2004

## The controversial issue of China

**T**he role China is playing and will continue to play in the future is a subject for intensive debate within metalworkers' unions.

In practically all congresses I have participated in the last few months, China has been discussed – and not without fear for the future of the respective domestic manufacturing.

China has emerged as the manufacturing hub of the world, continuously attracting enormous foreign direct investments, US\$53 billion in 2002 and growing. This implies that thousands of jobs are moving to China from all over the world.

Metalworkers in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia fear de-industrialisation, delocalisation and off-shoring of work to China and expect answers from their unions.

At the last Executive Committee meeting, in May, we discussed China at length. Two experts fed Executive members with background information for the discussion. Professors Tom Hart of the Stockholm School of Asian Studies and Apo Leong from the Asia Monitor Resource Centre in Hong Kong made excellent presentations and also responded to questions and comments from the floor.

They made clear that China cannot be seen as just a big growing market. It is a mistake to believe that China today represents a market of 1.3 billion potential consumers. The differences between regions and sectors of the economy in terms of standards of living and working conditions are so huge that the real potential market for those who want to regard China as such is reduced to 200-250 million consumers.

The gap between Chinese people who can afford to buy what China produces and those who cannot could in the end create an explosive social climate that will be difficult, if not impossible, to contain for such a huge country. Social unrest can only be controlled by democratic systems which make possible that the people determine their own future.

There is no doubt that, from a trade union point of view, China is controversial in at least one aspect, e.g., what relations trade unions in the democratic world should have, if any, with the official All China Federation of Trade Unions. The ACFU is controlled by the Communist Party and has failed so far to commit to the struggle for and exercise of internationally recognised workers' and trade union rights.

At the Executive, it was decided to have a close look at what and how the IMF can work with this particular issue. The starting point will be to make an inventory of activities which many of the IMF's affiliates are already organising in and outside China for workers in the TNCs.

This, I believe, is a good start. We must explore all possibilities to reach workers at the plant level because I think this is the best and most realistic way to bring about small but important changes in this huge country.



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## Great ambitions

Reading this, the 13th IMF Editors' Meeting, held in Montreal, Canada, will have taken place. One of the outcomes will be the first-ever IMF media directory, listing affiliates' media outlets with their respective target groups, print-runs and number of website visitors. Already collecting this information makes you impressed: the diversity, the ambition, the sheer amount of it, with magazines distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies and websites visited by tens of thousands a week. The ever-present question is: What difference does it make? Some unions conduct research on this; others listen carefully to their constituencies. Answers are encouraging, and there is probably no audience that does not want more printed information or more services via union websites.

Also discussed in Montreal was the rapid technological shift taking place in media. From print to web, of course, but don't forget that print has become high-tech, in many aspects cheaper than ever. And in a not too distant future, we'll see the merger of the two, with sheet thin soft screens looking and feeling like paper but functioning as online computers.

By the way, well into its fifth year of existence, Metal World has for the first time white-collar workers on its cover – embarrassingly late, taking into account that you, in some countries and industrial sectors, represent 40-50 per cent of our members. And growing.



**JESPER NILSSON**  
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## AFFILIATES

# FIAT Melfi on par with other car plants

**MELFI ITALY** An agreement reached between Fiat management and the metalworkers' unions representing striking autoworkers at the company's car plant in Melfi, southern Italy, was ratified by the workers, and ended a three-week dispute over pay and shift patterns. The official results of the ballot, announced on May 17, showed that 77.4 per cent of the workers voted in favour of the pact.

Workers at the plant had been protesting work periods that reached as much as 12 consecutive days, as well as earning lower pay in comparison with Fiat colleagues elsewhere.

The new deal provides for an average monthly wage hike of €105 (US\$126), to be introduced in instalments starting in July 2004 and bringing pay for Melfi workers in line with that of the

other Fiat plants by July 2006. Also, workers will no longer have to work back-to-back weeks of night shifts, there will be a maximum of 10 consecutive working days, and seven days of holiday have been added.

Another hotly disputed issue in the conflict was the long-standing exorbitant and arbitrary disciplinary measures taken at the Melfi plant. A moratorium on all such measures over the last year was agreed, as well as the re-establishing of a conciliation commission.

As the Melfi plant not only produces the popular Punto and Lancia Ypsilon cars, but also makes auto parts which it supplies to other Fiat facilities in Italy, the walkout is said to have impeded the company's production in much of the country. **KL**

# Hunger strikes at Republica

**BUCHAREST ROMANIA** Protesting the government's failure to meet its obligations following the cancellation of a privatisation contract with the pipe-making company S.C. Republica S.A., workers at the company have been on two hunger strikes since April 1.

The first strike ended when an agreement was signed that the workers would receive unpaid wages. However, when the enforcement of the agreement was stopped, a second hunger strike, in front of the Romanian government's Privatisation Ministry started on April 29. There have been as many as 65 joining the protest. The workers belong to the Malaxa Trade Union, a member of the IMF-affiliated U-Metal National Metalworkers' Federation.

Several years ago, when Republica



Workers on hunger strike

was sold to a consortium of companies, the contract stipulated that the buyer was to restart activity at the plant, increase the production of pipes and pay overdue wages totalling \$2.1 million. The new owner, however, ignored all commitments, and upon the cancellation of the contract, it fell on the government to give the workers their unpaid wages.

The IMF has urged the Romanian government to find a settlement in favour of the workers. **KL**

## AFFILIATES

## Aker Yards merges its activities

**NORWAY/FINLAND/GERMANY** Following restructuring at the Aker Kvaerner group, resulting in three separately listed companies – Aker Yards, Aker Kvaerner and Kvaerner, Aker Yards will merge its shipbuilding activities in Norway with those of the company in Finland and Germany.

The combined group, with 13 shipyards in Europe and one in Brazil, will become the leading shipbuilding group in Europe and the world's fifth largest.

Trade union reactions to Aker Kvaerner's reorganisation of the group's activities are favourable. The chief shop steward at Aker Yards in Norway called the restructuring a "positive move". At the Finnish

metalworkers' union, Metalli, the head of the shipbuilding section also felt it was a step in the right direction, and that there would be improved coordination of activities with the various shipyards under one group, "a better division of labour" between the shipyards in Norway, Finland and Germany. And the IMF's director for the shipbuilding department, David Seligson, commented that small European shipyards had not been largely competitive. **KL**



Aker Yards shipyard, Norway

## Contract at American Axle

**DETROIT USA** UAW-represented workers at American Axle & Manufacturing have ratified a four-year agreement, covering more than 6,700 workers. The deal was reached after workers took one day of strike action. Among gains achieved are:

- an up-front lump-sum payment of \$5,000,
- a 2 per cent performance bonus,
- \$1,000 holiday bonuses in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Also of importance in the agreement is the stipulation that no plants will be closed and health care is maintained. **KL**

## USWA to suspend organising drive at Alcoa

**PITTSBURGH USA** The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) is suspending its organising campaign for hourly workers at the Alcoa smelter facility in Mt. Holly, South Carolina, due to what it has described as unfair labour practices and violations of a neutrality clause to which the company had agreed.

The union believes that Alcoa:

- told workers it would close the plant if they joined the union,
- threatened to lay off workers if they joined the union,
- conducted illegal surveillance of union activities,
- threatened to take away pay if workers joined the union.

The decision to defer was taken with the knowledge that the workers no longer had a free and fair choice as to whether or not to join the union. The USWA says Alcoa has even formed a "Union Free Environment" consulting group, dispatching union-busting consultants directly from the company's corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh. **KL**

## Sweden's SIF gets new deal

**STOCKHOLM SWEDEN** The IMF Swedish affiliate SIF (Svenska Industritjänstemannaförbundet) signed a new three-year collective agreement on March 31, covering wages and working conditions for 110,000 white-collar workers in the metal sector.

When talks officially began on January 1, the employers' organisation proposed the introduction of a new bargaining system which would have had all wages negotiated at company level, between each individual employee and his/her nearest superior. This was rejected by the union, as was the employers' demand that the existing agreement on working conditions be optional at company level. The result is that the new agreement has exactly the same structure and is based on the same system as earlier agreements.

The main items contained in the contract include:

- The total value for the three years is a minimum 7.3%.

- Wage increases for the three years are 1.7%, 1.8% and 1.8% (totalling 5.3%).
- Each member is guaranteed a wage increase of a minimum 220, 220 and 235 SEK for the three years.
- A wage review shall take place at company level each year and be negotiated between the local trade union and the company. This is estimated to be at least 0.5% per year (historically the wage review has given from 1.1% up to 3.5%).
- Minimum wages shall be increased by 2.7%, 2.2% and 2.7% (totalling 7.7%).
- Regarding working time/pension, there are three options (determined by the individual member or by agreement at company level): one day extra time off, or 0.5% extra pension contribution, or 0.5% cash payment.
- The right to additional "parental leave pay" has been extended from two to three months.

The agreement is valid from April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2007. **KL**

IMF INITIATIVES

## IMF signs framework agreement with Bosch

**GLOBAL** An international framework agreement, “Basic principles of social responsibility at Bosch”, has been signed by management of the German-based automotive and engineering transnational, by the Bosch Group European Works Council, and by the International Metalworkers’ Federation. This is the eighth international framework agreement (IFA) for the IMF.

The IFA will be implemented throughout the Bosch Group, covering over 225,000 employees at hundreds of locations in more than 30 countries.

Stating that a priority at Bosch is to combine “the pursuit of economic objectives with consideration for social and environmental factors,” the principles of the agreement are based on the



Bosch plant, Blaichach, Germany

PHOTO: Bosch

core labour standards of the International Labour Organisation.

Included in the IFA are provisions

concerning the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, children’s rights, occupational health and safety, equal opportunities, and the rejection of forced labour.

As well as covering the entire Bosch Group – whose business sectors are divided into automotive, industrial, consumer goods & building technologies, the agreement stipulates that the company

will not work with suppliers that fail to comply with the basic ILO standards. **KL**

## Bosch’s main manufacturing plants:

Bosch is present in more than 30 countries. Its main plants, sorted by country, are situated in:

**GERMANY:** Abstatt, Ansbach, Augsburg, Bamberg, Blaichach, Boxberg, Braunschweig, Bühl/Bühlertal, Darmstadt, Eisenach, Elchingen, Frankfurt/Main, Göttingen, Hildesheim, Homburg, Horb am Neckar, Immenstadt, Kusterdingen, Leonberg, Möglingen, München, Nürnberg, Reutlingen, Rommelsbach, Rutesheim, Salzgitter, Schwieberdingen, Stuttgart-Feuerbach, Tamm, Waiblingen, Witten

**AUSTRIA:** Hallein, Linz, Vienna

**BELGIUM:** Brussels, La Louvière, Tienen

**CZECH REPUBLIC:** Budweis, Jihlava

**FRANCE:** Angers, Beauvais, Drancy, Juvin-court, Levier, Mondeville (Caen), Moulins, Pont de l’Arche, Rodez, Saint-Ouen, Vénisieux

**PORTUGAL:** Abrantes, Braga, Vila Real

**HUNGARY:** Budapest, Hatvan

**ITALY:** Bari, Crema, Milano, Offanengo, Turin

**NETHERLANDS:** Tilburg

**POLAND:** Wroclaw

**RUSSIA:** Moscow

**SPAIN:** Alcalá de Henares, Aranjuez, Buelna, Castellet, La Carolina, Lliçà, Madrid, Pamplona, Treto

**SWEDEN:** Arjeplog, Göteborg, Kista, Norrköping, Vaitoudden

**TURKEY:** Bursa

**UK:** Cardiff, Denham, Glenrothes

**MEXICO:** Aguascalientes, Juárez, San Luis Potosí, Toluca

**USA:** Albion, IN, Anderson, SC, Ann Arbor, MI, Baudette, MN, Broadview, IL, Charleston, SC, Clarksville, TN, Farmington Hills, MI, Flat Rock, MI, Fountain Inn, SC, Gallatin, TN, Johnson City, TN, New Carlisle, IN, Palo Alto, CA,

Pittsburg, PA, Russelville, KY, South Bend, IN, St. Joseph, MI, Sumter, SC, Waltham, MA, Wooster, OH

**ARGENTINA:** Buenos Aires

**BRAZIL:** Aratú, Campinas, Curitiba, Pomerode, São Paulo

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Brits

**TUNISIA:** Beni-Khalled

**CHINA:** Beijing, Suzhou

**INDIA:** Koramangala

**JAPAN:** Daito

**MALAYSIA:** Penang

**SOUTH KOREA:** Buyong, Seoul, Taejon, Yongin

**AUSTRALIA:** Clayton

*Note: The table does not necessarily display all countries where the company is present or all its plants.*

Source: Bosch

## TRADE UNION RIGHTS

## Trade union rights violated at GM plant

**GRAVATAI BRAZIL** The International Metalworkers' Federation has protested to the head office of General Motors Corporation about ongoing actions of GM management at the company's auto plant in Gravatai, Brazil. These include the denial of the right to freedom of association. The IMF also expressed concern over the status of health and safety protections at the plant.

In the letter, sent on May 19 to G. Richard Wagoner Jr., GM's chairman and chief executive officer, the IMF general secretary, Marcello Malentacchi, referred to the transnational automaker's refusal to allow a free and fair election whereby workers at the company's Gravatai facility would be able to democratically decide their representatives. "The IMF fully supports a complaint under the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises filed by the Sindicato Metalúrgicos de Porto Alegre," wrote Malentacchi. The union is a member of the IMF-affiliated Brazilian metalworkers' union, Confederação Nacional dos Metalúrgicos (CNM-CUT).

Malentacchi also expressed concern over the unjust dismissal of workers who have suffered occupational injuries at the plant and asked the company to ensure that all legal protections and rights of injured workers be respected. The IMF general secretary stated that the GM management at Gravatai should take actions to address the health and safety conditions in the plant.

Union representatives from GM operations worldwide, who will be meeting in Detroit in June in the framework of the General Motors Action Group, will discuss the situation in Brazil. **KL**

## Birlesik Metal members harassed

**BURSA TURKEY** Birlesik Metal-Is, an IMF Turkish affiliate, reported violations of trade union rights at the Bursa subsidiary of Grammer A.S. Seating Systems. The company, a manufacturer of components and systems for auto interiors, based in Amberg, Germany, had refused not only to recognise the trade union at its plant in Bursa, but also illegally dismissed 64 workers, committed unfair practice regarding the recruitment of 200 new, unskilled workers, and failed to respect its employees' right to freedom of association, guaranteed by the Turkish Constitution and ILO Conventions ratified by Turkey.

On March 26, at a meeting in Istanbul held with representatives of the company, Birlesik Metal, the Turkish trade union confederation DISK, and the German metalworkers' union IG Metall, a Protocol Agreement was signed. However, even though the terms of the agreement stated

that the dismissed workers were to be reinstated on March 29 and that training measures were to be set up for the new recruits, management did not comply. Moreover, the newly hired workers as well as white-collar employees were forced to join another trade union, which has harassed, threatened and even assaulted Birlesik Metal members at the plant.

Following protest letters sent by the IMF and many affiliates to Grammer's chairman of the board in Germany, Birlesik Metal reported in May that the dismissed workers were finally reinstated, calling it "a concrete victory for international solidarity." The struggle for the union's recognition, however, is continuing. **KL**



## Workers forced to quit union

**ISTANBUL TURKEY** In late March, Birlesik Metal-Is reported serious violations not only of international labour standards but also of Turkish labour law at the steel company Colakoglu.

According to Birlesik, a public notary entered the plant in order to obtain the resignations of the union's members, following which over 700 workers were forced to quit the union. And while the official was collecting resignations, security forces were also present. When the union attempted to enter the premises, management refused to let them in, but invited a rival union to do so. As a result of this breach of workers' rights to organise

freely in the union of their choice, the IMF has protested in writing to the ministers of justice, labour and internal affairs. "If this situation is not changed," stated the IMF, "we will be obliged to inform the International Labour Organisation of these violations at Colakoglu."

Birlesik Metal, which remains the competent union at Colakoglu, is presently appealing the case in court. "We want to establish that the procedure used by the employer was illegal," said a union spokesperson.

The Turkish government ratified ILO Convention No. 87, on freedom of association, in 1993. **KL**

## IMF INITIATIVES

## Non-manual workers and China in focus at IMF Executive

**GENEVA SWITZERLAND** High on the agenda at the two-day meeting of the IMF Executive Committee, in Geneva, in May, was the topic of non-manual workers and IMF policy and activities in this area.

The issue of non-manual workers has become a global one and Executive Committee members felt it was very timely to address it. The composition of today's workforce is shifting from blue-collar to white-collar jobs, and as manufacturing becomes more and more technology intensive, this trend is bound to continue. At the same time, the unionization rate is low among these workers.

The changes in the industrial and occupational structure represent a major challenge for the trade unions, but they also offer an opportunity. Organising the unorganised is at the core of the IMF's Action Programme, and the mission of unions is to organise both the traditional core occupations and the non-manual, and represent the interests of both.

The IMF, recognising the importance of recruiting non-manual workers, recommended that its activities be strengthened worldwide for this group. (See also Special Report, page 18.)

The issue of China was another key topic for discussion at the IMF Executive meeting.

A decision was taken to set up an ad hoc working group, to be led and coordinated by the IMF. Among its tasks will be to:

- gather information on all on-going projects in China initiated and carried out by IMF affiliates or in association with other organisations,

- explore different ways to get in contact with workers and their organisations at plant level, and
- make proposals to the Executive in terms of activities that should be organised by the IMF.

Regarding trade union developments in Belarus, the Executive Committee took the decision to immediately suspend the Automobile & Agricultural Machinery Workers' Union (AAM) from IMF affiliation and to recommend its expulsion to the IMF Central Committee, to meet in May 2005.

The next meeting of the IMF Executive will be held in December. **KL**

## ILO makes recommendations on China

**GENEVA/CHINA** After considering the complaint lodged by the ICFTU and IMF with the International Labour Organisation against the government of China for violations of principles of freedom of association, the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association has issued its recommendations, adopted by the ILO Governing Body at its March 2004 session.

Charges in the ICFTU/IMF complaint, filed in March 2002, were related to authorities taking repressive measures against leaders, elected representatives and members of independent workers' organisations.

Of particular concern to the IMF was the case of independent metalworkers' representatives at the Ferro Alloy Factory in Liaoyang, in northeastern China, who were arrested for their part in a peaceful workers' protest over unpaid wages and benefits and then charged with "illegal assembly" and "subversion of state power". Two of these metalworker representatives, Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang, were sentenced in May 2003 to long, harsh prison terms.

In its report, the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association recommended that detained trade unionists in China, like anyone else, should benefit from normal judicial proceedings and

have the right to due process. It once again strongly urged the government to take necessary measures for the immediate release of the two men and



Chinese worker, Qinhuangdao

to institute the independent investigations requested previously in respect of, amongst others, allegations of violent police intervention at the Ferro Alloy Factory demonstrations.

The final paragraph of the Committee's recommendations states: "In light of the numerous outstanding requests for information and action, and convinced that the development of free and independent trade unions and employers' organisations is indispensable for social dialogue and to enable a government to confront its social and economic problems and resolve them in the best interests of the workers and the nation, the Committee once again strongly urges the Government to respond positively to its previous suggestion for a direct contacts mission." **JN**

IMF INITIATIVES

## IMF publishes new auto report

**GENEVA** The IMF published a new and much anticipated report on the global motor industry in conjunction with the IMF World Auto Council, held in Dearborn (Michigan), USA, on June 8-10. The 70-page publication, entitled "IMF Auto Report 2004", includes chapters on:

- Challenges and strategies for trade unions
- China's auto sector
- Production overview
- Employment trends
- Regional dimensions of vehicle sales.

"The IMF Auto Report aims to form shared awareness of conditions in the global motor vehicle industry, common

challenges metalworkers in the sector face, and ways for trade unions to respond. Our hope is that this information will help in developing policies to benefit metalworkers and their communities," says IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi in his introduction to the publication.

Since the previous Auto Report was issued, in 2000, China has become the fourth largest national vehicle producer, behind the United States, Japan and Germany. Consequently, the unprecedented development is the subject of a separate chapter, "China's auto sector".

The publication, produced in Eng-

lish, Spanish, German and French, is being distributed to IMF affiliates and is available for downloading on the IMF website.

The recent IMF World Auto Council, as well as the Auto Report, will be covered in depth in the next issue of Metal World, due in late September. **JN**



Available in four languages

## Alternative strategies presented

**GLOBAL** Development of an alternative economic programme has been a major priority for the IMF and its affiliates in the 2001-2005 IMF Action Programme. The topic has been discussed thoroughly at many IMF meetings at world level, with the aim of clarifying and defining exactly what an alternative economic programme should look like.

This process culminated in the presentation of the paper "IMF Strategies for an Alternative Globalisation" at the IMF Central Committee meeting in Cape Town in December 2003. The document articulates the four pillars of an alternative economic programme which resulted from discussion and debate within the IMF. It was presented to the Central Committee not as an invitation to re-debate the merits of the proposed programme, but to agree on strategies for implementing it.

Fitted with an introduction outlining the discussion in Cape Town, the paper has now been printed in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish, and is being circulated to all affiliates. It can also be downloaded from the IMF website. The aim with disseminating the strategies is twofold: to provide affiliates with the agreed alternative economic programme and strategies to promote it and, more importantly, to stimulate debate within affiliated unions that will result in concrete actions in furtherance of our strategic objectives. **JN**



## The IMF condemns attacks in Madrid

**MADRID SPAIN** The International Metalworkers' Federation expressed its sympathy and the total support and solidarity of metalworkers worldwide with their Spanish brothers and sisters following the unspeakable attacks by terrorists which took place on March 11 in Madrid.

"Deeply saddened, horrified and dismayed by these events, I would like to convey the heartfelt condolences of the entire International Metalworkers' Federation for the many innocent people killed or injured in these cowardly attacks," said Marcello Malentacchi, IMF general secretary. "The IMF condemns in the most energetic terms these premeditated attacks, whose victims were mostly workers, students and immigrants. Violence as a means of expression must always be condemned." **KL**

HEALTH & SAFETY

## Workers' Memorial Day, April 28

**GENEVA SWITZERLAND** On April 28, the "International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers," three Geneva-based Global Union Federations participated in a rally at the Place des Nations, just outside the offices of the United Nations.

The event was organised by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), with the participation of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) and the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers' (IFBWW).

Addressing the rally were the IUF president, Paul Andela, and Alfiero Nicolini, from the IMF Swiss affiliate SMUV/FTMH.

Gathering more than 100 persons, the rally in Geneva sent a clear message that workplace accidents and ill health are preventable and that employers who fail to respect the health and safety of their workers must be held to account. A formal two minutes of silence in remembrance of workers who have been killed over the past year was held.

The three Global Union Federations are working to end abusive health and safety conditions. The IMF, for example, is conducting a project in India to address the basic problems of shipbreaking workers by providing them essential services and motivating for organising.

Scrapping ships is one of the most work-intensive and dangerous jobs there is. The highly hazardous shipbreaking industry employs over 160,000 workers in India alone.

JN



Alfiero Nicolini, FTMH/SMUV, addressing the rally



Participants at the Geneva rally

## Brazilian government to ban asbestos

**BRASILIA BRAZIL** At the end of March 2004, the Brazilian government announced its decision to ban asbestos, thus reversing the country's past national policy and practice with regard to this substance. It is expected that the ban will be introduced soon and that committees are being set up to examine what needs to be done.

One step in the right direction is a new process being patented in Brazil to

produce fibre-cement using vegetable matter. Companies are already using this technology to produce, for example, water tanks and corrugated tiles.

The city of São Paulo was first to set a good example in Brazil in the struggle against asbestos. Already in March 2001, the city council had unanimously approved legislation to prohibit the use of asbestos in buildings and construction work.

Exposure to asbestos, professionally and domestically, is known to cause deadly diseases, with extensive loss of life and terrible suffering. More than 30 countries around the world, including Argentina, Chile, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Australia, have already banned the use and marketing of asbestos.

KL

TRADE UNION WEBSITES

## Numsa launches revamped website

**JOHANNESBURG SOUTH AFRICA** The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), the country's largest metalworkers' trade union, launched its new look website on May 1.

"Numsa has been off the worldwide web for a few years now after its website information became stale, the look became tired and the framework unwieldy," said the union in a statement.

When Numsa decided it was necessary to revamp its website, it had to take into account a number of different users:

- its own members, shop stewards and other workers, both locally and internationally, who increasingly have access to the Internet;
- employers who want to know more about their workers' choice of trade union;
- journalists and students who are interested in information about South African trade unions;
- non-governmental organisations locally and across the world.

The new website contains news headlines from the South African and global metal industry, the latest Numsa press releases, policies, facts about Numsa, contact details, a photo gallery, etc. The site also includes stories from Numsa's internal publications, the Numsa News and Numsa Bulletin.

Background research papers written especially for the engineering and automobile jobs summit can also be downloaded.

Visitors are invited to register to receive an e-mail newsletter on an ongoing basis. This will inform subscribers of updates and important announcements. In September this



year, at Numsa's 7th National Congress, the website will be updated

directly from the venue. See it on [www.numsa.org.za](http://www.numsa.org.za). **JN**

### ...and Amicus introduces health and safety section

**LONDON GREAT BRITAIN** Amicus – the biggest trade union organisation in the UK private sector and manufacturing industry – has launched a new health & safety section on its website. There you'll find H&S news, publications and other resources, including an extensive and useful collection of links to other H&S sites.



[www.amicustheunion.org/main/asp?page=38](http://www.amicustheunion.org/main/asp?page=38)



# Still hope in Brazil

*Lula is the lathe operator who has become president of Brazil. For 18 months, he has governed the world's fifth largest nation, a country suffering from hunger and mass unemployment. "We must be patient," say Lula's working class voters in São Bernardo, where, once upon a time, it all started.*

TEXT: HARALD GATU

PHOTOS: R. STUCKERT, A. MACIEL



**W**e met briefly at the presidential palace in the capital, Brasilia. Lula was surrounded by a crowd of security guards and civil servants who hissed, “No questions, do you get it? Not a single one.”

We had last met 15 years ago, when Lula was in Stockholm and went to visit Leif Blomberg, the then general secretary of the Swedish Metalworkers’ Union. Leif thought Lula was a “nice guy”.

At that time, Lula was the leader of the small, radical but rapidly growing Workers’ Party and was about to embark on his first presidential election.

Today, he has groomed his beard, put away his cap and walks with a rolling gait, looking like a teddy bear in his statesman’s suit. His body is larger, his voice darker and his job is mission impossible – to transform society in the world’s most unequal country.

It took Lula four attempts to win the presidency of Brazil. He attained his goal when popular dissatisfaction with the former president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, reached well into the Brazilian middle classes. Cardoso, who defeated Lula in two presidential elections, turned Brazil into a neo-liberal laboratory, where publicly-owned property was privatised and global capital was invited in with open arms. Cardoso introduced a hard currency policy to smash the 1,000 per cent inflation rate, got rid of the old money and introduced a new currency tied to the US dollar.

But the problem was that the US dollar became the hard currency of the 1990s. The global money markets doubted Brazil’s ability to defend its rate of exchange, which was fixed to the dollar, and started speculating. Cardoso’s government operated the highest interest rates in the world to defend itself, but one day everything collapsed. One industrial job in three disappeared. In the state of São Paulo, the vigorous, modern financial centre of the country, one person in five is out of work. When the city of Rio advertised 1,000 street sweeping jobs, there were 160,000 applicants.

### CONSTANT TURMOIL

This is the country Lula has inherited, a land in constant turmoil. Starving landless people migrate in desperation to the slums of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, from where they can easily see how the upper classes, living in extravagant abundance, shelter anxiously in gated communities, protected by armed guards, razor-wire and sophisticated alarm systems.

This is the country where in one city alone, Rio de Janeiro, 4,000 children – mainly street children – were shot and killed in a period of four years. That

figure should be compared with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which during the same period 400 children were killed as victims of the violent conflict.

The country’s constant turmoil is demonstrated every day when landless people try to occupy estates patrolled by the sharp-shooting militias of the large landowners.

This magnificent country once attracted Portuguese navigators, with its brazil tree that gave the nation its name and whose red colour provided the emerging European textile industry with dyes. This is a country which has been ruled for 500 years by an elite which once pushed millions of African slaves on to plantations and into mines, and has ruled ever since with whips, bullets and capital. This ravaged, corrupt, ragged country decided on a day in October nearly two years ago to put aside the men of the elite, and instead elect a former lathe operator as president and head of state of 182 million inhabitants.

### PURE CHANCE

The city of São Paulo is surrounded by suburbs full of factories, lured here in the 1960s and 70s by a military dictatorship offering low wages and young, healthy workers.

The world talked about “the Brazilian miracle” with emerging industries and economic development rates which astonished everyone. This “miracle” provided training, enabling unschooled lads like Lula to become machine-tool operators.

It was pure chance that Lula became involved with the union. His big brother, Frei Chico, was active in the underground Communist Party and mentioned his brother to the Metalworkers’ Union in São Bernardo. “He is young, doesn’t like the union, knows nothing, but might join anyway.”

When his brother asked Lula, the latter said angrily: “No, I don’t want to join the union; it’s only for bastards.” In a military dictatorship, a union doesn’t hold the same position as it might in normal circumstances. Unions were a joke, an uneasy, obedient tool of the dictators. There was no question of negotiating wages. The person who converted Lula was Afonso, a left-wing activist. When Afonso talked, Lula listened. He thought Afonso was knowledgeable, serious and honest. Lula joined and soon became the secretary of the São Bernardo branch.

On a foggy, rainy day in May 1978, autumn arrived in the southern hemisphere. But it was to be a hot season in Brazilian workplaces, and it all started at the Scania truck factory at São Bernardo. Those who were there at the time still remember it.

One of them was an engineering work-

#### FACTS ABOUT BRAZIL

**Population:** 182 million

**Capital:** Brasilia

**IMF affiliates:** Confederação Nacional dos Metalúrgicos - CNM/CUT and Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Metalúrgicos - CNTM

er, João Bosco, then 28 years old. Ford, Toyota, Chrysler, Mercedes, the gigantic Volkswagen plant with its 30,000 workers, and Scania – all the car factories were on the boil. Their workers were demanding a share of the economic miracle.

Only a few workers at Scania knew that this was the day the strike would be called. Bosco remembers what happened: “A few of us got together at ten the night before in someone’s home to work out our tactics. At 7:40 the following morning, during the coffee break, we whispered to one another: NOW! And Scania came to a halt after the coffee break.”

After an hour or two, the military police surrounded the factory. In the tumultuous crowd outside, a small bearded man wearing a cap pushed his way through to the railings around the Scania works and looked at the silent factory behind the palm trees. The strikers’ spokesperson, the secretary of the Metalworkers’ Union, had arrived: Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

He had turned up to do the shop steward’s typical job: negotiate the price of labour.

Through the fence he saw the silent plant, which lit a spark; at one factory after another work ceased, and soon 80,000 engineering workers were on strike. They filled the football stadium in São Bernardo, where Lula took hold of the microphone.

“It was there and then that Lula stood out for the first time as a leader,” said Bosco.

They knew each other, had attended trade union training sessions together, and lived in the same neighbourhood. “He was a good man, a good speaker, funny and bright. He was a good friend.” But was he a future president? “No! No! No! No one could even think the thought then”.

The strike provided the metalworkers with pay rises of 25 per cent and with self-confidence, a consciousness of their strength.

### A NEW PARTY

The following summer Lula and a friend were sitting in the shade of the trees along the avenue Rua Barão de Itapetininga, in central São Paulo. This is where he suggested for the first time the idea of a new party, the Workers’ Party. He wanted a party created by the metalworkers, not a new left-wing sect, but a broad-based, open party for all who wanted socialism. They clearly repudiated the communist dictatorships; what they wanted to build was something new. The idea rapidly gained support from industrial workers, landless peasants, and not least from radical priests in the Catholic church.

Outside the church at São Bernardo, the square of Praça da Matriz slopes down to the main street streaming with



At the beach of Santos, where Lula had his first job, selling peanuts and oranges.



João Bosco, Lula’s former neighbour: “In 1978, no one could think of Lula as a future president.”

traffic. The square is framed by mango and palm trees, and tamarind trees, whose fruit is used for making chutney. In the evening the square is quiet; the only sounds to break the serenity are the giggles of loving couples. On some dark, dank evenings you can hear the choir singing in the church. This is where Lula came to get to know the liberation theologians, the left-wing movement in the Catholic church, with

# FEATURE

## BRAZIL



Lira, a worker at Scania, says: "We must have patience. Lula is not running the country alone."

radical priests and bishops who supported the workers. On the First of May every year, there is a "mass for the working class" held here, in which Lula still participates.

Lula hid in this church when the police were after him. When the trade union offices had been destroyed and the police had blocked the bars where the union activists used to meet, the workers assembled in the church instead. The police never entered.

Today, church caretaker Djalma Ferreira has parked his Ford Escort behind the church to do some repair work on the car. The rain is falling as he checks the brake shoes. We go with the shy and retiring Djalma into the church hall to hear him tell us what happened.

"I remember the first time the workers came here. The police were running after them and hitting them hard with batons; they chased them with dogs and fired teargas. It was terrible, but the workers sought refuge and the police left them alone here."

Djalma made clear his modest pride for protecting Lula and the trade union activists. He uses simple words. He feels no need to boast.

Naturally he is at the church for the workers' mass on the First of May and greets Lula who always comes up to him, slapping him on the back, saying "Hello, Djalma. Is everything alright?"

"He is a person of historical importance. When he realised that the union didn't have enough power, he started the Partido dos Trabalhadores, the Workers' Party. I think he was destined to change things. He finds it easy to talk to people and easy to negotiate."

What do you tell him on the First of May? "I wish him good luck. I really want him to succeed."

Not far from the church is the Sindicato dos Metalúrgicos del ABC, the Metalworkers' Union office for the industrial belt of the ABC towns – São André, São Bernardo and São Caetano. If one likes, one can regard the activities in the building as a measure of how far the trade union movement has got in this part of Brazil. The meeting rooms are filled with one study group after another, and the statistics department gathers data about wages from various plants. In the information department, a group of journalists is busy finishing today's material for the daily four-page

newspaper, which is published for the 90,000 members.

Helinho Horato, a member of the union's executive, receives us in one of the rooms. This was Lula's old union office. Helinho approves of Lula's first year. "We are currently discussing what line to take about the government's policies. We have noted two important items: inflation is low and Lula has brought Brazil back into the international arena. We have also seen important reforms but expect further changes to strengthen trade union rights and labour legislation for individuals."

### URBAN GUERRILLA

It is a long way from the union offices in Rua João Basso in São Bernardo to the presidential palace in Brasília, a stylish modern showplace with many concrete arches and glass windows, which takes one back over 40 years to an era when lunar travel broadened the imagination, not least amongst the architects charged with drawing up the newly established capital in the interior of Brazil.

The palace was captured nearly two years ago by a somewhat self-conscious but smiling Lula, with his government that didn't resemble any other the country had ever had. The prime minister was once part of a small urban guerrilla group which kidnapped the American ambassador, but after years of torture in jail came out to adopt another political path. The minister of the environment is from a family of rubber tappers in the interior of the Amazon basin, born in a bamboo hut, starting to work as a rubber tapper at the age of ten, and only learning to read when he was 16. The minister of land reform is a leftist revolutionary from the movement of landless people. The minister of culture, Gilberto Gil, is one of the best known singers in Latin America, who spent time in prison during the dictatorship in the 1970s and, like Lula, hails from the impoverished north of the country.

Together they have to lead a nation which is in continuous daily turmoil.

What will happen the day when land reform starts to be implemented? At present, the large landowners' paid gangs are training their handguns against hungry squatters. And tomorrow? How safe is Lula? And how will he handle the situation when his own people run out of patience? Many are demanding rapid change and expect that the radical party programme will be followed to the letter.

Will Lula succeed in winning his promised war against hunger, when the country lacks money? How will Brazil get money when the US and EU pile high duties on Brazilian fruit and vegetables? How will the local population be fed when an increasing part of the cultivated land is being used for soybeans for American and European meat factories, and the profits go to transnational companies?

These are the questions discussed by many of the engineering workers at the Scania plant.

Their own lives started improving slowly after the crucial, historical strike in 1978. The Scania workers earn considerably more than those in other car plants; the union's rights are far better than those of the vast majority. There is a local union branch with a small office where a banner and a drawing from their workmates at the Swedish parent factory in Södertälje have pride of place.

A line of workers file into the room to tell us what they think of Lula's first year in office: Amadeu, Nilo, Jonas, Janio, Marcos, Anselmo, Wilson, Silvio, Valdeci, and old Lira. One by one they enter, until about 20 of them are there, and they all want to tell us about the day – October 27, 2002 – when Lula won the election in his fourth attempt to become president.

They tell us about their hopes, but also about the difficulties, about "financial terrorism" which holds Brazil in an iron fist, about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which make difficult new demands before allowing Brazil to have loans for its national treasury, where the expenses are so much greater than the income. They talk about patience, the fact that Lula is not running the country alone. In order to secure a majority, he entered into an alliance with a right-wing politician.

"We won the presidency, but we don't have the power," says one of the Scania workers. "This is not a socialist government, although Lula is a socialist, don't forget."

### GREAT PROJECT

Also João Bosco, Lula's old friend and neighbour, took part in the crucial strike in 1978. Will Lula manage to deal with it?

"Lula represents the working class and is also its hope. This is a great project. It is not really about Lula the person, but about this great project."

The great project is about reforming the world's most unequal country into a more equitable society. Lula knows the hopes that have been vested in him and his government. He also knows that time is running out. The next presidential election will take place in two years' time, and before then he wants to fulfil at least one promise: that all citizens will be able to eat three meals a day.

As already said, we only saw each other hastily in the presidential palace, which symbolises modernity but also can be supposed to express the will of the people in a nation where everything has remained unchanged.

After a few minutes and some brief words, he departed with his entourage of security guards and civil servants. Lula is clearly a man in a hurry.

# Globalisation is going white-collar

*With the shifting composition of today's workforce, from blue-collar jobs to white-collar, the trade union challenge for organising is great. In addition to representing the traditional core occupations, unions must show their relevance to the needs of non-manual workers, whose unionisation rate remains low.*

BY ANNE-MARIE MUREAU

A major change in the occupational profile of employment over the past years has been the shift from blue-collar to white-collar jobs. Technological innovation has transformed the nature of the workplace and the nature of the work and skills expected from people. As manufacturing becomes more and more technology-intensive and the demand for new high value-added products increases, one can expect this trend to accelerate.

Later in this report, we will come back to the challenges this development poses for metalworking trade unions. But first, a few examples to illustrate the trend.

In the USA, the share of non-production workers is registering a slow but steady increase in relation to total employment (see graph on next page). In the sectors "aircrafts & parts" and "computers & electronic products", this share now amounts to 53% and 45%, respectively.

In Germany, as the graph shows, over half of employment is now to be found in non-manual grades. For the metal industry in particular, the figure is reaching 40%, compared to 34% at the beginning of the '90s. In France, the share of engineers and professionals in the metal industry doubled in the last 15 years, whereas that of production workers dropped by 5%. Japan is experiencing a similar development, with non-manual workers accounting for around 45% of overall employment in the metal industry. In two sectors (see graph), non-manual employment is well above 50%.

The general trend for non-manual occupations is upward. The changes noted earlier in skill requirements resulting from the introduction of new technology, modifications in

trade patterns (including growing competition from low-wage countries and increased market pressures) and in work organisation will become more pronounced.

## AN ISSUE FOR ALL IMF AFFILIATES

The issue of non-manual workers is not just an issue for unions in developed countries alone. "Globalisation is going white-collar," as the magazine *Business Week* recently put it. All kinds of knowledge and skilled work can now be done almost anywhere. After the outsourcing of assembly work, corporations are shifting upscale jobs – for example basic research, chip design, engineering – to lower wage countries, in particular to those with a large pool of well-educated and skilled people.

For example:

- IBM and Motorola are moving software design jobs to India;
- Boeing has transferred qualified jobs to Russia and recruited aerospace engineers there;
- GM is outsourcing white-collar work to India;
- Alcatel is moving R&D work to Tunisia;
- Philips has shifted R&D on most TV, cell phones and audio products to China.

In the same vein, South Korea and Taiwan are positioning themselves as important R&D and services hubs.

## A LOW UNIONISATION RATE

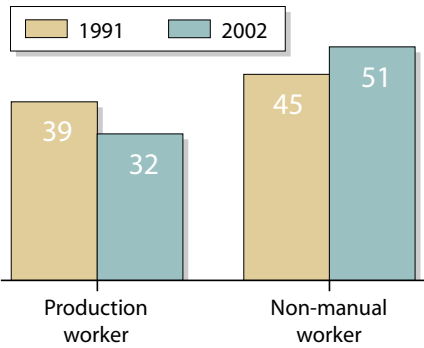
While the proportion of non-manual workers in employment is rising, union representation among this category remains

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## WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS

### Germany

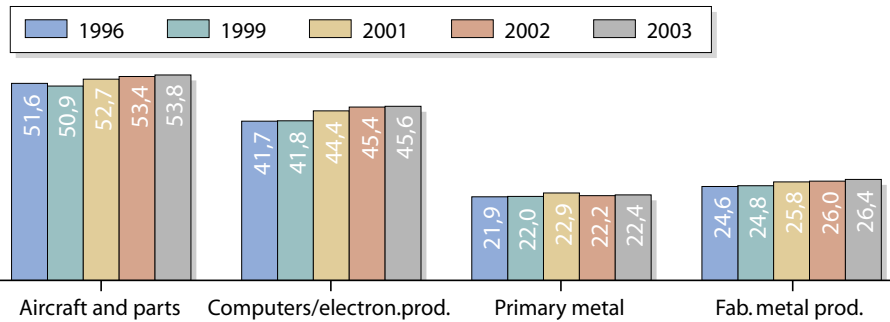
Out of 100 employed persons, there were:  
(per cent)



SOURCE: IG Metall

### USA

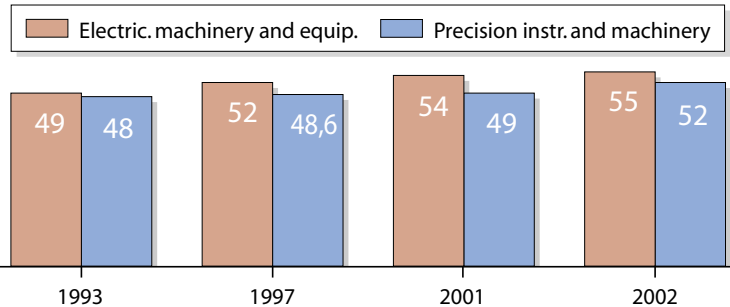
Share of non-manual workers, 1996–2003  
(per cent)



SOURCE: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Japan

Non-manual employment in two metal sectors, 1993–2002 (per cent)



SOURCE: Basic survey of wage structure; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan



GRAPHICS: Elin Brander

weak. In most countries they are usually less well unionised. In the IT sector in particular, union membership is very low. Their share in the total membership of many industrial unions affiliated to the IMF hovers at about 10%-15%.

This is partly due to different attitudes on the part of non-manual workers, who generally tend to be more individualist and, quite often, see little value in organising and collective support. It is also due to the fact that, traditionally, most unions have emphasized organising and furthering the interests of production workers, who account for the bulk of their membership, and not given proper attention to workers outside their traditional stronghold. Moreover, employers often turn out to be more hostile to the unionisation of non-manual workers than of manual workers. They prefer the former to be non-unionised and/or on individual

rather than collective agreements. There are also legal restrictions to organising these workers in certain countries.

Nevertheless, non-manual workers, even those in the higher positions, are increasingly aware that they are now no less vulnerable to management decisions than production workers. Just like them, they are drawn into the race to the bottom and downsizing, and see their jobs being shifted abroad. They are starting to learn and experience that the logic of cost-cutting no longer distinguishes between blue-collar and white-collar. Not only is production work outsourced but also highly skilled occupations, and even when blue-collar work is outsourced many non-manual jobs in activities related to production are lost as well.

With mergers and takeovers constantly reshaping the

# IMF SPECIAL REPORT

## WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS



With globalisation increasingly hitting white-collar workers, attitudes towards trade unions change.

industrial landscape and globalisation hitting people at the high end of the skills scale, attitudes are changing as well. White-collar workers start to think differently and distance themselves from their company; they look for help and the defence of their rights in the face of neo-liberal market radicalism. In a way, the recent debacle in the IT sector did some good, as it got people who had been employed in this branch to wake up and join the union, as in Sweden for example.

Organising the unorganised remains a fundamental task of all IMF affiliates and the majority have adopted policies which establish recruitment as a priority in their activities. It is how trade unions came into existence and it is what

they still exist for. Thus, trying to organise non-manual workers is increasingly important for IMF affiliates.

Examples of critical issues for non-manual workers are:

- working time, work/life balance,
- career development and lifelong learning,
- work intensification, stress and burnout,
- mechanisms for solving problems resulting from increased responsibility,
- remuneration systems (including the performance bonus),
- outsourcing,
- mobility,
- pensions,
- equality issues.

## A blurred demarcation line

The demarcation line between manual and non-manual workers is getting blurred and it may be difficult to classify workers strictly according to these two categories. Non-manual workers represent a diversified group of people, ranging from clerical workers, administrators, IT workers, technicians, engineers and supervisors/team leaders to managerial staff. Their needs are sometimes different, with an emphasis on individual rather than collective services. Some are closer to the shop floor and may

have come from a background where trade union membership is part of the culture. But others have little or no connection with labour organisations. The higher the education level and the younger the person – especially those with an academic background – the more distant he/she is likely to be from trade unions.

Non-manual workers are to be found in all branches of the metal industry, but especially in electronics and ICT, engineering, aerospace and automotive manufacturing.

# IMF SPECIAL REPORT

## WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS

In many ways, the basic concerns are the same as those confronting other workers, but there are differences in terms of approach and emphasis. This requires getting a grip on increasingly differentiated working conditions, attitudes, and patterns of perception and employment profiles. The issue for trade unions is also how to respond to the increasing demand for a more tailored approach and more individualization in providing services.

A policy paper on "Non-manual workers in the IMF" was adopted at the recent IMF Executive Committee meeting in Geneva, May 12-13. Regarding the development outlined above, the paper poses a number of questions, which are closely linked to the future of trade unionism:

- How do unions position themselves faced with these developments?
- What are the strategies for reaching out to non-manual workers?
- How do unions integrate them in their organising and bargaining policy, and in their structure? Are these structures relevant and appropriate?
- Are these workers involved in union policymaking and activities?
- How can the IMF support the organising, collective bargaining and servicing objectives of its affiliates?

The policy paper says that unions should demonstrate that they are relevant to meeting the needs and expectations of non-manual workers. Because they feel more vulnerable and insecure at work than in the past, non-manual workers are more interested in getting involved in the search for alternatives. In this connection, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility linked to the promotion of core labour standards are issues that can help engage these workers and mobilise them for union work.

Objectives of trade union response should be twofold:

- to strengthen the presence of the IMF and its affiliates in non-manual occupations. As in other sectors/branches, we are faced with the challenge of organising and union-building.
- to improve IMF services to existing members and better respond to their needs and expectations.

In line with its Action Programme, the IMF has carried out activities for non-manual workers, including workshops and seminars. The IMF policy paper sets out common goals and recommendations for future work, including:

- Increase awareness about the non-manual workers' issue in all countries and regions.
- Promote the exchange of information and experience on organising tools and strategies.
- Seek to develop new solidarity concepts, allowing the negotiation of collective representation of interests with more individual autonomy and self-determination.

- Use international framework agreements (IFAs) as leverage for organising non-manual workers. These workers are often faced with management resistance to organising and/or restrictive contract language on this point. IFAs open a space for organising and should be utilized to that end.
- Raise the issue of legal restrictions to organising non-manual workers, which may be in violation of ILO conventions.
- Improve communication and networking between affiliates within the IMF.

The IMF mission will continue to be managing the balancing act of organising the traditional core occupations and the new target groups, and representing the interests of both.

## Non-manual workers in the IMF

In some countries, there are unions representing exclusively white-collar workers. In others, non-manual workers are part of industrial unions, which have a special division or a branch to take care of their interests. A majority of IMF affiliates, however, have no specific structure.

Specific white-collar unions:

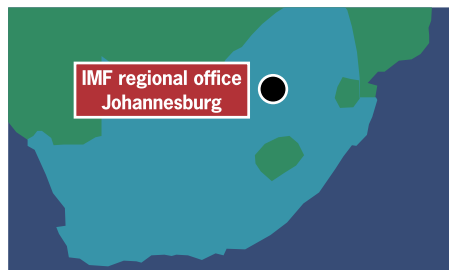
ASIMRA, Argentina  
LBC/NVK and SETCA/BBTK, Belgium  
TU, TEK and Insinöoriliitto, Finland  
Handel og Kontor, Norway  
De Unie, Netherlands  
SIF and Civilingenjörersförbundet, Sweden  
IFPTE, USA

A division/department/branch in unions representing both manual and non-manual workers, e.g:

AMWU, Australia  
CAW, Canada  
IG Metall, Germany  
UAW, USA  
CO-industri, Denmark  
SIPTU, Ireland  
MCA-UGT, Spain  
FIM-CISL, Italy

The majority of IMF affiliates have no specific section/department dealing with white-collar workers' issues. It is also worth noting that some industrial unions have a section for white-collar employees on their website, e.g. the AMWU, Australia or FTM-CGT, France.

### SA autoworkers in negotiations



**JOHANNESBURG SOUTH AFRICA** The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) and the Automobile Manufacturers Employers' Organisation are currently engaged in collective bargaining negotiations for Numsa members working in South Africa's auto sector.

After what Numsa called a "shameful" offer by the employers of a 4.4 per cent wage increase, representing the upward movement in the consumer price index, and their rejection of all other claims, the union has put forth demands which include:

- a guaranteed wage hike of 15 per cent across the board;
- a 3-year wage agreement;
- 100 per cent payment of maternity leave;
- for every artisan, four apprentices;
- workers working under labour brokers to be employed permanently after 3 months;
- provision of anti-retroviral drugs to HIV/AIDS sufferers, who should be given 30 days' sick leave circle;
- five days per occurrence for family responsibility leave.



Numsa shop stewards

PHOTO: William Matlala

### New Zealanders ratify agreement

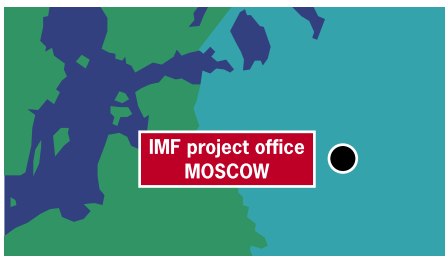


**WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND** Members of the New Zealand Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union (EPMU) have ratified the Metals and Manufacturing Industries Collective Agreement 2004. The contract, which provides a 2.9 per cent wage increase, is the country's largest private-sector industrial document and sets the standard for wages and conditions across New Zealand's manufacturing sector. It represents 2,500 workers at over 220 companies directly, and many thousands more indirectly.

### Georgian metalworkers meet the IMF

**ZESTAFONI GEORGIA** On April 14-16, 25 activists from four Georgian metalworkers' unions took part in a seminar initiated by the Miners' and Metallurgical Workers' Union of Georgia (MMWUG), with financial and organisational support of the IMF. They became acquainted with the world's democratic trade union movement and with the activities of the IMF and its core documents – the Rules and Action Programme.

It was the first time Georgian metalworkers got in direct contact with the international labour movement, so they were extremely interested in all information connected with the IMF. What was called the "Revolution of Roses" inspired union workers with the hope for a revival of industry, espe-



cially the metal industry, in Georgia.

As the seminar got underway, the Federation of Unions of Georgia declared its aim to change its structure, including forming one united metalworkers' union as a result of merging the five existing metalworkers' unions. During group work at the seminar, all union activists said "Yes" to the formation of one union that would include all

metalworkers of Georgia, but they think this process should be widely discussed in all union structures and backed by real decisions that will form the basis for realising this initiative.

All participants of the seminar expressed in their speeches the willingness of unions to fight for workers' interests, including: adequate salaries and wages, working conditions and environmental protection and making trade unions authoritative in society.

With this seminar, the IMF has extended itself geographically, and metalworkers in Georgia have become acquainted with IMF principles, values and standards.

## This is the IMF

**The International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) represents workers in the metal industry. The IMF was founded in 1893 and has its head office in Geneva, Switzerland. Currently the IMF is representing the interests of 25 million metalworkers in 200 affiliated unions in 100 countries.**

The IMF endeavours to build a strong metalworkers' movement throughout the world. The Action Programme adopted by the last IMF Congress, in 2001, presents four major areas of activities: working for an alternative economic programme, organising the unorganised, promoting solidarity and fighting for human and trade union rights.

The highest decision-making body of the IMF is the Congress, which meets every four years. Between Congresses, the Central Committee, consisting of the delegates of all affiliated unions, meets every second year. The Executive Committee consists of 18 members elected by the Central Committee and usually meets twice a year.

The IMF head office, where the Secretariat is located, is in Geneva, Switzerland, where worldwide activities are coordinated with a network of regional offices:

- East and Southern Africa - Johannesburg, South Africa;
- South Asia - New Delhi, India;
- Southeast Asia and the Pacific - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia;
- Latin America & Caribbean - Santiago, Chile.

The IMF has also developed regional and sub-regional structures for Africa, Asia and Latin America. In these three regions, the IMF has altogether 11 sub-regions which meet regularly. In some countries, the IMF-affiliated unions have formed Country Councils.

To coordinate activities in specific industrial sectors, the IMF has industrial departments for the following sectors: aerospace, automotive, electrical and electronics, mechanical engineering, shipbuilding, non-manual workers, and iron, steel and non-ferrous metals. In addition, there is a standing working party on work organisation.



**For the address of the IMF head office in Geneva, see page 2. The addresses for regional and project offices are:**

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## Calendar 2004

### JUNE

- 7 - 18** IMF Summer School  
Geneva and Nyon, Switzerland
- 14 - 15** IMF Sub-Regional Committee Meeting for the Caribbean  
Kingston, Jamaica
- 14 - 18** Volkswagen Global and European Works' Council  
Neckarsulm, Germany
- 15 - 17** IMF Editors' Meeting  
Montreal, Canada
- 24 - 25** IMF LACREC Coordinating Committee Meeting  
Santiago, Chile

### JULY

- 22 - 23** Workshop on Labour Relations and Trade Union Organisation in the Autoparts Industry  
Satillo, Coahuila, Mexico

### AUGUST

- 5 - 6** APREC Coordinating Committee Meeting  
Wellington, New Zealand
- 18 - 20** Seminar on TNCs in Latin America  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

### SEPTEMBER

- 1 - 2** Seminar for Non-Manual Workers for Latin America & the Caribbean  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 8 - 9** Reg. Women's Meeting for North America  
Pittsburgh, Pa., USA
- 9 - 10** IMF Meeting on Health & Safety in the Mining and Steel Industry  
Mexico City, Mexico
- 21 - 24** Training Seminars and Workshops for Women in the Metal Industry  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

### OCTOBER

- 21 - 22** Meeting on Siemens for Latin America  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

### NOVEMBER

- 9 - 11** IMF Central and Eastern Europe Auto Conference  
Prague, Czech Republic
- 10 - 11** IMF Women's Committee  
Geneva, Switzerland

IMF PROFILE

## “I’m regarded as a troublemaker”

*Jan Uhlir, OS KOVO, is a fearless critic of both government and employers.*

**PRAGUE CZECH REPUBLIC** Jan Uhlir apologises as he lights a Sparta cigarette. “But it’s against human rights not to be allowed to smoke in your own office,” he says. He’s been smoking Spartas for 30 years now. When he started, they were cheap but hard to get.

Like many things in today’s Czech Republic, they are plentiful but ten times the price. This is typical for all aspects of the Czech economy: cars, homes, even clothes have soared in price. Before the change in regime which followed the “velvet revolution” of 1989, there were jobs but low wages, and now wages and salaries have risen, but so has unemployment. The union is fighting to have a social dialogue with both government and employers, so far with little success.

In 1989, Jan Uhlir was an electronics engineer with the heavy industry company CKD. He was given three minutes to decide whether to accept or reject a job as leader of the union in the company. He accepted, but with a proviso: “Not for more than three months,” he said. He still hasn’t returned to his previous job.

When he took over his predecessor’s office, he was horrified by what he found. It had been a daily practice to spy on and record the actions of colleagues. Informing on one another was widespread. “I didn’t dare tell anyone what had been going on,” he said. “They would have been killing each other in the factory.”

Although he describes himself as “a former communist, up to 1989,” he now describes communism as a “can-

cer on the body politic.” “It was hard to know on whom you could rely,” he adds. It was in 1989 that hopes for “communism with a human face,” were raised, only to have them brutally smashed a few months later.

So Jan Uhlir reluctantly became a trade union activist. Fifteen years later, he is still a fearless critic of both government and employers.

Despite his position, he is rarely asked to take part in live TV broadcasts because of his unpredictable opinions. “I am regarded as a troublemaker, and I am proud to be one,” he beams. Uhlir’s criticism of the government and the Social Democratic secretary of industry, Milan Urban, is well known. “I want to stimulate growth by increasing purchasing power,” he says. Urban, on the other hand, wants to restrain wage increases.

We met him in his smoky office a few days before the 1st of May, the labour movement’s big day. But in the Czech Republic there is little celebration amongst the vast majority of sceptically-minded Czechs. There are no rallies in Prague at all, only a few festivities on



Fifteen years ago, Jan Uhlir reluctantly became a trade union activist.

the occasion of the country’s accession to the European Union, which was happening on the same day. Jan sighs and reveals that he must travel 180 kilometers to the industrial city of Brno to take part in any celebrations for May Day. “People had more than enough of May Day during the communist years,” he explained. For the same reason, it was difficult to motivate Czechs to get involved in unions. The number of members in OS KOVO has fallen, as has the proportion of unionised employees, which has fallen to 45%.

“We must create a stronger base organisation. We haven’t had time to do that yet.”

He sees membership in the European Union as an acknowledgment of where the Czech Republic, after a decade of change, actually belongs: amongst Western democracies. “But we have no illusions,” he adds, “We won’t get massive grant aid. We realise that we will have to do everything ourselves,” he concludes.

**STIG JUTTERSTRÖM**

### JAN UHLIR IN A NUTSHELL

**Age:** 60  
**Country:** Czech Republic  
**City:** Prague  
**Profession:** trade union president  
**Organisation:** Metalworkers’ Federation in the Czech Republic - OS KOVO, with 140,000 active members.  
**Hobby:** working with his hands, carpentry