INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

LABOUR MOVEMENTS Research Committee (RC) 44

May 1999

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Mission	
To encourage international	
research on Labour Movements,	

research on Labour Movements, with a focus on their role both in industrial relations and in the political arena. Membership is open to any person engaged in research into Labour Movements or in Labour Movement

Secretary's notes

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We are very grateful to the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) for the grant they have given us to produce this Newsletter over the next three years. This has enabled me to give Anthea Metcalfe, our Newsletter and Membership Coordinator, an honorarium to perform these tasks. As from July, she will be located in Cape Town. e-mail: antheam@yebo.co.za

We are especially keen to recruit members into RC44 from Africa, Asia and Latin America. As Richard Hyman argues in this edition, these countries continue to be under-represented in RC44 and in many cases, these are the parts of the world where labour movements have been most innovative over the last decade. One problem the difficulty scholars from these countries face in obtaining the necessary foreign exchange for ISA activities. If the ISA is to become genuinely representative of world sociology, this problem urgently needs to be addressed.

In Richard Hyman's last newsletter before the Montreal Congress (June 1998), he said that we should devise a communications strategy for the new millennium. He suggested that we could achieve 'considerable economies' if we simply distributed the Newsletter electronically, via the Internet on the ISA and SWOP websites or an e-mail attachment in html format. We will try to make this possible in a user friendly way with minimum effort on your part. We will continue to send a hard copy to those who do not have access to the World Wide Web. This is the last copy that all members will receive by post. Anthea will contact those members with e-mail to explain the new system.

The founders of RC44 were concerned to encourage research which recognised that trade unions have political as well as economic functions. I have noticed that a number of other research committees cover issues that concern the labour movement - RC10 (Participation and Self-management), RC30 (Sociology of Work), RC47(Social Classes and Social Movements), RC48 (Social movements, Collective Action and Social Change). Perhaps we could explore shared sessions with some of these Research Committees in Brisbane in 2002. If you have any suggestions, let us know.

We hope the article by Rob Lambert, on a meeting of Southern Labour Movements, with an invitation to RC44 to participate in the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) in South Africa in October this year, generates interest from those members active in labour movements. Please feel free to write to us and encourage members to subscribe to this Newsletter as well as join RC44 and the ISA. We have used a Southern African focus to kickstart the Newsletter but are serious about covering issues wherever our members may be.

Until September

Eddie Webster

e-mail: 029edw@muse.wits.ac.za

Comment from the President - Richard Hyman

RC44: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The ISA Research Committee on Labour Movements has its origins in the late 1980s. Primarily on the initiative of Marino Regini, a number of ISA members proposed the creation of a Working Group titled, 'Labour Movements in the Industrial and State Arenas'. This was quite a mouthful, but showed the concern of the original founders to encourage research which recognised that trade unions have political as well as economic functions, and indeed that the two are intimately interconnected. A milestone of this early phase was a seminar organised by Marino in 1989, which resulted in the publication of the book, *The Future of Labour Movements* in 1992.

By the time of the ISA World Congress in Madrid in 1990, it was possible to argue that we were an active group with a solid core of members, and our application to become a Research Committee was approved. At Madrid, at Bielefeld in 1994, and most recently at the Montréal Congress, we had organised a lively and well-attended programme of discussions. We have also developed good working relationships with national and regional sociological associations. The last ISA directory listed over 80 paid-up members (my own figures were somewhat higher) and there is a significant 'periphery' involved in the activities of RC44 without being ISA members. We are now one of the largest research committees, with members in every continent.

For the future I see three main challenges:

The first is to consolidate our membership in those parts of the world where it is fairly weak. The origins of RC44 were among scholars in Western Europe and to a lesser extent in the USA, and these regions still predominate. We have a handful of members in Africa, Asia and Latin America where many vigorous, expanding and innovative labour movements are located. A key aim in the next few years must be to make our activities truly global.

Second, labour movements seem to be entering a new epoch, and not simply because of the advent of a new century and a new millennium. RC44 was founded at a time when trade unions - at least in the countries from which our original members were drawn - were on the defensive, and when the rise of the political right encouraged the exclusion of labour from the political arena. Since then, the ideology of the 'free' market has run into its own contradictions; today even the World Bank sees the need for the protection of labour standards. As national economies become and more more subject to transnational competitive forces, governments are again turning to trade unions as interlocutors: often confronting labour with serious strategic dilemmas. The restructuring of national economies and national labour markets, and the exposure of national industrial relations systems to external challenges, have forced union movements with varying degrees of success to attempt to 'modernise' and to take halting steps towards greater international awareness and solidarity. The transformations in the real world of labour confront scholars with the challenge to build new modes of understanding and explanation.

But finally, the challenge is not merely academic: most of those who study labour movements do so not as detached intellectuals but as coparticipants. In the past, the practical engagements of many RC44 members have not been mirrored at the level of the Research Committee itself. This needs to change, and I know it is a priority of Eddie as our new Secretary to forge much closer links with international labour.

Richard Hyman

e-mail: r.hyman@warwick.ac.uk

How RC 44 is Governed

Statutes

- 1. The RC was established in 1990 in accordance with Article XI of the ISA Statutes
- Objectives To encourage international research on Labour Movements, with a focus on their role both in industrial relations and in the political arena.
 - Its activities include:
- \Rightarrow organising sessions at each ISA World Congress and at regional ISA Conferences
- \Rightarrow organising other international meetings, workshops, colloquia, etc
- \Rightarrow publishing a regular newsletter
- \Rightarrow encouraging professional interaction and collaborative research in Labour Movement Studies
- \Rightarrow any other relevant activity
- 3. RC44 strongly affirms its support for the following core labour standards which it hold to be fundamental human rights:
- \Rightarrow Freedom of Association
- \Rightarrow Right to organise and bargain collectively
- \Rightarrow Prohibition of forced labour
- \Rightarrow Elimination of exploitative forms of child labour
- \Rightarrow Non-discrimination in employment or occupations
- 4. Membership is open to any person engaged in research into Labour Movements or in Labour Movement Activities
- 5. Membership Fees will be determined by the Business Meeting held at each ISA World Congress.
- 6. The policy of the RC, consistent with the Statutes, will be determined by a simple majority of members in good standing at each Business meeting. It is open to the Meeting
- to submit any question to a postal ballot of
 - members, and this must be followed in the absence of a Quorum of 15 members. In the period between each World Congress, the RC shall be governed by a Board comprising President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasure and Newsletter Editor and between 4 and 10 ordinary members.

Candidates for office shall be ISA members in good standing. Nominations shall be invited in advance but may, at the discretion of the President, be accepted at the Business Meeting, which may also decide to hold a postal ballot of members, and may agree to combine two or more official positions. Officers and Board members shall normally serve for no more that two consecutive 4-year periods.

7. These Statutes, adopted at the Business Meeting held in Bielefield in 1994, and revised at the Business Meeting held

in Montreal 1998, may be amended by a two-thirds majority at any subsequent Quorate Business Meeting or in a ballot of members (called either by a simple majority at a Business Meeting or by a decision of the Board). Unless otherwise agreed by the President, proposed amendments must be received in writing by the Secretary at least two weeks in advance.

Membership and Affiliation Information

ISA Membership

Individual

Open to scholars and professionals of sociological teaching, research or practice. There are 3600 members from 91 countries, presently.

Benefits: Members receive

- International Sociology (ISA journal)
- ISA Bulletin (ISA Newsletter)
- Discount subs to Current Sociology
- Reduction in Fees at ISA World Congress
- Participation in meetings of ISA, Research Committees, Working & Thematic Groups.

Fees:

- cover a 4-year period
- divided into A, B, C Categories, according to GDP of countries - identify your category for your country of residence and pay the corresponding fee - see back of application form
- ◊ special rates for students

How to apply?

- \Rightarrow Complete the enclosed application form
- \Rightarrow E-mail ISA isa @sis.ucm
- ⇒ Submit electronic membership form http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/formisa.htm

Collective

Regular collective members are:

- C national associations of sociologists
- C international and regional associations
- C research institutes
- C university departments.

Benefits: Regular collective members:

- appoint their representative on the Council of National Associations, the highest governing body of ISA which meets every four years to elect the President and Executive Committee.
- receive International Sociology and Current Sociology (official ISA journals),
- ISA Bulletin,
- Directory of Members

Fees:

Annual membership fee is established by the ISA Executive. Enquiries to the ISA Secretariat

Affiliation to RC44

 US\$20 for a 4-year period. Send money directly to the ISA Secretariat

Isa Secretariat:

Phone: 34-913 527 650 Fax: 34-913 524 945 E-mail: isa@sis.ucm.es http://www.ucm.es/info/isa - electronic membership form

Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR)

Rob Lambert, Regional Coordinator Executive Board Member, RC44

A meeting in March, which gave a new Southern identity to the Indian Ocean Trade Union initiative, was a historic landmark for three reasons. Firstly, leaders of some of the major International Trade Secretariats (ITS) met and strategised with leaders of some of Asia's independent unions. This had not happened before. Secondly, commitment to a Southern alliance of unions was unqualified. Thirdly, senior leaders of the mainstream movement that had previously showed little interest in such an alliance, advanced many of the strategic proposals.

The severe impact of globalisation on the organised labour movement everywhere was the reason for this unprecedented unity of purpose. Across the globe, unions have been hit by lean production restructuring that has been integral to economic liberalisation. Downsizing, work intensification for the remaining core, outsourcing and casualisation have confronted unions everywhere. The changes have cut into the union's membership base. Thus far, there has been no answer to capital mobility and the impact of large regions of the globe where labour rights are denied. In countries such as Australia, once the haven of legally secure union rights, unions are now reeling under wave after wave of labour market 'reform', that has cut these rights to pieces.

Until recently, such unity of purpose at an international level did not exist as cold war divisions lingered after 1989 and continued to divide and weaken the movement. The Indian Ocean initiative that gave birth to SIGTUR is a case in point. The initiative was begun in 1989 when certain Australian union leaders were fearful of the consequences of Australia's radical economic liberalisation, given its proximity to the Asian region where union rights are Leaders argued that Asian labour denied. movements had to be strengthened in the new free trade era. An early slogan attacked free trade for its inattention to union rights. Banners at the early Conferences proclaimed, 'No free trade without free trade unions'.

Despite this intent, the initiative was interpreted as a move by the World Federation of Trade Unions to reestablish itself. The ITS were hostile as was the ICFTU. Senior Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) leaders were opposed but were forced to accept the development of the new regional network because of the strong support given by key ACTU affiliates. This opposition dissipated when the Indian Ocean initiative was instrumental in promoting successful shipping boycotts in defense of union rights. Now the support is strong at all levels. The basic attitude is, we either swim together or we will sink together.

Given this new unity of purpose, the 5th Regional Conference hosted by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) at the end of October this year will be a significant event. The theme of the five day conference is *Trade Union Rights in the 21st Century – Our Declaration, Vision, Strategy.* Union leaders are saying that they do not want another meeting simply analysing the impact of globalisation. They know what the change is doing to their organisations. Rather, they want to discuss strategies and campaigns to resist the changes more effectively. They are looking to try and move from a purely defensive position to a more assertive stanc e that will eventually regain lost ground.

Day one of the Conference will present instances of organised resistance that brought together workplace organisation, the community and which forged new international linkages. This will be drawn from the historic struggles of the KCTU against the IMF inspired attack on life-time employment in Korea; the Australian dock workers fight against the attack on the right of the MUA to exist; the international campaign against Rio Tinto and the all India general strikes against economic liberalisation.

Day two will focus on sectoral workshops that will consider ways to internationalise union organisation, connecting workers in different factories through world works councils. **Day three** will focus on the Union vision for the 21st Century. This will include a forum debate on economic liberalisation.

Members of RC44 could contribute to this process. If there is interest and if academics can make it, we will plan an RC44 meeting to coincide with this important union meeting. From the union side, there is a need to draw in labour committed intellectuals to assist in the process of analysing the impact of global change on different sectors and as well as emerging alternatives and strategies to gradually move the unions in a new direction.

Rob Lambert

e-mail address: rlambert@ecel.uwa.edu.au For a draft programme of Sigtur Conference, e-mail: antheam@yebo.co.za

Conferences

Call for papers

Do you have a forthcoming conference that you would like to announce or call for papers? Please send details to Anthea.

South African Sociological Association (SASA) Annual Congress,

- Date: 6-9 July 1999
- Venue: Military Academy, Saldanha Bay Western Cape
- Hosts: Department of Sociology and Centre for Military Studies,
 - University of Stellenbosch

Theme: "Securing South Africa's Future" An encompassing theme that covers all facets of events and issues affecting the future of South Africa, whether this be within societal, regional or global context. Already international delegates have indicated their interest. It would be wonderful to have some RC44 members present.

Format:

Plenary sessions including key note speakers, split sessions devoted to papers generated through working and research groups, panel and round table sessions, student sessions, SASA's Annual General Meeting and excursions.

Industrial Sociology Working Group Preliminary Sessions:

- 1. Employment, Unemployment and the SA Labour Market
- 2. Labour in the next millenium
- 3. Sociology of Management
- 4. Economic Sociology
- 5. Evaluating the Jobs summit
- 6. Race, Gender and Equity in Employment
- 7. New trends in Industrial Relations
- 8. New cleavages in the working class
- 9. Work and Globalisation
- 10. Science, Technology and Development
- 11. Labour and Technology
- 12. Technology in the South African Future

Closing date for abstracts:

20 May 1999. Please contact the Industrial Sociology Convenor, Andries Bezuidenhout: 029ajb@muse.wits.ac.za He will be willing to answer all your queries including Registration, Accommodation and Transport. Asoociacion Laatinoamerican de Sociologia del Trabajo

The Sociology of Labor: III Latin American Conference

Date:17-20 May 2000Venue:Buenos Aires, ArgentinaTheme:Labor on the Threshold of the XXIst Century

Format:

The Conference includes plenary lectures, parallel sessions and symposia. Sessions, organized around four general topics, are coordinated by:

- Work and Education: Maria Antonia Gallart (gallart@cenep.satlink.net) and Consuelo Iranzo (ciranzo@reacciun.ve)
- Technology, Organization and Labor processes: Jorge Walter (walter@udesa.edu.ar) and Ema Massera (ema@fcssoc.edu.uy)
- Labor markets: Adriana Marshall (marshall@mail.retina.ar) and Nadya Araujo Guimaraes (nadya@uol.com.br).
- Labor Relations: Pedro Galin (ipgalin@mail.retina.ar) and Maria Eugenia Trejos (espacios@sol.racsa.co.cr)
 Each session may be subdivided into up to three panels, focusing in more specific topics.

Important dates

- Deadline for abstract submission: 31 July 1999 Abstracts (1page) must be accompanied by a one-page Curriculum Vitae
- Notification of acceptance: 30 September 1999.
- Deadline for paper submission: 15 February 2000 (maximum 30 pages, spacing: 1.5, standard margins, 1 hard copy and diskette)

Conference Registration Fees

Members of ALAST: US\$40 Non-members of ALAST: US\$70 Students: US\$40 1999 Membership of Latin American Association for the Sociology of Labor (ALAST): US\$50

For further information

novick@mail.retina.ar gira7641@cvtci.com.ar The Editors would like to generate some debate for the Newsletter from this article. You may either respond directly or write an article on negotiating subcontracting in your country.

Negotiating Subcontracting in South Africa Andries Bezuidenhout and Bridget Kenny Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP)

The subcontracting of labour is becoming a very controversial issue in South Africa. Unions generally oppose subcontracting, as it tends to segment an already segmented labour market even further. Also, it compromises health and safety standards and circumvents regulations aimed at providing for minimum standards. Employers, on the other hand, increasingly subcontract more functions as a strategy to enhance 'labour market flexibility'. But unions are developing more sophisticated approaches to deal with subcontracting than merely opposing it. The gold mining industry is an interesting case in point.

The gold mining industry is notorious for its hazardous working conditions. However, due to efforts from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and progressive new safety legislation, conditions have been improving over the last decade. Mineworkers won the right to refuse to work in areas considered by them to be particularly dangerous. But now, recent research shows, subcontracted workers are used to work in these unsafe areas in certain mines. Instead of receiving medical attention, some of these workers are dismissed when injured.

As a result, apart from more 'traditional' forms of subcontracting, such as shaft-sinking, subcontracting is increasingly occurring in 'core' underground work. Some mining companies subcontract the mining of whole shafts to contractors, who then subcontract further to smaller contractors. During a focus group interview, a mineworker compared subcontracting to AIDS:

"At first you do not recognise subcontracting is in your midst. But before you know it, it is all around you and then you catch it too."

But the NUM is in the process of developing ways to deal with subcontracting. In 1995, they signed an agreement on information sharing with employers and won the right to be consulted when decisions are made on subcontracting. However, in many cases, subcontracting practices that compromise safety standards are still used "behind the back of NUM", in the words of a union organiser. During the current round of negotiations between NUM and the Chamber of Mines, the body representing employers, the union is arguing that a regulatory body should be set up for the industry. The NUM envisions a body where employers, employees, the state and subcontractors are represented. Its function would be to accredit subcontractors operating in the industry. Only contractors meeting safety and labour standards will be allowed to take on contracts from mining companies.

Also in agreements with individual employers, the NUM is negotiating for committees consisting of union and management representatives to decide on subcontracting. These committees would not only decide as to whether subcontracting should take place, but would also award tenders to subcontractors. In this way, the union could influence the process to ensure that subcontractors meet certain requirements.

The outcome of the 1999 round of negotiations between the NUM and the Chamber of Mines is still uncertain. Also, a considerable number of mines (including an estimated 3 000 small scale mines operating illegally), are not covered by these agreements. The NUM, as well as other trade unions in South Africa, has a daunting task ahead if it effectively wants to deal with the "flip-side of flexibility". In the South African labour market debate, where an already flexible labour market has been proclaimed as being overly rigid, efforts to regulate employment standards may become increasingly difficult.

The issue, therefore, is much broader than subcontracting, but relates to the legitimacy of regulations designed to enhance the appalling working conditions of many South African workers. E-mail details if you would like to publicise a similar publication from your country.



- 2. Mills, Charles W. The Sociological Imagination (13.0)
- 3. Merton, Robert K. Social Theory and Social Structure (11.4)
- 4. Weber, Max. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of
- Capitalism (10.3)
 5. Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. The Social Construction of Reality (9.9)
- 6. Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (9.5)
- 7. Elias, Norbert. The Civilizing Process: Power and Civility (6.6)
- 8 Habermas, Jürgen. The Theory of Communicative Action (6.4)
- 9. Parsons, Talcott. The Structure of Social Action (6.2)
- 10. Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (5.5)

We would like to conduct a survey among RC44 members to determine the TOP 10 most influential books for sociologists of labour movements this century. Send your list of Top 10 books by 31 July 1999 and we hope to publish the list in the September Newsletter

Trade Unions in Zimbabwe



Lucien van der Walt

Send updates on trade union struggles in your regions

In March 1999, the powerful Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) announced plans to launch a workers' party to contest the 2000 elections. This followed a decision to launch a mass political movement for change by the National Working Peoples Convention of 400 delegates from 30 civic organisations, convened by the ZCTU in Harare in February.

The context is the ongoing confrontation between the organised working class and the repressive regime of Robert Mugabe, which took power in the 1980

Independence elections. The proposed workers' party could sweep urban constituencies clear of the de facto one-party rule of Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front). The popularity of the ZCTU, and its General Secretary, MorganTsvangirai, is at an all-time high due to its militant opposition to the devastating effects of the government neo-liberal Economic

Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) adopted in 1991, its opposition to Zimbabwean involvement in the Congo war, and calls for political reform. Average real wages are at their lowest levels since the early 1970s, spending in primary education is at its lowest levels since Independence, and health care spending has been cut in half. There have been mass retrenchments (30,000 jobs in 1998), a crisis on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange in November 1997, rapid price increases due to inflation, the weakening of the Zimbabwe dollar, and increasing taxation (around 40% of income).

Despite repression, the ZCTU held an overwhelmingly successful general strike against price and tax increases in December 1997, repeating the performance on 3rd and 4th March, and 11th and 18th November 1998. Faced with strike action, the government removed a range of taxes and froze basic goods' prices in September 1998. It also

invited the ZCTU to join a corporatist National

Economic Consultative Forum and a Constitutional Review

Commission. In November 1998, government changed tack: pressured by business, it removed price controls, leading to fuel price riots (reminiscent of food riots in January '98) and ZCTU strikes. Government's response was to ban stayaways, reject labour's demands, investigate the ZCTU, and torture independent journalists.

The regime attributes social unrest to a conspiracy of imperialists and homosexuals against land reform despite the fact that the current land reform programme has proved to be a rhetorical exercise like its predecessors, which have resettled only 5% of peasants in 20 years. In this context, the ZCTU withdrew from negotiations to initiate the workers' party. Of critical importance is the party's programme: the present aim is electoral participation and the policy is moderate. A 1996 ZCTU policy document, 'Beyond ESAP', is instructive: it argued that structural adjustment was necessary, albeit badly planned.

The National Working Peoples Convention's Declaration also accommodated capitalist restructuring, arguing the State's role in production systems must be redefined towards facilitation rather than interference and that the nation should be made to compete in the global market in the next millennium. Some Convention delegates favoured a broad popular front including business and other opposition groups, rather than a workers' party. In the worst scenario, Zimbabwe could replicate Zambia, where a union-backed (but business-dominated) Movement for Multi-party Democracy took power in 1991 only to implement an accelerated and devastating Structural Adjustment Programme.

However, the full manifesto and form of the Workers' Party, and its link to ZCTU, remain to be settled.

RC44 Board: **President**: Richard Hyman **Vice-President**: Claire Williams **Secretary**: Eddie Webster **Executive**: A V Jose, Rob Lambert, Carla Lipsig Mumme, Regina Morel, Pamela Roby **Newsletter and Membership Coordinator**: Anthea Metcalfe

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