

Labour Movements Research Committee (RC 44)

<http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/>

September 2005

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Inside	Page
Board members	2
ISA 2006, Durban 23-29 July	
RC44 Final Call for Abstracts	3-6
Congress Registration	7
Financial Support	8
Elections to the ISA Executive	9
SWOP/IDS/PODSU Workshop	11
Johannesburg, 21/22 July 2006	
Report: 7th SIGTUR CONGRESS	13
Thailand, 27 June-2 July 2005	
Andries Bezuidenhout	
Report: Mini-conference on Global	15
Labour, Philadelphia, USA, 12 Aug 2005	
Bridget Kenny	
Report: SASE Conference:	16
Future directions for Labour Movements, Budapest, Hungary, 30 Jun-30-Jul 2005	
Pauline Dibben	
Call for Conference Proposals	17
Global Companies, Global Unions, Global Research, Global Campaigns New York City, 9-11 February 2006	
Call for Conference Papers	18
New standards for the new times? The 8hr working day and beyond, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia 22/23 June 2006	
JOIN ISA and RC44	19

Mission of RC44

To encourage international 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 activities.

Editor's Notes

In this edition of the newsletter, we focus on conferences that grapple with the circumstances of labour movements around the globe. Three of the articles report on conferences held in the last three months and in all cases, it is clear that labour movements are on the defensive. However, the reports also show that workers' movements are also engaging with the forces of market liberalisation and are continuously seeking ways to build solidarity and power to secure workers' interests.

But the primary objective of this edition is to focus attention on ISA 2006, the World Congress of the International Sociological Association in Durban, South Africa in July next year. At ISA 2006, RC44 will run a series of sessions under the theme '*Global restructuring and the new worlds of work: Rediscovering the power of the labour movement*'. RC44 members will note that three leading institutes with a distinguished research track record on African labour movements are planning a pre-conference workshop to bring together scholars of African labour movements and union activists around the theme of *Trade Unions and Politics: Africa in a Comparative Context*. Other interested scholars should enquire from workshop organisers about availability of places at the workshop.

The single most important reason, however, is to outline the preparations for ISA 2006. In this newsletter, you will find material on the following:

- RC44 secretary's statement on preparations for 2006,
- RC44 final call for abstracts and deadlines,
- ISA 2006 registration fees and financial support
- A notice regarding elections of the ISA executive.

There are few places in the world today that provide an ideal place to debate the state of trade unionism today and in the future, and South Africa is one of them. As we write, the leading union federation, COSATU, is locked in a titanic battle with the country's President regarding the recent axing of Jacob Zuma as Deputy President of the country. Although the reasons surrounding the firing of Zuma are complex and contested, many in the unions see the contest as an opportunity to swing the pendulum in favour of those opposed to rampant market liberalisation.

We hope to see you in Durban next year to take stock of the many such battles labour movements have been fighting in defence of workers' interests.

Sakhela Buhlungu

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**INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
XVI WORLD CONGRESS DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 23 - 29 JULY 2006**

Theme: The Quality of Social Existence In A Globalising World

<http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/>

ISA 2006: RC44 FINAL CALL FOR ABSTRACTS*

*Theme: Global Restructuring and the New Worlds of Work:
Rediscovering the Power of the Labour Movement*

**For those who wish to present a paper at ISA 2006 in Durban next July
*Now is the time to act!***

You need to submit Abstracts of 500-600 words directly to the relevant session organizers listed below by no later than **31st October 2005**. Please also send a copy to the Programme Coordinator, **Rob Lambert**: rlambert@biz.uwa.edu.au. For further information about participation in Durban, please contact **Anthea Metcalfe**: antheam@yebo.co.za

We propose to limit each session to four papers in order to allow time for proper discussion and debate. However, if there are more than four quality papers, we could see if we could double stream your session.

In our view, Durban is an appropriate venue for our choice of theme, 'The Challenge of Global Restructuring and the New World's of Work: Rediscovering the Power of the Labor Movement'. In February 1973, Durban was the scene of a remarkable mass strike that heralded the birth of the new democratic, non-racial labor movement in South Africa. At that time, black workers were unorganized and any notion of a powerful labor movement that could challenge exploitation and the denial of political rights seemed fanciful.

We are acutely aware of the current predicament of the labor movement, which is struggling to develop an effective response to the double body blows of global restructuring and the changing worlds of work. Yet, despite the impact of these changes on labor, new responses are emerging. The eleven sessions seek to capture the impacts and new responses. *You need to consider your own research and writing in terms of these themes, make a choice of session and then send the abstract no later than the end of October.*

In the introduction to her book *Forces of Labor*, Beverley Silver has argued that the 'general and severe crisis' of the labor movement has contributed to 'a crisis in the once vibrant field of labor studies' (p1). Labor studies has lost some of its urgency. Perhaps this event in Durban reflects a small step in the process of revitalizing labor studies. We are off to a good start with excellent session organizers. Now we need you to work to ensure quality papers that address the various themes. We plan to make this an event where the discussions and debates will continue around some of the favorite 'watering holes' of this port city (the best being a restaurant at the harbor entrance).

In short, we are looking forward to this event and to the opportunities it presents for us to continue to advance our work as part of a commitment to the reorientation of labor in this time of deep crisis.

I look forward to making contact with you.

Rob Lambert, Secretary RC44.

* This is a preliminary call for papers. The final sessions will be confirmed in the next newsletter. If you plan to participate in the XVI ISA World Congress, we would like to encourage you to join the ISA and Research Committee 44 via the ISA website: <http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/>

ISA 2006: RC44 SESSIONS

*Theme: Global Restructuring and the New Worlds of Work:
Rediscovering the Power of the Labour Movement*

Session 1: Theorising Labour

This session will be organised around Beverly Silver's recent book *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalisation since 1870*. The book recasts labour studies in a long-term and global framework and explores the likely forms that emergent labor movements will take in the future. Colleagues are invited to submit abstracts that engage with this argument.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Beverly Silver**, Department of Sociology, The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, USA **E-mail:** silver@jhu.edu

Session 2: Labour History in the era of Neo-liberal Globalisation

This session complements the theory session, i.e. the significance of labour as a category, and the significance of a labour history at a time when the category of labour is itself questioned. This session also reveals how the history of trade unionism remains rich, diverse and creative. This session showcases cutting edge labour histories both in the north (Europe, North America) and in the south. Comparative history, historiographical papers, and those with an historical perspective on contemporary issues are welcome. These histories raise many of the issues grappled with in the various sessions of the RC44 programme, such as forms of organisation; social movements; revitalization; politics.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Craig Phelan**, Editor, *Labour History*, Department of American Studies,
University of Wales, Swansea, UK **E-mail:** c.l.phelan@swansea.ac.uk

SESSION 3: Global Corporate Restructuring and Global Governance

Economic deregulation flowing from neo-liberalism has intensified global competition, which has resulted in an acceleration of mergers and acquisitions, labour process change, work intensification, internal labour market segmentation, factory closures and waves of investment in the south. The privatisation of the state is a key facet of restructuring, creating new space for global corporations to colonize the state itself. These processes have been accelerated and consolidated by the new institutions of global governance such as the World Trade Organisation, which complements the strategies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The current proliferation of bi-lateral free trade agreements is a key facet of the new global architecture that legitimates and enforces these processes. This session explores these changes and considers their implications for labour movements.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Rob Lambert**, Organisational and Labour Studies, School of Business,
University of Western Australia, Perth, AUSTRALIA **E-mail:** rlambert@biz.uwa.edu.au

Session 4: Changing Worlds of Work

Labour restructuring in the current period has reinforced old divisions and generated new divisions in the workforce. One important fissure concerns the employment contract. It divides full-time permanent waged work from other forms of employment such as casual, fixed-term and agency work as well as varied forms of 'dependent' self-employment. Outside the many officially recognized categories of work lies the informal sector, which embraces large numbers of workers in the south. A new more casualised workforce is growing in numbers in several countries, as part of a broader set of changes in wages and working-time conditions. This session will explore the implications of these changes for the structures and strategies of labour movements.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Iain Campbell**, Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University,
Melbourne, Australia **E-mail:** Iain.Campbell@rmit.edu.au

Session 5: Gender and Labour

This session will focus on the gender implications of the restructuring of work and the responses of labour to these changes. In addition, gender relations within the labour movement will be examined, particularly with regards to the role played by women in union revitalization. Globalization has led to the massive growth of the economy, in particular the service sector. The session will explore whether and how forms of managerial control in these new sectors are gendered and what this implies for collective organization.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Suzanne Franzway**, Gender Studies Unit, University of South Australia, Magill Campus, Magill, South Australia, AUSTRALIA **E-mail:** suzanne.franzway@unisa.edu.au

Session 6: Labour and Social Movements

This session will examine the impact of neo-liberal globalisation on labour movements as well as the responses of labour movements to these global challenges. In particular, the session should explore whether (and how) labour movements are finding common cause with other working class movements who are facing marginalisation and social exclusion. We face many of the same employers, but they and we operate within different economic, social and political contexts. Will economic and workplace restructuring and the consequent exclusion of large sections of the working class create conditions that will lead to 'the next upsurge'? What sort of model does labour adopt – a business union orientation, a focus on electoral politics, internal mobilization, or connection with other movements? How broadly or narrowly does labour define its goals and mission, and how does this interact with internal structure and external alliances? What accounts for greater and lesser degrees of success?

SESSION ORGANISER: **Dan Clawson**, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA **E-mail:** clawson@SADRI.umass.edu

Session 7: Models of Union Organisation

Models of unions maintaining high levels of mobilisation and membership involvement in union affairs have continued to elude union movements across the world. Furthermore, the changing nature of work as well as the changing composition of the workforce calls into question the existing models of union organisation. This session will explore new ideas about existing and emerging models of union organisation. Exciting research is emerging out of the UK and the US about trends towards the 'revitalisation' of union organisation, but such revitalisation is not necessarily about going back to organising strategies of the past. On the other hand, some significant movements in the South did not go through similar levels of bureaucratisation as their counterparts in the North. How are they facing up to the challenges of a globalising world?

SESSION ORGANISER: **Sakhela Buhlungu**, Department of Sociology and Sociology of Work Unit, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, SOUTH AFRICA **E-mail:** buhlungus@social.wits.ac.za

Session 8: Transnational Organising

This session will focus on the limits and possibilities of current attempts for transnational organising. It will take an historical perspective of transnational organisation of the labour movement in different parts of the world. The session will also explore whether or not globalization presents new opportunities for transnational organizing that avoid reproducing relations of inequality between labour movements of the global North and those of the global South. Relations between national and international labour organizations and social movements, which fall under the broad category of the "anti-globalisation movement", will also be examined. Papers examining links between labour movements, on the one hand, and organizations that enforce 'fair globalization' are welcome in this session.

SESSION ORGANISER: **Peter Evans**, Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, USA
E-mail: pevans@berkeley.edu

Session 9: Trade Unions and Politics

How do trade unions relate to party politics? How is this relationship affected by economic restructuring and neo-liberal globalisation? In some countries, a strong link exists historically between unions and social democratic parties. Is this relationship redefined towards more independent trade unionism? In post-colonial societies, unions have often been subordinated to strategies of 'national development'? What happens to the unions when such strategies become more neo-liberal? Are unions defending welfarism and national development against globalisation? Are they capable of developing a political alternative? How are political alliances and relationships to political parties redefined?

SESSION ORGANISER: Bjorn Beckman, Politics of Development Group, PODSU, Stockholm University, SWEDEN
E-mail: bjorn.beckman@statsvet.su.se

Session 10: The Changing Geography of Power

In the past decade or so, industrial relations scholars have become more interested in issues of space and spatiality whereas human geographers have begun to pay greater attention to the nature of working class life and industrial relations. The result has been the emergence of what some have come to call "Labour Geography". Specifically, Labour Geography seeks to analyse the relationship between space and power. It is an approach that sees space not simply as a stage upon which social action plays out but rather, as a social product, which can be shaped and struggled over by various economic and political actors. Put slightly differently, it recognises that the geography of capitalism is something which is actively struggled over and which, in turn, can have dramatic impacts upon how practices of industrial relations and labour politics play out. Thus, how labour movements come to terms with the ways in which local communities are linked to the global economy or how the particularities of place mean that organising strategies, which are appropriate to one place, may not be for another have important consequences for how the geography of global capitalism is made. Taking the position that spatial relations are both constituted by, and constitutive of, social practices, through specific case studies this session will explore how the power of geography can shape the geography of power, and vice versa.

SESSION ORGANISER: Andrew Herod, Department of Geography and International Affairs, University of Georgia, Athens, USA
E-mail: aherod@uga.edu

Session 11: Trade Unions and NGOs: Surviving the Future

Papers exploring the links that have existed (and continue to exist) between unions and a wide range of non-governmental organisations are invited for this session. With the dominance of the neo-liberal policy agenda worldwide and the resulting effects on union density and scope, forging links with NGOs has become one possible union revival strategy to pursue. Similarly, NGO movements have benefited from the support of the labour movement. The seminal partnering between the 'Teamsters' and 'Turtles' in the Battle of Seattle is one illustration of this dynamic. Yet there undoubtedly exist challenges in managing this relationship stemming from the different frames of reference that may be adopted by unions and NGOs. The core questions being pursued in this session are: what are the possibilities for the union/NGO alliance in pursuing common change action agendas? What are the common issues between these organisations and unions? How do the contradictions play themselves out? Can these contradictions be managed so that both unions and NGOs achieve their objectives? Considering these questions is undoubtedly an intellectual project, and thus not only are case study, descriptive papers encouraged; but papers that seek to provide a broader intellectual contribution are also encouraged.

SESSION ORGANISER: Donella Casperza, Organisational and Labour Studies, School of Business, University of Western Australia, Perth, AUSTRALIA
E-mail: dcasperz@ecel.uwa.edu.au

For more information about ISA 2006: <http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/>

ISA2006 CONGRESS REGISTRATION FEES IN US DOLLARS

Congress registration fees are divided into Regular and Student fees. Students must provide a photocopy of their valid student card or equivalent. There are different fees available for ISA Members and Non-Members. ISA Members are scholars who paid to the ISA Secretariat in Madrid their individual membership fees for the current year. Regular registration fees have been divided into three categories A, B, and C. Participants must identify the category in which their country of residence is classified and pay the registration fee corresponding to this category. The table of countries can be found at http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/table_c.htm. All programme participants (paper givers, session organizers, chairs, discussants, etc.) must register for the Congress before May 31, 2006. Otherwise, their names will not appear in the Programme Book.

REGULAR FEES BEFORE 31 MAY 2006 AFTER 31 MAY 2006

CATEGORY A

ISA member	USD 305	USD 355
Non member	USD 405	USD 455

CATEGORY B

ISA member	USD 130	USD 180
Non member	USD 210	USD 260

CATEGORY C

ISA member	USD 100	USD 125
Non member	USD 125	USD 150

STUDENT FEES BEFORE 31 MAY 2006 AFTER 31 MAY 2006

CATEGORIES A, B, C

ISA member	USD 100	USD 125
Non member	USD 125	USD 150

CALL FOR PAPERS: *Current Sociology*, Journal of the ISA

Dennis Smith, Editor of *Current Sociology*, would be very interested to receive high-quality, original and scholarly papers of 6,000 to 8,000 words for possible publication. True to its name, the journal is keen to publish papers that show how sociological knowledge and perspectives may be used to improve our understanding of current issues in social change and/or contribute to current debates within the discipline of sociology. There is no deadline on this call. Dennis is also interested in proposals for 'thematic sections' within specific issues of the journal. A 'thematic section' is a collection of three or four papers of very high quality on different aspects of a particular theme. This concept may be attractive to networks of scholars and researchers who are working in similar areas and who are conducting a lively debate. If this applies to you, contact Dennis: d.smith@lboro.ac.uk.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ATTEND ISA2006 IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ISA and the Local Congress Organizing Committee of the XVI World Congress of Sociology have made a provision in their budget to support invited speakers, session organizers and paper givers, totalling 665,000 Rand. This amount is made up from an anticipated grant of 250,000 Rand from the UNESCO Participation Programme and another 415,000 Rand taken from the joint ISA-LOC Congress budget. The Grants Committee, elected by the ISA Executive Committee in 2004, will allocate the grants for the XVI World Congress of Sociology. The Committee shall be composed of four members of the ISA Executive Committee and the Chair of the South African Local Organizing Committee. The ISA Vice-President for Finances will chair the Committee.

Three categories of grants:

1. Invited speakers: Presidential Sessions, Author meets the Readers, Symposia. Designated for invited speakers who may not be ISA members and may come from category A countries. Applications shall be sent to the President and the Vice-President for Programme who will make recommendations to the Grants Committee.

2. Travel/accommodation grants: For individual members of the ISA in good standing coming from the developing countries (category B or C) and who play an active role in the Congress programme either as a session chair or a paper giver. The Grants Committee will make the decision (see below for the proposed guidelines for applications).

3. Registrations grants: Allocated to the Research Committees to subsidise the participation of featured speakers and/or paper givers chosen by the RCs. This funding will allow RCs to apply either for 1 congress registration in category A, or 2 in category B, or 3 in category C. Grants are available only to participants, members of the International Sociological Association, presenting papers in the RC programme. Considering that the allocated amount cannot meet every need, requests may have to be arbitrated. The Vice-President for Research with two other members of the Research Coordinating Committee will make the final recommendations.

Applications should be sent by e-mail to the ISA Secretariat isa@cps.ucm.es and copied to Ann Denis, Vice-President for Research, adenis@uottawa.ca before January 31, 2006. Applications must include the name(s) of the person(s) to whom the grant will be allocated and the title(s) and abstract of their paper(s).

Guidelines for submitting application for a grant

1. Who is eligible?

Only individual members of the ISA in good standing (i.e. having paid their individual membership fees) coming from developing countries (listed in categories B and C on the congress registration form) and who play an active role in the Congress programme either as a session chair or a paper giver.

2. What will the grants be?

The grants can be allocated for one or many of the following items:

- Congress registration fee
- Airfare (in full or in part). Tickets will be purchased by the Local Organizing Committee
- Accommodation (available in students residence)

3. How to apply?

Letters of applications shall be received by October 1, 2005 at the ISA Secretariat.

They should be sent simultaneously to the ISA Secretariat and to a Research Committee, Working and/or Thematic Group where a paper will be presented, asking for its endorsement. RCs, WGs, and TGs will be requested to comment on all the applications sent by participants in their sessions, confirming the individuals' participation and stating their priorities as to whom a grant shall be given.

E-mail address of the ISA is isa@cps.ucm.es

4. Decisions

The Congress Grants Committee composed of members of the Local Congress Organizing Committee and of the ISA Executive Committee will review all applications and distribute available funds accordingly by December 15, 2005, so that all successful applicants can pre-register to the Congress in January 2006.

ELECTIONS TO THE ISA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2006-2010

ISA members are invited to submit nominations for the slates of candidates for officers of the International Sociological Association for the period Fall 2006 - Summer 2010. Elections will take place at the XVI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Durban, South Africa, July 2006. The Research Council and the Council of National Associations will elect 16 members of the ISA Executive Committee. The Assembly of Councils composed of all members of the Council of National Associations and the Research Council will elect the President and Vice-Presidents.

The delegates to the Council of National Associations and to the Research Council elected Nominating Committees whose task is to compile the slate of nominations for the eight places on the Executive Committee to be filled by the Council of National Associations and the Research Council respectively, and to take part in the compilation of the slate for the Presidency and the five Vice-Presidencies.

The Nominating Committees elected are composed of:

Nominating Committee for the Research Council

Jennifer Platt, UK, RC08 (Chair)
Mustafa Koc, Canada, RC09, RC31, RC40
Marilyn Porter, Canada, RC32, RC38
Ulrike Schuerkens, France, RC09, RC20, WG06
Chin-Chun Yi, Taiwan, RC06

Nominating Committees for the Council of National Associations

Maria Stella Grossi, Brazilian Sociological Society
Christine Inglis, Australian Sociological Association
John Lie, American Sociological Association
T. K. Oommen, Indian Sociological Society
Pekka Sulkunen, Finnish Sociological Society

The required curriculum vitae should consist of a maximum of 20 lines, including both academic and organisational experience, and listing up to three selected publications. For the candidates for the President and Vice-Presidents it should also include their priorities if elected to a post.

The form and a curriculum vitae, should be e-mailed and sent by regular mail **to arrive by January 31, 2006, to:** Izabela Barlinska, Executive Secretary, International Sociological Association, Faculty of Political Sciences Sociology, University Complutense, 28223 MADRID, Spain.
Fax: 34-91-3524945 E-mail: isa@cps.ucm.es

Extracts from ISA Statutes: Nominations procedures

10.2 Each Nominating Committee shall seek nominations for candidacy, with appropriate biographical information, from its own constituency... the Research Council from Research Committees, and both shall seek nominations for candidacy for the Presidency and Vice-Presidencies. All ISA regular members in good standing may send nominations to the Nominating Committees. Each nomination must be supported by two members, and include evidence of the consent of the candidate. Not later than three months prior to the World Congress, each Nominating Committee shall draw up and send to the members of the relevant Council a slate of at least sixteen candidates for possible election to the Executive Committee.

10.3 The two Nominating Committees shall also act as a single committee, with the current President acting as the non-voting chair, to draw up a slate of candidates for the Presidency and the five Vice Presidencies; this shall be circulated to the members of the Assembly of Councils not less than three months before the World Congress. The slate shall comprise at least two candidates for the Presidency, and at least two candidates for each Vice Presidency.

10.4 All candidates ...must be individual members in good standing of the ISA at the time when the Nominating Committee is set up, and must have been such members from the time of the previous World Congress. After two consecutive terms on the Executive Committee no member is eligible for a further consecutive term, except as President.

10.5 In drawing up their slates the Nominating Committees shall consult the relevant constituencies, and give due consideration to fields within sociology, to geographical representation and to gender as well as to candidates' experience in organising international activities.

Extracts from ISA Statutes: Duties of Executive Committee members

8. The Executive Committee's tasks shall include: proposing policies to the Assembly of Councils and carrying out the policies established by it; proposing the membership dues to the Council of National Associations, the Research Council or to the Assembly of Councils; acting on matters of urgency, and reporting on activities periodically to the Council of National Associations, the Research Council and the Assembly of Councils.

a. Individual members of the EC should serve on at least one sub-committee if appointed to it, and act to represent and further the interests of the Association in their home areas. They should also take an active part in EC discussions, sending comments if unable to attend meetings.

9.1 The ISA President shall legally represent the Association both internally and externally, and shall have general responsibility for the implementation of the Association's policy and for supervision of the activity of the Secretariat. S/he shall chair the meetings of the EC...

9.2 There shall be five Vice-Presidents, responsible, respectively, for Research, National Associations, the Programme of the next World Congress, Publications, and Finance and Membership.

The responsibilities of each Vice-President will be:

1. **Research:** To oversee and coordinate the activities of RCs, WGs and TGs, to propose policies in the area of research, and to encourage comparative and cross-national research.
2. **National Associations:** To maintain liaison with regular collective members, and to propose policies and activities to respond to their needs.
3. **Programme:** To develop the programme for the next World Congress, in liaison with the Local Organising Committee.
4. **Publications:** To oversee the running of the Association's publications, and to propose policies in the area of publications.
5. **Finance and Membership:** To oversee the Association's financial affairs in liaison with the Secretariat, and to propose policies in the area of finance and membership.

**TRADE UNIONS & POLITICS:
AFRICA IN A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT**

SWOP, IDS, PODSU Workshop
Johannesburg, South Africa 21/22 JULY 2006

The Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Zimbabwe, and the Politics of Development Group (PODSU) at Stockholm University, Sweden are organising a conference in Johannesburg on 21/22 July 2006. The conference theme is 'Trade Unions and Politics: Africa in a Comparative Context'. The timing of the conference is intended to allow participants to join ISA 2006 in Durban from 23 to 29 July 2006 where RC44 will run a series of sessions under the theme of 'Global Restructuring and the New Worlds of Work: Rediscovering the Power of the Labour Movement'.

African trade unions often played an important role in the national liberation movement against colonialism and many continued to do so after independence. However, following independence many unions became subordinated to dominant parties, losing an autonomous capacity to intervene politically. As states sunk into indebtedness, the position of the wage-earning economy was undermined. State-led national projects were in crisis and governments were under pressure to adjust. Wage employment was badly hit and unions sought to disengage from the state-corporatist order, which seemed to have lost its capacity to deliver. Unions resisted retrenchments, cuts in wages, and the deterioration and privatisation of social services. They demanded greater autonomy as well as influence on the direction of government policies.

The aim of the workshop is to examine union-party links and the options facing the labour movement in Africa today. What can unions do to enhance political influence while simultaneously protecting their autonomy? In exploring the preconditions of working class politics the workshop will focus on the current struggles of trade unions in different parts of Africa, while also reviewing experiences from elsewhere. Being historically part of the nationalist camp, many unions continue to be closely allied to nationalist political parties. How successful have they been in advancing autonomy and influence in that context? In some cases, unions remain incorporated into authoritarian ruling party structures, deprived of both autonomy and influence. What is the scope for reform? Are alternative forms of workers' organisations emerging, capable of asserting workers' influence? Then, there is the South African case where the leading union federation is aligned to the ruling party, but retains the autonomy to mobilise. Elsewhere unions have explicitly distanced themselves from party politics, even accepting government strictures that unions must be unaffiliated politically. How far have such 'non-political' unions succeeded in establishing their own lines of influence?

The wage earning classes in Africa are small and shrinking and unions engage in a struggle for survival in the face of falling real wages, de-industrialisation, outsourcing, casualisation, and privatisation. The ability to influence politics and to articulate popular grievances, however, does not depend on size alone. What is the scope for African workers spearheading popular

democratic politics? Is organised labour capable of offering voice and leadership to a wider range of popular forces? Does it develop political responses that go beyond the immediate issues of employment and wages? To many the formation of a 'Labour Party' is assumed to be the natural means by which unions can influence politics, not the least in view of the European experience of a strong link between social democratic and communist parties and the organised labour movement. How do African unions see this possibility? What is their experience?

In parts of the continent, we have seen the emergence of new grassroots movements which seek to provide a voice to those sections of the working class that fall outside the traditional nationalist and labour movements. To what extent is the scope of unions to intervene in politics facilitated and/or inhibited by the way African workers are situated in the dynamics of the political economy, including its insertion globally.

Comparative labour network

The workshop will pay particular attention to the experiences of Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, while seeking to solicit contributions from a wider range of African countries, including in particular those that had been involved in the study edited by Beckman and Sachikonye (2001) and those who are linked to the networks of the three convening research institutes. In particular, we aim to involve the African Labour Research Network (ALRN), which brings together union-linked research outfits, such as NALEDI (South Africa), LEDRIZ (Zimbabwe), LaRRI (Namibia) and the research units of TUC (Ghana), ZCTU (Zambia) and NLC (Nigeria). In drawing on its combined networks of labour scholars and unionists, the workshop encourages joint contributions whenever convenient.

The workshop is planned for one and a half working days and participants are expected to arrive in Johannesburg the day before the workshop and proceed to Durban late in the second day to participate in ISA 2006, and RC44 activities in particular. A major purpose of the workshop is to expose the IDS-PODSU-SWOP Africa network to the wider labour agenda of RC44 and vice-versa. All three convening research institutes have a distinguished record of scholarship in comparative labour studies in Africa.

The primary target group for the workshop are African scholars and union activists from some of the leading movements on the continent. We also hope to involve scholars from other regions of the world. Interested scholars are advised to send enquiries to the conference organisers in advance, as there are limited places.

Enquiries should be directed to Anthea Metcalfe at antheam@yebo.co.za or to any one of the three convening institutes at the following e-mail addresses:

SWOP, Sakhela Buhlungu: buhlungus@social.wits.ac.za

IDS, Lloyd Sachikonye: sachi@zol.co.za

PODSU, Bjorn Beckman: bjorn.beckman@statsvet.su.se

CHALLENGING LABOUR LAW REFORMS AND THE UNMAKING OF LABOUR REGIMES

7th Congress of the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR)
Bangkok, Thailand, June 26th to July 1st 2005
Report by Andries Bezuidenhout

The Australian Ambassador to Thailand looked somewhat hot and bothered as a rowdy group of trade unionists from South Africa, India, Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and indeed, Australia, confronted him in front of the embassy in Bangkok. They were protesting the proposed labour law reform in his home country. The irony of mostly Asian trade unionists protesting about labour rights in Australia could not have escaped him. The event received wide media coverage in Australia and in Thailand and coincided with mass rallies in Australia in protest of the same issue.



Turning up the heat in Bangkok: SIGTUR protests Australia's intended dismantling of labour laws.

Indeed, this was one of the more public actions of the 7th Congress of the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) which was held in Bangkok from June 26th to July 1st this year. This network organisation consists of a group of trade unions and trade union federations from a range of countries in the South. In this region, Thailand is second only to China in attracting major investment inflows. Much of these investments are in new production capacity. Yet, as in China, the labour movement remains weak and marginal. But this is beginning to change. In a way, the organisers of SIGTUR wanted to make a statement with their presence in the country and encourage Thai workers in their struggles to organise factories.

The discussion at this year's Conference focused mainly on labour law reform – a theme that was common in most of the countries where SIGTUR members came from. These reforms generally attempt to make it easier for enterprises to use various forms of casual or non-standard employment. They also attempt to individualise labour relations, leading to a shift in emphasis from “labour relations” to “employment relations”. Finally, privatisation leads to the same logic being applied to the public sector.

Some of the prominent labour federations in SIGTUR, such as COSATU from South Africa, CUT from Brazil and the KCTU from South Korea, succeeded spectacularly in bringing about democratic and labour reform in their countries from the 1980s onwards. But these gains are now under pressure because of labour law reforms in the name of “labour market flexibility”. Other members, such as the KMU in the Philippines, are still fighting labour repression - and in some cases the assassination of labour and human rights activists.

Delegates discussed the content of the attack on the labour movement in various parts of the world in a number of focussed sessions. An important session looked at how unions could build and rebuild powerful democratic unionism capable of resisting global restructuring. Shin Seung Chel, the KCTU Vice President, argued that the attack on the labour movement by neo-liberal globalization comprised of four essential aspects. First, the financialization of capital led to chronic destabilisation and jobless growth. Second, labour market flexibilization was a direct assault on unions, leading to a downward spiral in working conditions. This made the building of solidarity and working class unity more difficult. Third, privatisation is led by an assault from trans-national corporations to commodify public goods. Not only energy and water were involved, but also food and education. The final aspect is trade liberalization, which was also a political strategy to maintain control over third world countries.

The outcome of this assault was clear and tragic, but the labour movement has up to now been unable to devise a coherent response, argued Shin. There was a need for a review of direction and strategy, and unions could no longer rely on traditional methods of struggle. In South Korea, the spread of insecure work – ‘irregular’ work – since the financial crisis of 1997 had eroded trade union representivity and had divided workers. More than half the Korean labour market can now be classified as ‘irregular’. These workers received half the wages of permanent employees, and found it extremely difficult to assert their basic rights as employees.

In response to this, the KCTU put new organising strategies at the core of its agenda. These included fighting for the regularisation of ‘irregular’ workers, the amalgamation of unions to form a stronger organising base, the direct organising of ‘irregular’ workers as well as transforming the KCTU’s remaining enterprise unions into industrial unions (One should keep in mind that 60% of the KCTU’s membership are still members of enterprise unions).

Shin pointed out that they had seen some good results, but that capital was not sitting idle. Ideologically the KCTU was attacked for only representing regular workers, and that they were trying to make casual work even more unstable as a trade off. The danger was that the unity of the working class could be eroded even further. To counter ideological attacks it was important to change the issue of casual labour into a social issue – one that referred to discrimination that included issues of gender, race and citizenship. Indeed, the issue of ‘irregular’ work had become a major political issue in Korea and labour law reforms that attempted to further relax regulations were stopped in parliament – for now.

At a global level struggles to fight casualisation are already gaining pace, argued Shin. The ILO’s discussions on the scope of the employment relationship show that there is serious engagement with the issue. Other international organisations such as the ICFTU were also putting the issue on the forefront. In order to win these campaigns, Shin pointed out, the issue has to be presented as not only being about labour law, but about the suppression of rights. The casualisation of labour needed to be made a global issue.

In his address, Shin Seung Chel used his own country, South Korea, as an example. However, during discussion sessions delegates from various countries showed how similar strategies were followed in their countries – often in the name of labour market flexibility. Women were often affected more profoundly by these changes. In some cases, the “War on Terror” was used to justify further attacks on trade unions.

Indeed, the SIGTUR conference started drafting “A universal declaration on labour law and labour rights from the economic South” in an attempt to entrench certain labour rights as fundamental human rights. As pointed out, SIGTUR is mainly a network organisation. It has not got formal recognition in any of the international institutions. Nevertheless, it has as its members some of the most significant labour movements with social movement characteristics. It would be a step in the right direction if it contributes in shifting the language of the market to one that emphasises fundamental rights.

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MINI-CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL LABOUR

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

12 August 2005

Report by Bridget Kenny

This daylong conference was co-sponsored by the American Sociological Association (ASA) sections: Political Economy of the World System, Labour Movements and Political Sociology. The cross-sectional sponsorship brought out a particularly strong emphasis on global conditions under which labour works, organises and relates to other movements. Panels included a wide range of topics, but the effect was energetic debate on both conditions of restructuring affecting labour and of labour organising. For instance, a panel on textiles and apparel covered organising at multiple scales. Edna Bonacich (UC-Riverside) and her co-author, Jane Wilson, argued that a global 'logistics revolution', led by giant retailers like Wal-Mart, generally has led to the weakening of labour, but also produces new vulnerabilities for capital at particular 'nodes' in these global chains—like ports and airports. Another paper discussed successful examples of trade union ability to construct social justice campaigns in particular communities. Bob Ross modelled international sweatshop campaigns.

Other sessions discussed the auto industry and union approaches comparatively in the United States, Mexico and China. A panel on organising among contingent service sector workers included papers on retail workers in South Africa, low-wage service workers in Los Angeles and Seoul, Korea and street vendors in Argentina. The papers raised questions as to 'who is a worker' and what happens to the character of organising in the reconstitution of labour markets toward contingency and informalisation. Another session demonstrated the importance of the state and its agencies to the control of the labour supply and labour process in sectors as diverse as domestic work and dock work.

A lunchtime session discussing the recent split in the AFL-CIO differentiated it with the CIO in the 1930s, and debated the significance of the split for the labour movement in the United States. Generally participants felt it was not positive to divide a weak movement, but there was also discussion of potential benefits of competition between unions. Afternoon sessions included papers on transnational labour regimes and cross border organising, which explored the relationship between consumer-based advocacy campaigns and a politics of protectionism within the US labour movement. Another one discussed emerging economies and repressed labour with a focus on Mexico and China. A third focused on patterns of counter-hegemonic mobilisation, including a paper by Suzanne Franzway (Univ. of South Australia) on "Feminism and Transnational Labour Advocacy". Peter Evans and Anna Wetterberg (UC-Berkeley) suggested that a model of movement organising may well come from public service workers in the Global South fighting issues such as privatisation of services. Beverly Silver presented her main arguments in the award winning, *Forces of Labor*, reviewed in this newsletter in April 2004 (Vol 2, No 4). An evening session focused on a discussion from labour activists on experiences of transnational solidarity, including Jeff Hermanson from the AFL-CIO Solidarity Office, Neva Makgetla from the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and Scott Nova from the Workers' Rights Consortium.

Important themes of debate emerged during the day which included the role of the state as mediator and as target of organising under conditions of globalisation, the limitations of actions at a collective bargaining level to affect a globalised system, the character and strategic emphasis of international campaigns, the possibilities and problems of cross-union alliances as well as alliances between unions and other social movements.

At both the mini-conference and at the Labour Movements business meeting, RC-44 was advertised and the call for papers distributed. If the Global Labour conference is anything to go by, there is certainly strong interest from American-based labour scholars in comparative contexts, international labour movements and global political economy linking the North and the South. These have been integral foci of RC-44 and bringing our colleagues on board can only point to productive and energetic debate in the future. Onward to Durban!

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMICS (SASE)
Socio-economic Theory: Future Directions for Labour Movements
17th Annual Meeting, Budapest, Hungary, June 30- July 2, 2005

Report by Pauline Dibben

One of the first panel sessions of the SASE annual conference addressed the key issue of the future direction for labour movements. In doing so, it incorporated presentations from the perspectives of both the developed and developing world. In each case, the presenters drew attention to broad trends and specific examples, and directly addressed the challenges faced by labour movements in the current economic, political and social context.

Since the conference was set in Hungary, it was perhaps appropriate that the session began with an insight into post communist unionism. David Ost explained how, under the communist regime, unions had a central role, essentially as part of the communist apparatus; the period following this was marked by union decline as a result of competitive pressures, privatisation, and the inability of unions to take a clear and separate stand against the capitalist reforms. More recently, there have been signs of renewal, particularly within transnational corporations where unions have benefited from Western contacts and new resources. A number of factors, moreover, have contributed toward potential union growth: the recognition by union leaders that their own survival depends on unions' expansion; the expectations for unions following incorporation into the EU; emerging international labor solidarity; working conditions for younger workers; and the new workforce. Nevertheless, challenges for the future include a legacy of anti-labor attitudes, practical difficulties such as organising in small firms, and the trend for unions to chiefly represent skilled, male workers rather than those who are in marginalised sectors.

The two papers that tackled labor movements in the developed world both involved quite detailed discussion of specific case study examples. Peter Fairbrother examined three case studies in Britain, Australia, Italy, with diverse foci in each case, including the British Civil Service and the privatisation of public transport in Victoria, Australia. His conclusions drew attention to the need for trade unions to develop clear strategies, including those for effective leadership. Rick Fantasia, meanwhile, tackled labor movements in the United States. While the picture here was generally negative, he spoke enthusiastically about the five or six unions that have embraced 'social movement unionism' through working with immigrants, campaigning against sweatshops, and joining in 'Jobs with Justice' coalitions.

The fourth paper was presented by Edward Webster, and drew attention to the strategic choice facing the labour movement in South Africa: essentially whether to embrace market driven politics or societal driven politics, and therefore become agents of restructuring, rather than instruments of social justice. Building on the work of Polyani, Webster argued that there is a need to understand the particular trajectory of the South, where the labour movement is taking a 'Social Movement Unionism' role - working with social justice movements as a countermovement to market-based politics and economic liberalism.

In addition to providing a detailed insight into the challenges facing the labour movement within various economic and political contexts, the papers also stimulated a lively discussion around the labour movements' responses to situations of post-communism and post-colonialism, and the extent to which labour movements have, and indeed should embrace either business or social movement unionism.

Full papers presented at the SASE meeting:

Fairbrother, P. 2005. 'Unions Facing the Future: Questions and Possibilities'.

Fantasia, R. 2005. 'A Movement in Spite of Itself: U.S. Labor and its Representations'

Ost, D. 2005. 'After Post-communism: Trade Union Futures in the Former Soviet Bloc.'

Webster, E. and Lambert, R. 2005. 'Markets against Society: Labour's Predicament in the Second Great Transformation.'

Recently published books by the above authors:

Fairbrother, P. 2005. 'Trade unions in Renewal: A Comparative Study'. London: Taylor and Francis.

Fairbrother, P., Paddon, M. and Teicher, J. 2005. 'Privatisation, Globalisation and Labour: Studies from Australia'. Australia: The Federation Press.

Fantasia, R. and Voss, K. 2005. 'Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement'. California: The University of California Press.

Ost, D. 2005. 'The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-communist Europe'. USA: Cornell Uni Press.

Webster, E. and von Holdt, K. (Eds) 2005. 'Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition. Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press.

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CALL FOR CONFERENCE PROPOSALS
Global Companies, Global Unions, Global Research, Global Campaigns
New York City, February 9-11, 2006

Unions around the globe continue to operate in an ever-more complex and rapidly changing corporate environment. Increasingly the employers they face across the bargaining table or in organizing campaigns are part of diffuse transnational companies who have no loyalty to any one industry, product, or country. Given the globalization of firms, finance and labor markets, the labor movement recognizes that union organizing and bargaining campaigns, and strategic research must become global as well.

It is with these challenges in mind that we propose to bring together an international conference of scholars and trade unionists in New York City in February of 2006.

Specifically, the conference would:

- i. Share and learn from recent union initiatives in strategic corporate research and strategic global organizing and bargaining campaigns from around the globe in order to more effectively take on multinational companies through global comprehensive campaigns.
- ii. Expand our collective knowledge and understanding of the changing nature of corporate ownership structures, practices and strategies for the world's largest multinationals.
- iii. Lay the groundwork for building a sustainable global network of unions and academics to continue to work together to effectively engage multinational corporations worldwide.

The conference will be a mix of interactive workshops, paper presentations, panel discussions, and sector, industry, and/or company caucuses involving a mix of academics, trade unionists, and representatives from labor related NGOs from around the globe. In addition to material presented at the conference, in-depth strategic corporate research reports will be prepared by a team of researchers from the universities sponsoring the conference, with input from union members of the planning committee. The reports will focus on a limited number of key multinationals from diverse sectors and industries, where building research and strategic campaign capacity would be most useful to unions worldwide. To date the list of companies include Wal-Mart, Kraft Foods, Siemens, Exxon Mobil, Suez S.A., Alcoa, SSA Marine, Bouygues, Starwood, and Sanofi Aventis. These company reports, along with shorter summaries on the access points for information on multinational corporations at each of the countries represented at the conference, will be available at the conference for all interested participants. **Submission Deadline: 15 September 2005**

We are seeking ideas for workshops, presentations and panel discussions as well as papers to be presented. If you are interested in participating in the conference please submit a one to three page proposal outlining your paper or presentation and how you believe it relates to the goals outlined above.

All proposals should include:

- i. Description of format (workshop, campaign case study, panel, paper presentation etc.)
- ii. Description of the content or focus
- iii. Name of the person submitting the proposal and full contact information including address, phone number, fax number and e-mail addresses.
- iv. A working hypothesis and a brief description of the research methodology.

Proposals for workshops should include names, addresses and presentation title for any speakers, presenters or panellists that are proposed. All papers must be written in English and in a format and style that is accessible to the general reader, free from academic jargon. Final papers should be 25 double-spaced pages in length, including all citations, tables and references. While our deadline for proposals is 15 September 2005, we would like to hear from you as soon as possible, so we can assist with your presentation as well as organize the conference successfully. General conference material and registration information will be posted at <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/globalunionsconference> as planning for the conference progresses. They should be sent to the attention of Conference Coordinator, Kate Bronfenbrenner, at klb23@cornell.edu

Or: Kate Bronfenbrenner, Director of Labor Education, Research, 356 ILR Research Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 14853, New York City, USA

Fax: + (607) 255-0245

Phone: + (607) 254-4749

**CALL
FOR
PAPERS**

**NEW STANDARDS FOR THE NEW TIMES?
THE 8-HOUR DAY AND BEYOND**

Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University
Melbourne, Australia
22-23 June 2006

As part of commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the historic achievement by stonemasons in Melbourne of an Eight-Hour Day, a conference on contemporary working-time issues will be held on 22-23 June 2006 in Melbourne. The conference is organised by the Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University, with support from the Victorian government. It will be held in conjunction with a twinned conference of labour history and working hours, organised by the Labour History Society and the University of Melbourne, scheduled for 21 June 2006.

The 'New Standards conference offers an excellent opportunity to examine the broad range of working-time issues confronting workers in Australia at the start of the 21st century. Contemporary problems continue to include long hours for full-time employees, often in the form of unpaid overtime. However, they also include issues such as poor schedules, unpredictable variations in hours, lack of control over hours, under-employment and casualisation. In today's language, many citizens are concerned about *work and life* (or work and family) *imbalances*. What is causing these problems? How extensive are they? How do we overcome them?

The focus of the conference is on scholarly analysis. However, it will also reach out to a discussion of possible paths forward, drawing on the lessons of history and examples from other advanced capitalist societies. Thus, academic papers will be supplemented by panel discussions that tease out the dilemmas of different forms of working-time regulations (including what is sometimes called 'working-time deregulation). Suggestions for papers are invited on all aspects of this important topic.

In particular, we encourage papers that look at:

- Long hours for full-time workers
- Work and family
- Working time and gender
- Short hours and part-time work
- Time sovereignty
- International comparisons
- Access to paid leave
- Flexible work schedules
- Working time over the life course
- Union strategies
- Time in the workplace/time in the city

Deadlines: Abstracts are due by 31 January 2006. Full papers are due by 20 May 2006.

Further information can be obtained from the RMIT organisers:

Iain Campbell (Iain.Campbell@rmit.edu.au)

Cathy Brigden (Cathy.Brigden@rmit.edu.au)

For further information on the Labour History conference, contact:

Peter Love (pjlove@infochange.net.au)

Join the ISA Research Committee on Labour Movements (RC44)

What is RC 44? It is the Research Committee on Labour Movements of the International Sociological Association (ISA), the largest academic forum for those engaged with sociologically related issues of enquiry.

Mission of RC44: To encourage international 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 activities.

Benefits of joining RC44:

- An opportunity to engage with interdisciplinary academics/researchers with similar interests. Current membership includes international academics/researchers from Africa, Asia, North and South America, Europe, Oceania and Asia.
- Regular newsletter featuring international articles on labour, reviews of new books, profiles of research units, conference proceedings, comments on recent publications on cutting edge research, conference and doctoral programme announcements, call for papers and more...
- Opportunity to participate in the RC44 session programme at the next ISA World Congress in Durban, South Africa in July 2006.
- Cost: 20 US Dollars for four years

For more information on RC44 visit: <http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/global labour/>

OR E-mail: Anthea Metcalfe antheam@yebo.co.za

Join the ISA & RC44 at <http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/>

Benefits of joining the ISA

- Reduced ISA 2006 in registration fees at **ISA World Congress**, Durban, South Africa 2006
- Receive *International Sociology* (the official quarterly journal of the ISA)
- Receive *the ISA Bulletin* (the ISA newsletter) and the *Directory of Members*
- Discounted subscription to ISA journal, *Current Sociology*
- Over **60 years of age** qualifies for life membership of the ISA
- Receive *isagram*, the ISA electronic newsletter containing announcements of forthcoming conferences, calls for papers and manuscripts, prizes, competitions, etc.
- Reduced subscription rates to journals offered by various publishers.