UNITY

IS OUR STRENGTH



Towards Genuine Workers Movement

Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Link
Asian Cultural Forum on Development

"The 21st Century has been described by many as the Pacific century. In the Asia-Pacific region, let us make it a century for workers."

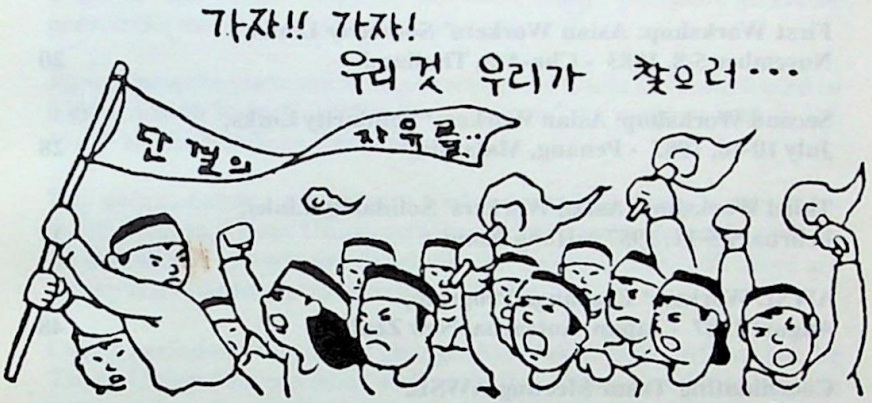
WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE ! !

Asia -Pacific Workers' Solidarity Link
(APWSL)

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FOREWORD

This publication titled **'Unity is Our Strength: Towards a Genuine Workers Movement'** is the result of joint efforts of the Coordinating Team of Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links. Therefore all credit goes to the members of this network.

As we know the trade union movement in the world has contributed to a great extent in realizing the basic rights of the workers both in the North and in Southern Countries.

But unfortunately, in Southern Countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, Trade Union activities were seen by the authorities as an obstacle to growth and development. In some cases still there are severe restrictions on trade union activities.

Over a period of time, lots of changes have taken place both within the Trade Union Movement as well as in the strategies adopted by the management. In many cases managements were successful to float parallel unions which very often took the side of the management rather than workers. They are known as 'Yellow Unions'. On the other hand, production system is also changing. It is no more confined to the factory, it has secondary and tertiary contract workers spreaded even to the households in remote villages.

With the introduction of Free Trade Zones and to create conducive conditions for foreign investment, in many countries governments have relaxed labour laws and Industrial Relation Acts. As a result workers are deprived of their basic rights.

The Trade Union movement itself has its own weaknesses in terms of participation of the common workers in the decision making process, and participation of women workers at leadership level. Also at a time, when 'Trade Unions' concerns have to transcend not only wage matters but also a narrow sectoralist mentality, dealing only with workers issues, interaction of the Trade Union movement with other movements like peasants, fishworkers, bonded labourers and child workers, and also with the environmentalist movement has yet to be fully realised.

Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links is an initiative from this region with a comprehensive approach towards building genuine workers movement to face the challenges emerging for the changes that have been taking place in the world and particularly in this region.

We hope that this publication will serve as an introduction to this network to the groups and organisations concerned for the well-being of the workforce who are directly related to the production process.

John Maynard deserves our heartfelt appreciation for his valuable time and effort which made this publication possible.

M. Abdus Sabur

May 1, 1991



Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links

"The Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Link is an informal network of trade unionists and activists in Asia and the Pacific. It exists to link, facilitate, and promote genuine trade unionism amongst the countries of the region".

The Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links network (APWSL) has its roots in the experiences and struggles of the workers of Asia and the Pacific. It has developed an action programme from these roots through a series of workshops, meetings, and activities since its origins as Asia Workers' Solidarity Links (AWSL) in 1981.

Concern about the anti-labour trends emerging in the Asian countries had been expressed at the Third Council meeting of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) in Kandy, Sri Lanka in September 1981. To link together genuine labour unions and worker groups in Asia it was agreed that ACFOD should convene or co-convene an Asian workers' workshop.

Following a proposal to the ACFOD Council meeting workers' representatives from 11 countries attended a Preparatory Meeting for AWSL held at Pattaya, Thailand in July 1982.

The First Meeting, which formally established AWSL as a network of union activists was also held in Thailand, at Cha-Am in November 1983. Subsequent meetings (or workshops) have been the Second Workshop (Penang, Malaysia, July 1985), the Third Workshop (Hong Kong, February 1987), and the Fourth Workshop in Osaka, Japan in August 1989.

It was the Fourth Workshop at Osaka that incorporated the name Pacific into AWSL - now APWSL.

APWSL is governed by the program which was endorsed at the First Workshop in 1983, and which has been modified and developed at subsequent workshops, based on the experiences of the participants.

Structure

The structure of APWSL which has evolved through this process is based on national APWSL teams. Each participating country nomi nates two National Facilitators - one man and one woman - who are responsible for the overall coordination in their respective countries, and for liasing with the international APWSL network.

The international APWSL network is divided into four sub-regions - South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific. The international coordination is the responsibility of the Regional Coordinating Team (RCT) of four people - two men and two women - each representing one of the sub-regions. The members of the RCT are elected from the National Facilitators for a period of three years.

The network is serviced by the APWSL Secretariat based in Sri Lanka, with assistance from the ACFOD Secretariat in Bangkok.

The origins, developments, programmes and activities of APWSL are followed in the chapters of this book.

A development of particular importance to note at this stage is the restructuring of APWSL which became necessary to ensure the full and equal participation of both women and men. It became APWSL policy that National Facilitators, country representatives, the RCT, and all levels of APWSL, must comprise equal numbers of women and men to reflect the character of APWSL as a genuine network of union activists.

Origins of APWSL

Six of the participants of the Third ACFOD Council in Sri Lanka in September 1981 met to discuss their concerns about the situation facing workers in Asia in more detail.

They noted that the move towards industrialisation in Asia was backed by national industrial development policies of the various governments. Free Trade Zones were also being established in the region.

Accompanying the move toward industrialisation were repressive and unfavourable labour policies. The growth of capitalist forces and transnational corporations (TNCs) led to the further suppression of the fundamental rights of workers in Asia.

There was a growing trend amongst the leadership of the labour movements to adopt a passive approach. They became less accountable to their own members, and became aligned with the interests of the capitalist forces of the TNCs.

Noting these developments with great concern, the Sri Lanka meeting saw a need to organise a genuine labour movement to build up the solidarity of labour organisers, leaders, and workers in Asia. Such a movement would need to include both the organised and unorganised labour sectors, in line with the common themes of the Asian Reality and ACFOD's objectives.

The Asian Realities

A summary of the "country situation reports" presented to the Third Council of ACFOD was prepared by the Asian Realities Committee:

The individual country situation reports at the Third ACFOD Council reaffirmed ACFOD's orientation towards the people at the base or primary level. The experiences at the primary level throughout the region indicate common themes, despite the peculiar problems encountered in each situation.

It is impossible to comprehend the contemporary Asian Reality without reference to the emerging International Economic Order, at least two aspects of which are fundamental:

1. The increasing penetration of the capitalist mode into all areas of social and economic life in Asia and the Pacific. Not only are there tensions between nations as they compete for capital, but also within nations as access to wealth and power is rapidly being centralised.

2. Accompanying this penetration have been the effects of the world crisis in exchange and commodities. As wealth and power is accumulated by some groups, the absolute conditions of poverty and misery are worsened for the majority.

These features of the International Economic Order were implicitly recognised in the conclusions of the Second ACFOD Council in Penang in 1979. Each of these concerns had been repeated at this Third Council.

While diverse, each concern is closely linked to regional trends seen in two broad categories:

1. The dramatic militarisation of Asia and the Pacific.

Since the previous Council meeting, international war-mongering was obvious to all nations in the region. consistent points raised in individual country situations were:

The overacting super-power play of the dominant nations in the world economy, and the expansionists aggression of individual countries in the region.

Nuclear arms proliferation and the environmental consequences of waste dumping in the Pacific.

The persistence and build up of foreign military bases in the Asian countries.

2. The consistent denial and oppression of human rights.

The deepening absolute poverty while the elites rapidly accumulate and enforce the fruits of under-development.

Worker rights and freedoms in the sale of labour and their bondage to unjust and pernicious forms of exploitation.

The repression of individual and community efforts to promote just and appropriate alternatives to their under-development.

The strengthening of remaining colonial structures and disregard for national and individual claims for independence and self-determination.

Repression of the rights of minority, political and ethnic groups, and women.

The alienation of the individual and community from the traditional religious and cultural heritages.

The deprivation of traditional seafarers of their means of subsistence.

The arbitrary disregard of the democratic access of the peasants to their land.

A notable aspect of the country situation reports and discussion is the recognition of an ASIAN REALITY, not only with common problems, but also in the regional nature of the activities producing them.

Genuine workers' network

The team of six of the participants at the 1981 ACFOD Council outlined their objectives:

1. To bring together genuine workers, organisers and leaders to reflect on the Asian workers' reality and plan for ideas, activities and actions towards a genuine workers action program.

2. To share the experiences of the labour movement in the framework of the concerns that had been outlined.

3. To establish an Asia Workers' Solidarity Links network based on the struggles of the organised and unorganised sectors of the workers in Asia.

Proposal for a workers' network

Based on their concerns and objectives, a proposal for the establishment of an Asia Workers' Solidarity Links network was outlined. The proposal included a preparatory Asia-wide meeting to bring together active (genuine) worker organisers and leaders to reflect on the Asian workers realilty and to plan for ideas, activities and actions.

There would be a reflection on the definition and interest of a genuine labour movement and clarification of the criteria for identifying genuine labour organisers, leaders and workers in that context. There was to be no reservation as to the nature of the political background of the leadership or movement.

A program including communication, education, research and action was also proposed.

Communication:

To exchange and share information on the common problems faced by workers in Asia. Initially the Japanese labour journal Rodo Joho would facilitate the sharing of information by labour activists in Asia. A newsletter for Asian workers could be developed at a later time.

Education:

To develop a common workers education program to train organisers leaders and second generation worker leaders from the experiences of the member participants of the genuine labour movements. The program would also help to develop training materials, information leaflets, and audio visuals.

Research:

To research and develop information documentation in the following areas:

Employment situation, wage analysis, cost of living indexes and inflationary factors affecting workers.

The trend of the industrial development policies in the Asian countries and their implications on employment opportunities and labour relations.

Labour registrations, workers' rights, access to legal assistance, social security, and other workers' benefits.

Working conditions and health and safety aspects in the different industries.

The background to the labour movements in the developing countries at local, national, regional and international levels. The labour movements in the developed countries, their vested interests and interference in the genuine organisation of labour movements.

The growth of transnational corporations (TNC's); trends in the new international division of labour; and automation in industry and the redundancies of workers.

Participation in and support of the activities of other Peoples' Movements in Asia on issues affecting grass-roots development, to express workers' solidarity and the role of workers as an organised force to help strengthen the work of other common grassroots movements.

Action:
To develop the links in common action on urgent and important issues arising from the expressed needs of the genuine labour movements in Asia. To work towards the exchange of information and common action on the concerns of repressive labour legislation, the growth of the TNCs, and industrial unrest arising from workers' protests in the different countries of Asia.

Building a network

The preparatory Asia-wide meeting was planned as a small beginning to bring together interested, genuine and committed Asian worker leaders and organisers to reflect on the Asian workers reality for future action.

At the preliminary stage of the building up of the network it was noted that, without the realisation of the different context within which they function, then affiliations with other trade union structures was undesirable.

The preparatory meeting would reflect on and strengthen the objectives of an Asia Workers' Solidarity Links network based on:

a) The direction and trends of existing labour movement at the local, national and regional levels.

b) How best to act, link together and strengthen an Asian labour movement of genuine organised and unorganised worker leaders.

c) A program of common action to follow the preparatory meeting which would strengthen the objectives of the Asian Workers' Solidarity Links network.

The preparatory meeting was to bring together representatives from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and possibly other countries.

A local meeting organised by the ACFOD Coordinating Team (ACT) representative in each country could draw up a list of labour organising groups, labour leaders, trade unions and NGOs with labour organisation interests and send it to the Rodo Joho secretariat or the ACFOD Coordinating Group for the Asia wide meeting, for follow up contacts and the development of the program. The ACT member could help nominate the representative and provide information on the background of the leader, organiser or trade union represented.

It was proposed that the preparatory meeting be held in Thailand, with a total of 15 participants. Guidelines were to be provided beforehand to allow full participaation during the meeting. A four day tentative program included country reports, agenda of issues covering four major areas of concern, an action program for AWSL and a workshop and resolutions.

Preparatory Meeting

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Pattaya, Thailand

1 - 5 July 1982

The preparatory meeting for AWSL was held in the form of a workshop at Pattaya Thailand in July 1982. It brought together interested, genuine and committed Asian workers' leaders and organisers from 11 countries, along with another 5 observers.

There was one formal representative from 11 different countries invited by ACFOD, and they represented:

Thailand	Sri Lanka	Hong Kong
Malaysia	Bangladesh	Japan
Indonesia	India	Australia
Philippines	Aotearoa/New Zealand	

(The participant from south Korea had not been able to attend).

Meeting programme

The programme for the meeting covered five days, from Thursday 1 July until Monday 5 July: The meeting was greeted by Japan ACFOD Coordinating Team representative. and welcome address by a Thai labour leader. Each participant presented a country report, allowing time for questions and answers. Then the purpose of AWSL as well as the possible action had been discussed. The meeting came out with the idea that:

> **AWSL should be established as an Integrated Action Programme of ACFOD with the financial assistance of ACFOD. The major action programs should include survey of transnational corporations, and information exchange within the region.**

After the meeting, the exposure visit to tapioca store, loading area and village had been conducted.

A brief summary of the individual "country reports" of the first day follows:

Thailand: A population of 50 million with 7 million industrial workers and another 15 million agricultural workers. Union membership accounts for only 300,000 workers in 357 unions. There are no unions amongst the plantation workers and very few in the rural areas.

The minimum wage is 61 baht/day ($US 2.8) - 35% of the factories pay below this level. Unions have only started to reorganise since 1972.

Malaysia: The participant worked in a major motor-car assembly plant and was a union leader there. About 17% of the working population was organised into unions.

Culture and traditions were breaking down with consumerism. Methods of food production used for thousands of years were breaking down and being lost. New diseases were thought to be linked to re-cooled and prepared foods.

Indonesia: The participant worked for a labour education and welfare organisation. Indonesia has a labour force of 60 million with 56% in agriculture. There was large and increasing unemployment, and a very low income per capita.

In common with other Asian countries 'available labour', low wages and no worker protection encourages transnational corporations to become established.

Philippines: The participant was a trade union leader from the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1st Movement) union centre established in 1980.

Between 1982 and 1980 the Government tax burden on workers had increased by 210%. A church research office estimated unemploy ment at 44%. Over 100,000 women in Manila were in the "hospitality" industry, with another 30/40,000 at the U. S. military bases.

Sri Lanka: Of the population of 15 million there was a labour force of 6 million. The participant worked for a Peoples' Bank and also the voluntary New Development Society. He also worked with Indian workers and for their political rights.

Plan of action

The plan of action leading up to the First AWSL Meeting was:

1. A newsletter would be published to link all member countries. It would be edited and published by ACFOD Malaysia and issues would appear in October 1982, and February and June 1983 . All participants were to send items to Malaysia one month before these publication dates. The newsletter would be in English and the individual countries would then need to translate, reprint and circulate it within their own countries.

2. It was important that before the First Meeting of AWSL each participant organised a national meeting of interested union leaders and organisers. These meetings were to further the philosopphy, principles and aims of AWSL based on the program endorsed at the Preparatory Meeting.

Representatives of these national meetings would be the participants at the First Meeting of AWSL.

3. The First AWSL Meeting would be held in Thailand in July 1983.

4. Each country was to maintian bilateral links by way of the exchange of information and the sharing of experiences.

The First Call for International Solidarity

The first call for international solidarity action came very early! Bert Olalia, Chairman of the Philippines trade union centre Kilosang Mayo Uno (May lst Movement) was arrested by the military on 13 August 1982.

On 18 August Crispin Beltran (another KMU leader) and two others were also arrested. Further arrests followed until over 30 union leaders were held in military detention by the Marcos regime.

The prisoners were being held in the Camp Crame stockade without trial, without right of bail, and without evidence being presented against them.

Amnesty International had urged that urgent action be taken to secure the release of the union leaders, who were arrested for "legitimate trade union activities". Amnesty also expressed about persistent reports of the torture of prisoners, particular ly immediately following arrest.

AWSL activists in a number of countries were involved in gaining the support of unionists to protest to the Philippine government representatives in their respective countries. Activities included petition and protest letters, delegations of union leaders and demonstrations outside Embassies of the Phillippines.

First Workshop

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Cha-Am, Thailand

5 - 8 November 1983

After almost two years preparation, the Asian Workers' Solidarity Links network was formally established at the Cha-Am Workshop. AWSL became an action program of ACFOD based on the reality of the life of the workers of Asia.

There were 12 countries represented at Cha-Am. This time there were two women participants, although other women attending the ACFOD Womens' Program meeting held at the same time joined some of the discussions.

There were four main sections of the Workshop:

1. Each participant presented their country report.

2. The common problems facing the workers of each country and the causes of these problems were identified.

3. Solutions to the problems were discussed.

4. A common program at both the national and regional/international levels were discussed.

Drawing from the country reports that had been presented to the Workshop, the participants concluded that the common problems of the workers of Asia were:

A. Working conditions

The important problems were:

1. Income

a) the majority of Asia's workers have incomes below subsistence level

b) some workers have decreasing real incomes.

2. Bonded labour. In some countries there are workers who work without remuneration and they lose their liberty (bonded labour).

3. Children and women. In some countries children and women are sold to work in companies and prostitute houses. Women are often forced to work prolonged hours. The heavy burden for women workers who also have to work as unpaid workers at home was also emphasised.

4. Job security. In all countries the workers have no job security. Lay-offs, dismissals and lock-outs are real threats for the workers. There is not sufficient legislative protection to implement the rights of workers to earn a living.

5. Conditions of employment. The majority of workers suffer from bad terms and conditions of employment such as long probat ion periods, short maternity leave, compulsory overtime, etc.

6. Industrial accidents and occupational diseases. There are a lot industrial accidents and diseases caused by employers who do not provide safe working conditions. Most of the workers receive very little medical assistance or compensation following industrial accidents or diseases.

B. Workers' movement

The workers' movement was seen to be weak in all countries because of:

1. Political party domination causing the fragmentation of the workers' movement.

2. Domination by yellow trade unions where the yellow leaders collaborate with employers, military and government officials to weaken the workers' movement.

2. Domination by yellow trade unions where the yellow leaders collaborate with employers, military and government officials to weaken the workers' movement.

3. Sectarianism within the workers' movement caused by self interest within trade unions.

4. Labour aristocrats - labour leaders who become divorced from the real needs of the rank and file.

5. The majority of the workers are unorganised so that it is difficult to mobilise them to take part in the workers' movement. Some organised workers are not invited to participate in the decision-making and activities of the movement.

C. Workers' perception.

1. Owing to the feudal nature of Asian countries a paternalistic relationship leads to submissive workers.

2. Most of the workers are only self-interested and consider only day to day problems. They therefore have a lack of long- term direction for the workers' movement. This kind of perception undermines solidarity amongst themselves and other oppressed people

D. Foreign domination and intervention

1. The growing policy of the transnational corporations (TNCs) to take advantage of cheap labour in under-developed countries causes unemployment in the developed as well as the under-developed countries through the suppression of local industries. The radical changes in communications enables TNCs to manage many plants in various countries from one head office.

2. The investment policies of under-developed countries provide a good investment climate and facilities for TNCs to bring their capital and technology. Anti-labour legislation introduced to attract foreign investment affects the whole labour force.

3. The imperialists want to control under-developed countries economically and politically and they encourage dictatorial systems to suppress the mass movement.

4. Some foreign and international labour unions which collaborate with the imperialists intervene and manipulate the labour movement in under-developed countries in an attempt to weaken and control the workers' movement.

E. New technology

New technology and methods of management bring about unemployment on one hand and submissiveness on the other.

F. National/ international context

Only through protracted and continuous struggles would the short term and long term goals be acheived. The Workshop decided to look at the struggle on two levels - in the national context, and in the international context:

1. National context

At the national level the methods to employ were:

a) The education and awareness building of workers

b) Instilling a peasant/worker solidarity

c) Participation of the grass-roots in the decision-making

d) Special emphasis to be given to the participation of women in all activities

e) Generating public opinion to gain support for struggles in the movement

f) Using supportive organisation to help the various struggles in the movement

g) Creating income generating activities to support the movement

2. International/regional context

a) To share and learn from the experiences of other countries by exchanging information about struggles in general, and the struggles of women in particular

b) To document this information as a source for research, and as material for education programmes

c) To exchange activists - both men and women - between countries bilaterally and regionally

d) To build up solidarity links in terms of action and also the programme.

Goals

1. Short term

a) To co-operate with other organisations on the basis of common and mutual interest

b) To encourage the equal role of women in the movement

c) To strengthen the peasant/worker movement

d) To change the worker perception

e) To solve the problems of the working conditions affecting all workers in all countries

2. Long term

a) To promote an independent genuine trade union movement

b) To bring about social justice and equity

c) To recognise the equal role of women in society

Program of common action

It was decided that a methodology of common action in the national context was not possible due to

a) The varying degree of development in the countries

b) The particular problems in some countries

c) Various cultures

It was also decided that, in the spirit of the Preparatory Meeting at Pattaya Thailand, the Asia Workers' Solidarity Links network could only function effectively in the international/reg ional context on a programme of common action. A common action programme was drawn up:

1. Solidarity support

It was seen from case studies that supportive action from workers in other countries to those in struggle in a particular country enhances the solidarity of workers.

Forms of solidarity support which could be requested for a particular country by Asia Workers' Solidarity Links in that country were:

a) Letters of protest

b) Boycotts

c) Financial support

d) Picketting at the foreign Embassies of the country concerned

c) Publicing the particular issue or struggle

2. Newsletter

It was strongly recommended that a national newsletter of Asia Workers' Solidarity Links be published in each country where-ever possible. To make the newsletter a reality there needed to be an exchange of information.

It was decided that the following information be exchanged:

a) Information on transnational corporations. Special emphasis to be given to the TNCs of the participating countries

b) Details of labour laws and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)

c) The struggles of women and other oppressed groups

d) Health and Safety issues

e) On any other specific issues.

The methods of communication were discussed and it was recognised that the sending of information to some countries may cause some problems. It may be necessary to send informaton in unmarked envelopes, without the use of names.

3. Exchange of activists

To complement the newsletters and solidarity support it was agreed that contact among the various countries should be main tained by an exchange programme for activists. Criteria for activists who would be involved in such a programme were established:

a) Grass-roots leaders and organisers who are active and know ledgeable about the workers' movement

b) If such people were not available then representatives from associated support groups could be considered.

The national Asia Workers' Solidarity Links team were to select the respective participants for the exchange programmes. Except for Sri Lanka all countries had AWSL representatives in their countries. Sri Lanka was to form AWSL after the Workshop.

Only active AWSL groups were to nominate the participants for the exchange programmes.

Representatives of the Workers' Workshop to the Council Meeting

The drafting committee of the AWSL report were to represent the Workers' Workshop at the Council Meeting of ACFOD immediately following.

Co-ordinating team

It was decided that a three person Co-ordinating Team be selected to co-ordinate all the activities of the Asia Workers' Solidarity Links

network. The co-ordinator of the First Workshop was to be one of the co-ordinators, and the other two would be members of the ACFOD Co-ordinating Team (ACT) who had participated in the Workers' Workshop.

Finance

It was decided that the Co-ordinating Team would make concrete plans including a budget to carry out the common action programme, and also call the next workshoop.

International level

It was decided that AWSL should maintain links with the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE) in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, through two members of the Co-ordinating Team.

Conclusion

The First AWSL Workshop had now come up with a concrete programme both at the national and also the international/regional levels. As a starting point to develop the solidarity and communication amongst the participating countries, the Workshop was considered successful. The end result, however was to be determined by the activities of AWSL in each country.

Although the scene for workers in Asia still looked dark, there is spirit and an optomistic movement towards a more just and equal society.

Second Workshop

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Penang, Malaysia

10 - 16 July 1985

The Second Workshop brought together the largest number of participants so far to an AWSL Workshop, including the largest number of women. However there was still not an equal representation by women at the Workshop.

The Workshop had been preceeded by the South East Asia regional workers' AWSL exchange programme, the participants of which also attended the Penang Workshop.

This Workshop reviewed solidarity support activities and established a system of "Action Alerts". It reviewed the workers' exchange programmes, renewed the criteria for participants and planned further exchange visits.

A special programme to encourage the equal participation of women in AWSL was also adopted.

Videos of various labour and peoples' issues from the different countries were shown during the evenings.

Criteria for participants

The Co-ordinating Team had circulated a draft program for the Second Workshop, including further criteria for the selection of participants:

1. All participants should have read the documents from the First Workshop at Cha-Am.

2. There should be at least one participant from each country who could speak English.

3. The participants should have a knowledge of their country's labour movement, together with the political and economic situa tion.

4. There were to be two official participants or delegates from each participating country except for the ASEAN countries who would send three. These three would be the AWSL national facilitator, and the two participants of the recently completed exchange programme from each of the ASEAN countries.

5. Invitations to attend would be extended to a representative of the Transnational Information Exchange in the Netherlands, and the Centre for the Progress of Peoples in Hong Kong.

The National AWSL Facilitators in each country were to prepare and send a country report to the ACFOD Secretariat in Bangkok before the end of February 1985. The Secretariat would compile the country reports into a book form to be distributed to the participants at the Workshop.

Program for the Workshop

The program was to include a presentation by each country partic ipating on the political, economic and labour situation in their respec- tive countries. A panel discussion with countries grouped into Developed, ASEAN, South Asia, and Europe/Latin America and a special session on women workers in the labour movement were also to be included.

International labour networks present at the Workshop were:

Asia Monitor Resource Centre (Hong Kong)

Centre for the Progress of Peoples (Hong Kong)

Child Workers in Asia (Thailand)

Transnational Information Centre, London (England)

The report of the Cha-Am Workshop of AWSL was adopted by the Penang Workshop with some additions and modifications to reflect the experiences of the participants at the Penang Workshop.

Definition of AWSL

The Penang Workshop defined AWSL:

"Asia Workers' Solidarity Links is an informal network of trade unionists and activists in Asia and the Pacific. It exists to link, facilitate, and promote genuine trade unionism amongst the countries of the region. It is governed by a programme adopted at the Cha-Am Workshop of 5 - 8 November 1983 and subsequently endorsed at the Penang Workshop of 10 - 16 July 1985".

Action programme

The programme of common action was spelt out in more detail:

A. Solidarity support

The following forms of solidarity support could be requested by the Asia Workers' Solidarity Link in a particular country:

a) Letters of protest

b) Solidarity letters

c) Boycott

d) Financial support

e) Picketting at the respective Embassy concerned

f) To generate public opinion - publicising issues

Some examples of campaigns were discussed e.g. campaigns against trade union repression, against anti-labour laws, against the detention of trade unionists, and for any struggles of workers.

It was emphasised that union leaders be asked to write letters of solidarity support for support to be more effective.

Industry to industry, company to company, and organisation to organisation were other forms of establishing solidarity support.

B. AWSL "Action Alert"

In times of crisis national groups were encouraged to send Action Alerts to facilitate solidarity action. The Action Alerts were to give details of the particular incident and the support that was requested (protest letters, solidarity messages, etc).

The method for seeking solidarity support and follow-up was laid out. Either of two procedures could be used, one by direct contact from the National AWSL concerned to all other National AWSLs. The second was to send information via ACFOD:

1. i) An "**Action Alert**" from a National AWSLs would be sent to the other National AWSLs, with a copy sent to the ACFOD Secretariat.

1.ii) ACFOD Secretariat to do the follow-up of the solidarity support and to monitor the situation.

1.iii) The National AWSLs which sent the Action Alert would inform the other National AWSLs of any success or need for further action

2. i) An Action Alert from a National AWSL would be sent to ACFOD directly.

2.ii) ACFOD Secretariat to contact other National AWSLs

2.iii) ACFOD Secretariat to monitor the request and to keep National AWSLs informed of any success or request for further action.

It was also decided that asistance should be sought from Human Rights groups to support the campaigns of AWSL against violations of human rights.

C. Information and communication

1) It was decided that there were two types of information that should be exchanged - specific and analytical:

a) Specific:

1. On transnationorporations with particl emhasisbeing given to the TNCs of the AWSL participating countries.

2. Labour laws and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

3. The struggles of women and other oppressed groups (eg mig rants, immigrants, child labour, etc).

4. Health and Safety issues.

5. On any other issues as requested by National AWSLs.

6. On Quality Control Circles (QCCs) etc.

7. Union news

8. News on specific and general trade union repression.

9. Information on socio-economic issues which affect workers and the workers' movement.

10. Free Trade Zones

b) Analytical:

Any studies or research which would be useful to the AWSL programme.

2) The means of exchange could be:

a) Through the AWSL newsletters

b) Action Alert letters calling for solidarity support

c) Letters or newspaper cuttings about relevant labour issues

The language used should be English and the National AWSLs are responsible for translation and local circulation.

3) The exchange of information bilaterally and multilaterally was also encouraged especially informationn of common interest such as workers in the same TNC, the same industry in various countries, or the same sectors in various countries.

4) Certain information that would be sensitive to some countries was not to be exchanged. This had been discussed at the Workshop and National AWSLs were to be alert about such issues.

5) A minimum of four issues of a newsletter were to be produced each year by each country. Those countries currently producing more than that would continue to do so. Newsletters were to be produced in October 1985, and January, April, and July 1986, the cycle then being followed accordingly.

6) A form of check on the progress of newsletters would be worked out by the Co-ordinating Team and the ACFOD Secretariat. It was expected the participants be committed to the production of their newsletters. The Co-ordinating Team would investigate and reorganise the National AWSLs where there were failures.

7) Other resource publications were also to be used for the national newsletters:

a) "Asia Labour Monitor" (Hong Kong)

b) "Asia Link" (Centre for the Progress of Peoples, Hong Kong)

c) "Child Workers of Asia" (Thailand)

d) "Committee for Asian Women" (Hong Kong).

These resources were to be used for a period of one year, after which an evaluation was to be carried out as to the usefulness of these publications. As the Child Labour publication was a new one, a regular feed-back was to be given to assist in evaluation. Links were also to be maintained to the other publications for mutual benefit.

It was further emphasised that slides, posters, video-tapes, and other materials which would contribute to the programme should be exchanged. Participant countries were to supply a list of slides, videos, etc, to the ACFOD Secretariat. A catalogue would then be sent out to National AWSLs. Slides from the slide bank at ACFOD could be included in this catalogue

D. Exchange programme/Workshop

1. The recommendation of the South East Asia exchange programme for participant criteria was accepted:

a) Grass-roots leaders and organisers who are active and knowledgable from the workers movement.

b) Consequently it is not possible to consider persons from associated supportive groups.

c) It is mandatory that there be an equal participation of men and women. This is a very important criteria in acheiving the goal of AWSL in the involvement and participation of women.

2. Two other exchange programmes were now to be carried out. One would be the developed countries - Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The other would be South Asia - Pakis tan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Women workers

A. To encourage the equal role of women in the short term, and recognising the role of women in society in the long term prior ity should be given by National AWSLs in each country to imple ment the following program:

a) The National AWSLs to outline a programme of action to encourage the equal role of women, and send the outline out to the other National AWSLs by October 1985.

The following should be included:

i) A women workers workshop

ii) The linking up with womens' groups in each country

iii) The National AWSLs are to identify the womens' groups in each country with whom they work and circulate the list of these names to other National AWSLs.

iv) All National AWSLs were to give support to the implementation of the women workers' program in other countries. Forms of support which could be given were:

- exchanging information on the issues and struggles of women workers

- solidarity support, and seeking other ways of enhancing their struggles

B. The AWSL Co-ordinating Team, in conjunction with the ACFOD Secretariat, was to ensure the implementation of the working womens' programme

C. A separate session on their own was to be given to women workers in the next workshop. One of the agenda items following this session should be devoted to the issues and struggles of women workers, to be participated in by both men and women.

Culture

The negative aspects of the various cultures adversely affect the role of women, and also the perception of workers. There is therefore the need to promote the positive aspects of culture in support of the struggles of the workers' movement.

Recommendations of the Workshop

1. Minutes should be taken of the whole of the Workshop

2. Participants should stay in the homes of workers during the Workshop

3. A special session before the Workshop begins should be given to allow the introduction of participants, and thus better relationships established

4. Participants should be involved in the day to day running of the Workshop

5. Part of the programme should include socialising

6. The Workshop proceedings should be conducted in a circle

7. A Regional Co-ordinator was to be appointed for the South Asia region.

Third Workshop

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Hong Kong

5 - 11 February 1987

Asian Workers Solidarity Links National Facilitators from 12 countries gathered in Hong Kong from February 5-11, 1987. The meeting took place against the continuing drive of capital throughout Asia to increase its power and profitability and the use of state and military forces to enforce the rule of capital in each country.

The Hong Kong National Facilitators meeting followed the preparatory meeting for AWSL in Pattaya, Thailand in July 1982, and workshops of AWSL in Cha-Am, Thailand in 1983, and in Penang, Malaysia in 1985.

The Preparatory Meeting in Pattaya decided that the programme of AWSL should be based on:-

(a) The direction and trends of the existing labour movements at local, national and regional levels.

(b) How best workers and their movements could link together and strengthen an Asian labour movement of genuine organised and unorganised workers, whether they be based in the Industrial or agricultural sector.

(c) A programme of common action.

The meeting in Cha-Am set both short term and long term goals:

1. Short Term.

(a) To solve the problems of the working conditions which affect the workers of all the countries.

(b) To strengthen the Peasant - Workers movement.

(c) To encourage the equal role of women in the movement.

(d) To change the worker perception.

(e) To co-operate with other organisations on the basis of common and mutual interest.

2. Long Term

(a) To promote an independent genuine Trade Union Movement.

(b) To bring about social justice and equity.

(c) To recognise the equal role of women in society and adopt a common action programme of:

(1) Solidarity Support

(2) National Newsletters

(3) Exchange of Activities

This programme was reported to and accepted by the Asia Cultural Forum on Development, and AWSL became the worker programme of ACFOD.

Definition of AWSL

The meeting in Penang reflected on the first 18 months of AWSL activity and had defined AWSL:

"Asian Workers Solidarity Link is an informal network of trade unionists and activists in Asia and the Pacific. It exists to link. facilitate, and promote genuine trade unions amongst the countries of the region. It is governed by a programme adopted at the Cha-Am Workshop 5-8 November 1983 and subsequently endorsed at the Penang workshop 10-16 July 1985".

A common action programme was adopted at the meeting of:

(a) Solidarity Support

(b) "Action Alerts"

(c) Information/communication (Newsletter)

(d) Exchange programme and workshop

(e) Women workers.

The national facilitators meeting in Hong Kong received reports of the previous 18 months AWSL programme, heard country reports relating to National AWSL activities, labour laws and labour counselling, received presentations from other regional bodies based in Hong Kong, namely:

Young Christian Workers (Asian Team),

Asia Parternship on Human Development,

Centre for the Progress of Peoples (Hong Kong,)

Asia Labour Monitor (Hong Kong)

Committee for Asian Women (Hong Kong)

The meeting also heard from local Hong Kong labour organisers and met representatives from a number of Hong Kong unions and Trade Union Federations.

Based on the reports, reflecting on them and sharing the experiences of each country the Hong Kong meeting of AWSL made the following report and decisions:-

Solidarity Support and Action Alert

Much use had been made of the Solidarity Support and Action Alert systems established at the previous AWSL workshops. Altogether 32 Action Alerts were issued by AWSL regional or National groups in the previous 18 months. The Action Alerts to receive the most response tn this period were:

- Bonded Labourers Liberation Front, India, (2 alerts)

- Australian Nurses Federation

- Daya Bay Nuclear Plant, Hong Kong

- Hirani Industries strike, Sri Lanka

- Thai Iryo garment workers strike (Thailand)

- Nurses strike - Sri Lanka .

- Shop workers strike - Philippines

- Panfibre and Mostek redundancies, Malaysia

- Arrest of Trade Unionists, Sri Lanka

- Shooting of Farmers October 1985, Philippines

While the overall response of National AWSL Action Alerts had been encouraging, two problems were identified:

(1) Action alerts needed to specify the type of action called for.

(2) Groups initiating Action Alerts had a responsiblity to report back to responding groups on the outcome of the matter the alert related to.

Women Workers

The meetlng acknowledged that the programme on women workers had not received the attention it should have over the previous l8 months. Only one of the facilitators present was a woman. The meeting noted that:

"Genuine Trade Unionism must be based not only on the class and national struggle, but also on the equal participation of women. If this participation does not happen then we cannot consider our trade union movements, or indeed AWSL, to be genuine".

There were two specific resolutions from the meeting:-

(1) That countries alternated their delegates to National Facilitators meeting between men and women.

(2) That AWSL seek the assistance of the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) and the Womens' Programme of ACFOD to ensure that the Women Workers' Programme of AWSL is persued with vigour and to seek areas of specific co-operation with these groups.

Exchange Programme

Since the workshop at Penang all three sub-regions had partici pated in the workers' exchange programme:

1) Two participants from Australia to Japan and Korea

2) Two from Aotearoa/New Zealand to Japan

3) Two from Hong Kong to Japan

4) Two from Thailand to Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines

5) Two from the Phllippines to Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand

6) Two from Indonesia to Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand

7) Two from Pakistan to Sri Lanka

8) Two from Sri Lanka to India, Bangladesh

9) Two from India to Bangladesh.

The overall assessment of the Exchange Programme was that it was very positive and that it had helped to create an Asia workers consciousness within the work of AWSL.

Problems with visas caused the cancellation of some legs of the exchanges. Most of the exchange participants had already pro- vided reports but a few still remained to be followed up.

One exchange remaining (Japan to Australia and Aotearoa) was to be held in the second half of 1987.

Information, Communication, Newsletter

Since the Penang meeting 8 AWSL National groups had published a newsletter. These newsletters, published in English were for the information of AWSL networks within each country, within the region, and for other International contacts.

Concern was expressed by some non-English speaking countries that too much effort was being spent in producing the English language newsletters at the expense of internal newsletters in their own languages. Those countries concerned would reduce the frequency of their English language external newsletters and increase their internal newsletters.

It was agreed however that some English language communication newsletter must be continued by each country to enable the Asia-wide links to continue.

Clarification of orientation

The Hong Kong AWSL facilitators meeting clarified the orient ation of AWSL as being:-

(1) To promote genuine trade unionism throughout the Asian region.

(2) To promote and organise Asia-wide solidarity for the workers struggle in each of the countries of the region.

The meeting considered that the first 5 years of AWSL have been successful in promoting an Asia-wide consciousness of the participating groups and individuals in the AWSL programme.

The Solidarity/Action Alerts, exchange programmes and workshop/facilitators meetings had contributed well to the bullding of this consciousness.

The meeting needed to reaffirm however that its strategy was to build a network of Genuine Trade Unions and Asia worker solidar ity individuals, groups, and unions throughout Asia. The goal of AWSL was not to set up another Asian or international trade union centre.

In its future work the February 1987 meeting of AWSL Facilitators saw the key task for the following 2 and a half years as building the national networks and links of genuine trade unionism and Asia Workers solidarity activists and groups. This would guide the action for the next period.

Regional Coordinating Team

For the co-ordination of its work over the next period AWSL divided the Asia region into 3 sub-regions:

1. South Asia - Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka.

2. South East Asia - Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Phil ippines.

3. East Asia/Pacific - Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A Facilitator was elected from each of these sub-regions to form a Regional Co-ordinating Team for AWSL. Those elected were the National Facilitators from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Japan.

Malaysia was selected to act as the Secretariat for the Regional Co-ordinating Team.

The Regional Co-ordinating Team (RCT) was to meet in August 1988 and the National Facilitators were to meet next in September/ October 1989. (This meeting was subsequently held in Osaka, Japan in August 1989).

The term of the Regional Co-ordinating Team was to be until the next National Facilitators meeting in 1989.

To help co-ordination in this period the RCT would use letters and phone calls as needed. Conference calls could also be arranged. AWSL would also seek the help of Asia Labour Monitor to establish

computer links with each of the members of the RCT and then after that with as many member countries of AWSL as is possible.

Trends affecting workers

The Hong Kong AWSL Workshop restated the general economic and political trends affecting workers in Asia that were identified in the Cha-Am Workshop report:

(a) Foreign domination by 'developed' countries and TNCs to take advantage of cheap labour in Asia.

(b) The dictatorial state/military systems in many Asian countries to suppress the workers movement and to assist the TNC's to dominate the economy of each country.

(c) The growth of new technology and management methods that increase unemployment on one hand and the submissiveness of the workers on the other hand.

(d) The feudal culture of many countries that brings a paternal istic/submissive relationship of workers to capital.

(e) The move to industrialisation backed by national industrial development policies and Free Trade Zones which lend to repres sive and unfavourable labour policies by Asian governments.

In addition the Hong Kong meeting recognised two key developments that were taking place throughout Asia that were again reducing the power and living standards of working people.

(1) The trend to denationalise/privatise public sector operations.

(2) The trend of de-industrialisation of the 'developed' countries in Asia with industry 'running-away' to the cheaper labour New Industrial Countries (NIC's).

AWSL saw these last 2 trends in particular as key problems to be tackled over the next 2 and a half years years. The assistance of other regional worker support groups in Asia would be sought such as YCW, ALM and DAGA to provide as much support as possible to national groups and teams that were struggling against these trends.

Setting of priorities

As well as the key regional trends identified by this meeting each sub-regional group would be responsible to set sub-regional priorities for action during the next 2 and a half year period.

Each National AWSL group/team put forward a six month programme for its own work arising from the meeting. During the following six months each national group/team would endeavour to implement its plan and also submit a longer term 2 year plan to the RCT for endorsement.

The RCT was to assist each national group with its initial 6 month plan and the development of its 2 year plan. If for any reason there appeared to be any problem with the inplemetation or development of these plans by the national group or if the RCT lost contact with any national group/team the RCT was be empowered to call a national meeting of AWSL in that country to try and re-establish an AWSL national network on a proper footing.

National Goals

Each country put forward its national goals to the meeting, with particular reference to the work over the following 6 months.

(1) Aotearoa (New Zealand)

(i) Build awareness of the situation of the workers in Asia in the formal trade union movement.

(ii) Support and promote a Genuine Trade Union consciousness amongst workers unions in Aotearoa.

(2) Australia

(i) Continue existing work with the Australian trade union movement to build awareness of the situation of Asia's workers.

(ii) Initiate worker solidarity actions in Australian-owned companies which operate in other Asian countries.

(3) Hong Kong

(i) Raise awareness of Asia worker issues within the trade union movement by integrating this along with other social issues in Trade Union Education Programmes.

(4) Indonesia

(i) Develop AWSL and labour support links between cities.

(ii) Promote worker exchanges within Indonesia.

(iii) Publish booklets on labour laws and disputes.

(iv) Hold seminars and other educational programmes.

(5) India

(i) Develop AWSL links with India.

(ii) Link the South Asia regional AWSL groups on the questions of unorganised labour and child labour.

(6) Japan

(i) Build the awareness of the Asia workers' situation and struggle in trade union movement.

(ii) Promote genuine trade unionism through rank and file groups in Japan.

(7) Korea (South)

(i) Begin education on the successes of worker actions in other Asian countries.

(ii) Provide material for international support on trade union Human Rights issues in Korea.

(iii) Explain the situation of Korean labour to Asian labour groups.

(8) Malaysia

(i) Build a national AWSL network.

(ii) Disseminate information on the labour situation in other Asian countries to trade unions.

(9) Pakistan

(i) Report back the outcome of this meeting and try to estab lish a Pakistan AWSL team.

(10) Sri Lanka

(i) Continue networking amongst Sri Lankan trade unions to build awareness of the situation of other Asian countries.

(ii) Build links with unorganised workers and bring them closer to the organised trade union movement.

(11) Thailand

(i) Develop the non-aligned image of AWSL amongst Thai trade unions.

(ii) Link with struggle for genuine trade unionism (G.T.U.) in Thailand.

(iii) Promote exchange of information with labour/support groups outside Thailand.

(iv) Establish a study/action group to look at the Thai Government's economic policy - especially on Free Trade Zones and Privatisation.

Note:

(1) The Bangladesh delegate had to leave the meeting early.

(2) The Philippines delegate was unable to attend meeting.

AWSL Workers' Exchange Programme

Japan - Aotearoa/ New Zealand

August 1987

Ben Watanabe of the National Union of General Workers in Tokyo and Ms Keiko Suzuki of the labour journal "Rodo Joho" visited Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia in August 1987 as part of the AWSL Workers' Exchange programme.

Japan is held up as an example by employers in many countries to their workers as a country with life-long employment and harmonious and flexible labour relations which benefit both worker and employer alike.

The myths of the "Japanese miracle" were dispelled for many trade unionists in Aotearoa during their visit.

This workers exchange visit had been most successful in bringing to workers - and the wider public - the reality of workers' life in Japan at a time when there is a large propraganda effort to force labour market "flexibility" on to workers in Aotearoa, with Japan often given as an example of a "success story"

The framework on which the exploitation of workers in Japan is built was brought into sharp focus during meetings, discussions, seminars and media interviews -

The myth of the happy Japanese workers has been built on the tiny elite who work for the huge parent corporations. The vast majority work for various levels of sub-contracting companies - non-unionised and on lower and lower scales of pay.

The parent corporations use their massive power to force low wage costs onto the sub-contractors.

Japan is a very discriminatory society - against militant workers, women workers and ethnic minority groups.

Women are 40% of the paid workforce and are used as a 'safety valve' in the Japanese economy, earning lower wages and moving in and out of the work-force earning only half the male average and with only 5%

unionised. Part-time women workers are denied sick-pay and holiday-pay yet work as long or longer than other workers in the enterprise. Women workers also carry the double burden of all the domestic work.

Laws which act against the interests of women in Japan include the Equal Opportunity Act undermining women workers demands and without penalties for employers, and the Job Centre Law which allows middlemen to hire out workers to the corporations.

The "flexible time system" allows different numbers of hours to be worked on different days - 6 hours one day and 10 hours the next. The Working Hours Act allows smaller companies to maintain 48 hours as the regular working week instead of reducing to a standard 40 hour week.

The Quality Control Circle (QCC) is a system for union busting and dividing workers against each other. It is also used to keep workers incomes low by denying them parts of their bonuses if they do not have the right attitude. Workers come to work sick, do not report injuries and do not take holidays in loyalty to their QCC team.

The Japanese economy is currently in a depression and many large industries have closed down, some moving to cheaper labour countries like South Korea and Taiwan, mainly caused by the policy of the Japanese Government to allow the Yen to rise steeply in relation to other international currencies.

AWSL-Aotearoa had three main objectives for the visit of Ben and Keiko -

1. To bring to workers in Aotearoa - and also to the wider public - the reality of the workers situation in Japan, and to expose the myth of the so-called Japanese miracle.

2. To expose the visiting delegation to the situation of working people - and also the indigenous Maori people - of Aotearoa.

3. To build up the level of organisation and activity of AWSL-Aotearoa.

During their 7 days in the country it was arranged for Ben and Keiko to visit 3 of the 4 main centres (Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) and also one of the provincial centres, Rotorua. Although most of their time was in the North Island, they did go to Christchurch which is the main city of the South Island.

Three half-day seminars were organised by the Trade Union Education Authority (TUEA) one in each of the 3 main centres addressed by both Ben and Keiko. At the time of the Auckland seminar the shop stewards at a local Nissan car assemly plant were leading a campaign against the company's Japanese style "Nissan way". The confidence of the shop stewards in their campaign was strengthened by their meeting with the Japanese trade unionists. The workers voted by secret ballot by 130 votes to 39 against the company program which was also being strongly pushed by ther own union officials.

In Wellington a tour of the local MITSUBISHI MOTORS was arranged which was joined by up to 4 of the plants shop stewards. This factory had only that year been sold out-right to the Japanese after many years in the hands of a local family. (One of the factory delegates was a participant in an earlier AWSL exchange visit to Japan in February 1986). The workers were concerned that the new owners may try to introduce aspects of the "Japanese way".

A number of the workers at the car assembly plant had joined the local rent strike against the new policy of the Housing Corporation to base its rents on the local market rates of private rental instead of being based on government valuation. Under the new scheme special reductions in rent would be considered in cases of "hardship", placing many families in the position of having to go and ask for charity from the government corporation.

After visiting the car assembly plant, a brief visit was made to the headquarters of the rent strike organisation which handled a special bank account for workers to pay their rents into until the rent issue was settled. About 130 families had stopped paying rent to the Housing Corporation, and were paying into the special strike fund instead.

During the visit to the provincial city of Rotorua, a trip was made to what was now almost a ghost-town, Kaimgaroa, as the corporatisation of the Forestry Department has led to the layoffs of many workers, especially the predominantly Maori workforce in the area.

The visitors were greeted and welcomed by the Chairman of the Te Arawa Trust Board, the tribal authority for the local Maori people. They saw programs run by the Board for the local unemployed, visited a Maori language program and were guests at a traditional Maori meal, a hangi.

They also had discussions with a former rank and file forestry worker now working amongst retrenched forestry workers building coopera-

tives and small business ventures. A copy of a video they saw on the rank and file struggle against the yellow union leadership was sent to Japan to be used with foresty workers in Japan who were facing privatisation by the government there.

While in Rotorua, Ben and Keiko were given a brief look at at aspects of the local tourist industry for which the area is well known internationally.

In the other centres meetings were arranged for Keiko to meet with women union organisers and shop stewards to discuss the situation and struggle of the women of both countries. In Christchurch Keiko spoke at a meeting of the womens' sub- committee of the local district union council, speaking entirely in English for the first time.

The slide show of the Sanrizuka farmers' opposition to the construction of the Narita airport near Tokyo was shown to a group brought together by AWSL in Christchurch. A copy of this slide show was added to the resources of AWSL-Aotearoa.

To extend the issues of the "Japanese way" to the wider public of Aotearoa, radio, newspaper and magazine interviews were arranged. This included an interview with Ben on the nation-wide radio program "Good Morning New Zealand", a talk-back radio program in Auckland, items in both Wellington daily newspapers and an interview which appeared as a lead into a feature article in the "NZ Listener" on "Japanese Workstyles - a driving force in New Zealand".

AWSL-Aotearoa produced a small booklet based on the press interviews and other information given by Ben and Keiko during their tour. The booklet was made available to workers, unionists and trade union educators in Aotearoa as well as being sent to international labour networks like Asia Labour Monitor and International Labour Reports. It was also sent to ACFOD and all National AWSL's.

The visit to Aotearoa by Ben and Keiko was at a very important time, with much propaganda being produced by employer interests about "international competitiveness" and labour market "flexibility".

The 3 yearly General Election was held on the Saturday in the middle of their visit - the Labour Government of David Lange was elected for a second term. The right wing economic policies of the first term of the Lange Government had already seriously affected workers with corporatisation, privatisation and general "freeing'up" of the economy. There has been a massive increase in the wealth of the already rich. As

the share-market continued to boom workers real wages and also their social wage (Government health and welfare services), were steadily eroding.

AWSL-Aotearoa strongly supports the worker exchange program of AWSL as it works to build international understanding and solidarity, as well as strengthening the national AWSL's.

Coordinating Team Meeting

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Bangkok, Thailand

9 - 12 June 1988

The meeting reviewed the progress of AWSL in carrying out the program of action adopted by the National Facilitators at their meeting in Hong Kong in February 1987.

Communication

The National Facilitators were to be reminded of the decisions of that meeting, in particular:

a) Each country had promised to take up two or three activities and the Coordinating Team felt the need to know progress on these activities.

b) The Coordinating Team emphasised the vital role of communication to maintain an effective AWSL network. The Coordinating Team examined its own shortcomings in this area.

A temporary AWSL Secretariat had been established in Sri Lanka after agreement with the previous secretariat in Malaysia. This Secretariat would operate at least until January 1989, when the Coordinating Team would review the situation.

Equal participation of women

The equal participation of women in the AWSL programmes - nationally and internationally - was still not being carried out in some countries. All National Facilitators were encouraged to continue to implement the policies of past workshops on equal participation. (Even when women had participated in AWSL activities and workshops, they found the same discriminatory attitudes and practices existing in various degrees as in the wider society).

The structure of AWSL needed to be changed to promote the equal participation of women. Each country was requested to appoint two National Facilitators - one woman and one man.

The next Coordinating Team of AWSL should be made up of three men and three women - one man and one woman from each of the three sub-regions (South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia/ Pacific).

To begin the process of equal participation of women in AWSL one woman from each sub-region of AWSL was to be invited to the January 1989 meeting of the Regional Coordinating Team as a resource person. The meeting participants would be:

South Asia: One man from Sri Lanka and one woman from Bangladesh.

South East Asia: One man from Malaysia and one woman from Indonesia or Thailand.

East Asia/Pacific: One man from Japan and one woman from the Pacific.

An agenda item for the next National Facilitators meeting was to include a seperate workshop on the participation of women in AWSL, in consultation with the Womens' program of ACFOD.

RCT Meeting in Aotearoa/ New Zealand

The next Regional Coordinating Team (RCT) meeting was to be held in Aotearoa/New Zealand based on the following considerations:

a) The exposure of the Team to the perspective of the peoples of the Pacific.

b) To allow exposure of the Team (and wider AWSL) to the reality of Aotearoa.

c) To allow the Team to learn of the methods and strategies used by grass roots movements to meet the challenges in Aotearoa.

d) To strengthen the AWSL network in Aotearoa.

e) To strengthen the link with other ACFOD activities in Aotearoa.

f) To strengthen the overall ACFOD programs from this experience.

The RCT meeting would be in mid to late January 1989.

The next AWSL National Facilitators meeting was to be held at the time of the ACFOD Council meeting in Japan in September 1989.

Links with the Pacific

AWSL-Aotearoa/NZ was to begin the process of building links with the genuine trade union movement in the Pacific by discussion with labour movement representatives of the Pacific Island nations. The Coordinating Team would make provision for two representatives - one man and one woman - to attend the next National Facilitators meeting in Japan in 1989.

All AWSL's were encouraged to promote 'informal' exchange links, as well as the more formal ones organised within the program. When labour activists from one country travel to other countries they should

be encouraged to meet with suitably arranged AWSL contacts where possible.

The meeting felt the expressed needs of each country, but also the need to be selective in meeting these needs for the following considerations:

a) The emphasis on the networking character of AWSL needs to be interpreted in the concrete forms of activity.

b) The needs of growing AWSL's could generate a bigger demand for financial support than can be absorbed, and may create the image of AWSL as a funding agent.

c) It was important to support the efforts at national level to assist in reaching alternative resources as much as possible.

Due to previous short-comings and weaknesses of worker education programs as examined by the Team, the AWSL network needs to pay attention to alternatives being experimented with in some countries.

A paper was to be produced by the end of November on the building up of an alternative labour movement in Asia based on the self-perception of AWSL as a networking body in the process of self- eduction, to understand the Asian reality more closely.

Two Bangladeshi women who visited the meeting made a comprehensive contribution regarding the situation of Bangladeshi women in general, including women workers in that country. Their presentation reflected the importance of systematic research in assisting peoples' struggle The positive development of an alternative democratic process in Bangladesh emerging from various sectors and the linking up of these movements was expressed.

A difficulty in implementing the inter-relationship of AWSL and the local ACFOD Coordinating Team member in some countries was to be taken up by ACT.

International solidarity

A day of international solidarity activity in support of Malaysia's Internal Security Act (ISA) detainees was planned for 27 October 1988 - one year after the arrests of the current detainees began. All AWSL activists were urged to assist in linking individuals, sector groups and organisations in their various countries to plan appropriate actions.

A letter proposing the day of international activity was to be sent out from Japanese trade unionists in the following few weeks.

The AWSL Coodinating Team finished the meeting by extending its greetings and best wishes to all National Facilitators and activists.

Coordinating Team Meeting

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

23 - 27 January 1989

AWSL Aotearoa invited the AWSL international Coordinating Team to hold its January meeting in Aotearoa for a number of reasons as outlined at the previous RCT meeting in Bangkok in June 1988.

Thirteen people attended the meeting - one man and one woman from each of the 3 sub-regions of AWSL, as well astranslators and observers. There were seven countries represented - Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (South Asia sub-region), Malaysia and Indonesia (South East Asia and Japan, Fiji and Aotearoa (East Asia/Pacific) There were eight women and five men.

Meeting and exposure program

Visit to monthly meeting of Wellington District Council of Trade Unions. Meeting with ACFOD member organisations and program representatives. Then followed by four day exposure program. Meeting and discussion at Palmerston North city Union Centre. Meeting with local unemployed people on special works programs, Wanganui Trade Union Centre, Visit to Kiwi Cooperative Dairies giant milk processing plant at Hawera in South Taranaki, to milking shed on a dairy farm at milking time at Oeo in Taranaki, 2 night homestay at Parihaka Pa (home of Milton Hohaia, ACFOD Peasants Programme). Besides, the visit also included Waitara Meat Freezing Works (1000 workers), Taranaki Unemployed Workers Centre, Fitzroy Heavy Engineering plant, meeting and discussion with representatives of Taranaki District Council of Trade Unions, discussions with Milton Hohaia (Parihaka was the base of a non-violent resistance movement against colonial land settlement programs and was raided by British forces in 1884. Visit to Classic Garment factory at New Plymouth (120 workers, mainly women).

(Two of the participants visited Auckland for two days to meet with unionists, and 3 went to Christchurch for a day and met with CORSO, Trade Aid and Christian World Service of the Council of Churches)

Report of Wellington Meeting of AWSL Coordinating Team

The report was divided into the following sections:

Introduction

Characteristic of AWSL

Equal participation

Structure

Program

Communication

ACFOD Aotearoa

Budget

Introduction

Two main themes ran through the Wellington meeting - the full and equal participation of women (based on the decision of the last meeting in Bangkok to change the structure of AWSL to ensure equal participation of women), and the inclusion of the Pacific Island nations.

A change in the AWSL structures was recommended following the inclusion of the Pacific Islands nations in AWSL.

Characteristic of AWSL

AWSL had been defined at a previous workshop in Penang:

"Asia Workers Solidarity Links is an informal network of trade unionists and activists in Asia and the Pacific. It exists to link, facilitate and promote genuine trade unionism among the countries of the region".

The particular form that AWSL takes in the various countries is determined by the situation in each country.

Equal participation

The last Coordinators meeting in Bangkok had provided for equal representation of both men and women on the Coordinating Team - one man and one woman from each of the three sub-regions. With translators and observers present the total number was eight women and five men - women were in the majority at an AWSL meeting for the first time, following the change to the structure of AWSL.

With the addition of a new sub-region (Pacific), the Coordinating Team was to be 4 men and 4 women.

The participants of the sub-regional exchange programs are also to be one man and one woman.

Recommendations to be included in the agenda for the Japan AWSL Workshop in August were to be sent to Japan AWSL. The recommendations included the drawing up of an international AWSL charter for working women.

It is necessary for men's attitudes (including participants of AWSL meetings) to change in relation to the participation of women.

(Note : The contribution of the male translators was recognised and appreciated. However, it is important that non-English speaking women participants be translated by other women whenever possible).

Structure

In promoting genuine grass roots democratic trade unionism, then the structure and activities of AWSL must themselves reflect these principles - including the full and equal participation of women.

National structures:

Each country was to appoint two National facilitators - one man and one woman.

Regional structure:

A fourth sub-region of AWSL was to be established by dividing the existing East Asia/Pacific into two seperate sub-regions. The four sub-regions of AWSL were to be:

South Asia - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

South East Asia - Malaysia, Indonesia Thailand and Philippines

East Asia - Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan

Pacific - Aotearoa, Australia, Fiji and the Pacific Island nations.

A need was seen to clarify the relationships between AWSL and other genuine labour networks such as Asia Labour Monitor, Transnational Information Exchange, the Committee for Asian Women, etc.

Consideration needed to be given to AWSL's function as an Asia-Pacific Workers Solidarity Network at the next Work-shop.

Programs

The next Work-shop of AWSL was to be held in August 1989 in Japan in conjunction with "PP21" ("Peoples' Plan 2lst Century"). ACFOD had already decided to actively support PP2l.

The purpose of the Workshop was to develop an alternative way in cooperation with other genuine labour movements.

Recommendations for the Workshop agenda were to be sent to AWSL Japan before the end of March 1989, with a proposed agenda being sent from Japan to National AWSL's by the end of May.

Sub-regional exchange program

A further series of exchange visits for grass-roots activists was planned for May 1990 to August 1992. Great care was to be taken in selecting the participants for the sub-regional exchanges based on the following criteria:

1. Grass roots leaders.

2. A committment to future AWSL activities.

3. One man and one woman.

Where a sub-regional exchange program was not possible or desirable, then a bilateral exchange program (between two countries) should be arranged.

International Labour Solidarity calender

National AWSL's were encouraged to support the Calender produced by the Centre for the Progress of Peoples in Hong Kong both by supplying material for the next issue, and also assisting in its distribution and sale. Calender sales could be used to assist fund-raising.

Communication

The vital role of communication in the AWSL network was again emphasised:

A Communication from each national AWSL must be made tothe AWSL Secretariat at least once every two months.

The secretariat would continue to be based in Sri Lanka, the location being reviewed at the next National Facilitators meeting in Japan).

The communication could take the form of an AWSL report, a report on a work related issue, a newspaper clipping, a newsletter, or if no other form of communication was possible, a postcard.

Newsletter

It was proposed that the AWSL network develop a single international newsletter, using the existing newsletter of AWSL Aotearoa as an experiment. National AWSL's were encouraged to send material suitable for possible inclusion in such a newsletter to AWSL Aotearoa. A review of an international newsletter would be held at the August Workshop.

Information exchange - garment workers

Of particular relevance to the AWSL network is the situation of garment workers, the vast majority of whem are women. Previous workshops had all examined the situation of workers facing repressive labour laws, lack of genuine union organisation, discrimmination against women workers, low wages, and the movement by transnational corportions of their factories to even cheaper sources of labour.

The AWSL secretariat wished to collect information about the situation of gament workers prior to the August Workshop. Women garment workers were strongly represented at the AWSL Coordinators meeting.

Action Alerts

The "Action Alert", a simple yet potentially very effective form of solidarity action, was to be continued. Requests for letters of solidarity to striking or locked out workers could be made though the AWSL Secretariat, or directly to National AWSL's. Protest letters could also be requested. It was important that those making a request for solidarity messages, etc, send a follow- up letter to inform of progress.

One of the recent successful Action Alerts discussed was Menike, the Sri Lankan garment worker reinstated to her job after her dismissal for writing a poem describing her life as a worker.

ACFOD Aotearoa

The AWSL meeting concluded with a meeting with representatives of the other ACFOD programs in Aotearoa, the members of ACFOD, and the ACT representative.

To continue the process of further strengthening ACFOD in Aotearoa, AWSL Aotearoa would organise another meeting in late April 1989.

This meeting would be suitable for the preparation necessary for the next ACFOD Council meeting in Japan later in 1989.

Conclusion

It was agreed that both the Coordinators meeting and exposure program were very successful. The exposure program in particular had allowed the participants to meet many people and visit many places in Aotearoa.

The perception of "New Zealand" as a rich country with a universally high Standard of living with no internal conflict had been changed ... . The individual participants, AWSL Coordinating Team and AWSL Aotearoa had greatly benefitted from these two weeks. The challenge was to continue building on strong foundations!

Secretariat Report

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

12 June 1988 to 31 July 1989

Activities of the Secretariat have included:

1. Follow-up of the last National Facilitators meeting held in Hong Kong (5 - 17 February 1987) and circulating the meeting report. Two letters were sent to National Facilitators informing them of their tasks, which they had agreed to carry out for the following six months, as outlined in the report of the meeting.

2. Follow-up of the Co-ordinatiug Team meeting's decisions, held in Bangkok, and the circulation of the meeting report.

Letters were sent to each National Facilititor. Each country was requested to adopt the policy of equal representation and appoint one male and one female National Facilitator.

The Secretariat assisted the National AWSL of Aoteroa/New Zealand in organising the January 1989 Coordinating Team meeting.

3. Follow-up of the decisions of the Coordinating Team meeting held in Wellington during in January 1989, and circulating the decisions with a covering letter requesting each country to send a report of its activities.

Action Alerts and campaigns

Campaign against atrocities in the Phillippines.

Campaign against the dismissal of 402 workers from the Winner Textile Co. in Thailand.

The campaign against the closure of Thai-Belgium Industrial Company Ltd, resulting in the loss of jobs for 384 workers.

The campaign for the reinstatement of the 1980 July Strikers in Sri Lanka.

The solidarity campaign for the demands of the workers in the Bata Shoe Company and Associated Battery Manufacturing Company in Sri Lanka.

Campaign against the lock-out of 4.000 women workers from the GIL-Mayura Company.

Campaigned against the Fiji military coup overthrowing the lawfully elected Government in Fiji.

The campaign against the unjust deportation of Filipina migrant workers in Hong Kong.

The campaign against the Taiwanese Government's action in terming migrant workers as illegal and forcefully deporting them.

Support for the campaign for 300 garment factory workers in Bangladesh.

Campaigned against the prohibition of Harijans entering places of worship such as the temple Shreenathji in India.

Newsletters

Although each country had decided to publish newsletters regularly, the Secretariat was receiving them from Japan, New Zealand, Thailand and Australia.

There was a need also for better communication and response to Action Alerts.

Although there were difficulties with lack of resources etc, the Secretariat had been able to establish new contacts with the Asia/Pacific region for migrant Filipinas in Hong Kong, Women Working World-wide (UK), Human Rights Asia Watch (US), and the extention of the AWSL programme into the Pacific.

Industrial - Agricultural Workers' Exchange Programme

Northern Thailand

27 - 31 July 1988

The Industrial Agricultural Experience Exchange Activity was a mutual initiative of the three projects under ACFOD. The three projects are: The Peasant Project, the Womens' Project, and Asian Workers Solidarity Links.

Due to the inseparable relationship between urban and rural areas, and the rural problems linked with increasing population growth of urban communities this new activity was initiated to facilitate the exchange of experience between workers in different fields.

This activity stimulates workers and women in the cities to have an opportunity to exchange their experience with farmers and development officers who work in the north. The main objectives were:

1) To enhance the potential of each person by learning about each other.

2) To study the procedures of development work in both rural and urban communities.

3) To collect data of working experiences in both rural and urban fields.

The unbreakable relation between urban and rural seems to be very important. Because of the rural problems there has been a continuous growth of urban residents.

We hope that such an exchange of working experiences would help increase the intellectual perception of both fieldworkers, and facilitate some ways of coordination.

Report of the Exchange Programme

27 July 1988

(Exchange experiences with seven development workers in the North.)

The discussion started when a development worker from the Northern Development Organisation made a welcoming speech and introduced that his organisation was a bringing together of northern NGOs to be a center for talking and discussing various problems of development.

This recreation center has been sponsored by the Thai-Canadian Local Development Fund. There are four officers here.

Don-moon village comprises eighty-eight households, and each household possesses about 3 - 5 rais of land. Most villagers grow rice. They also plant some kinds of bean, garlic, and water- melon, and live a simple life.

The problems of northern farmers can be briefly mentioned as:-

1) The people have very little land. Most of the region is mountainous and in Chiangmai, only one-fourth of the area can be used for cultivation.

2) Forest areas. After the natural resources have been destroyed, there is a resulting water shortage in some areas.

3) The debt burden of the farmers is increasing every year.

4) Side effects of the new of agricultural policies emerge.

5) Traditional values and belief of ancestor spirits are replaced by a materialistic attitude.

The pattern of development work of the northern NGOs is divided into two categories: campaigning at the macro level, and field work at the micro level. The NGOs which emphasise field work have three approaches :-

The first one, a small group of development workers will focus only on the main problem of the village such as the rice problem. They start from kinship groups, conscientising these group to manage their own problems, such as establishing a rice bank. Sometimes study groups

are organised amongst the people, and training is offered to the people. The Centre for Social Development follows this approach.

The second one, the development workers together with the villagers will cope with all problems in the village such as the rice bank, savings group, selling cooperatives etc, which depend on the needs of the community. The groups following this approach are the Wat-pa-dara-pirom group and the Payoa for Development group

The last approach is that of education and culture for development. They try to study the strong points of traditional organisations such as the Muang-phai group which distributes water for irrigation in the area and respects the traditional relationships amongst families in kinship groups.

Working Procedures

Study tour, talking and discussing in small groups.

Hold on participatory principles.

Originate people organisaton.

Working for villagers needs no foundation establishment.

Activity

Establishing village cooperatives.

The working process of development workers normally starts from surveying villages, selecting villages, exploring the problems and essential needs of the villages. Then, creating some activities with the peoples' agreement, the development worker is only an assistant or observer.

Problems and changes in the community

The most important problem of farmers is the debt burden. The form of exploiting rural people is not as explicit or as clear as the exploitation in the factories. There are both rich and poor people in the same village. A serious problem in the near future is drought due to the over-cutting of trees in some concession areas conceded by the government.

There are some big enterprises such as Charoen-pokapan. The Charoen Pokapan's investment runs a complete-circuit agricultural

Some workers talk about migrating to urban areas to seek jobs in factories. They leave their rural homes because of poverty and in the hope of better lives.

Mr.Vichai Tiensan, a worker leader in Teyin Polyester Industry said that the labour union was established to improve working condition. But later, the trade union had to face many problems.

28 July 1988

The study tour group headed for Don-moon and Puang Villages, Tung-hua-chang District, Lampun Province to have a contact and exchange experiences with the village committee in both villages.

At Don-moon village, they had a talk with the committee members and exchanged the ideas of establishing a co-operatives and savings group in the village. The objectives of the cooperatives are to have their own shop in the village so that villagers could buy things at low price, and also receive the divided money from their purchases.

About savings group, it was expected to be a common fund of the village to let villagers borrow the money in an emergency. Also, it was for agricutural loan with low interest. The consideration of giving loan was done case by case. For the workers, they told about their struggling lives in cities to let the farmers know their conditions.

After discussion in Don-moon village, the group continued to Puang, a nearby village. The members in the group lived with the villager's in their homes. That night, the group and villagers gathered at the village school to have a friendly talk.

The village committee of Puang village described the village - situation that buffaloes were widely used for rice farming in the past, but now most people buy pushcart instead. This made them victims of the creditor. When using iron buffaloes, the villagers had to buy chemical fertilizer because they could not get manure anymore. Thus, the cost of production also increased.

The village committee saw that if this situation continued the people would face serious debt problems. So they turned to the traditional system, that is to use buffaloes for rice plantation.

Since electricity is going to be installed in this village, a lot of change will occur especially various facilities such as television, refrigerator, electric pot, etc. These will increase debt burden of the people. The committee tried to make the people aware of the expenses.

29 July, 1988

The group got up very early to say good-bye to villagers and continue to Ma-phan village, Sameang district, Chiangmai province. The trip was rather difficult. They had to cross a valley and reached the terminal village at sunset. That day, the village committee had conducted reforestation activities by co-operating with students from Chiangmai University.

At night, the villagers, the students, and the group had a seminar. The village committee said that villagers in this area had to encounter the capitalist concession of cutting wood that caused a water shortage. They marched to the governor asking that this problem be considered, but their request was ignored.

Conclusion

Nowadays, the workers in rural areas need to have some job in cities in the hope that they could earn more money to improve their standard of living. However, the problem remains that they can earn only very low wages, and work under bad conditions. They hope that they can save and send some money home to enable their family to acquire televisions, radios, refrigerators, etc. Workers try to get a loan at a very high rate of interest or using monthly payment basis in order to improve their living condition in the rural areas.

When the workers organized and formed labour unions they received negative response from employers such as cancellation of employ ment contracts transfers, or threats and some workers even lost their lives.

In the North, villagers have various kinds of problem such as not having enough land, debt crisis from the government policy, destroyed forests, increase of materialism and declining of local traditions. In some areas, capitalists invested in agro-industries which resulted in the farmers being only tenant workers in the large land belonging to the capitalist.

Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links

Women's Charter

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Preamble

Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links believes that women workers throughout Asia and the Pacific suffer discrimmination and hardship which is seperate from and additional to class discrimination.

Since its inception AWSL (now APWSL) has had a policy of equal participation of women and men. In practice this has meant that where a country sends two people to a meeting one man and one woman are selected, but very little else happened.

Building on from the womens' meeting at the AWSL Regional Coordinating Team meeting in January 1989 in Wellington Aotearoa/New Zealand, women delegates at the APWSL National Facilitators meeting in Osaka, Japan began the necessary work to draw up a Womens' Charter. This was to make the policy of full and equal participation a reality. It was the intention for the Charter to be adopted by APWSL.

This draft Charter is by no means a complete document and it is expected that successive meetings will add further points. The women at Osaka believed that for the Charter to be really effective it had to be linked with programmes and become a funding priority.

The APWSL Women's Charter

1. Equal educational opportunity for all

Education is a basic human right ofter denied women. It is important that women have access to information in order to overcome the barriers which prevent them from voicing their views and participating fully in the working class struggle.

It is equally important that men are educated to accept women as equal partners in the struggle. Furthermore men must take greater responsibility in childcare and domestic matters so that women and men make the decisions which affect their lives together.

2. Maternity leave and paid quality childcare

Many women suffer severe discrimmination for reasons connected to maternity. As a priority APWSL will organise to seek the introduction of PARENTAL leave which provides job security for women. In those countries which have good quality leave provisions, but pressure is placed o n women not to use them, APWSL will seek to remove that pressure by whatever means they can. Such means can include, but are not limited to, encouraging unions to take discrimmination cases and publishing the names of companies which force early retirement on women because of pregnancy.

APWSL believes there must be wide availablity of quality childcare with government, employer, and community support for all those who need it. To this end APWSL will urge unions to make strong demands for childcare when bargaining. Whereever possible APWSL will make public statements supporting the need for quality paid childcare and urge other organisations, such as unions to do the same.

Fourth Workshop

Asia-Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links

Osaka, Japan

14 - 15 August 1989

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links - National Facilitators from 8 countries and observers from 3 countries met in Osaka, Japan from August 14-15, 1989. The meeting noted the continual drive of capital, especially from Japan throughout the Asia-Pacific region to increase its power and profitability; and where challanged by workers shifted operations to other countries. The military forces and the State enforced the rule of capital in the Asia- Pacific region.

The meeting endorsed the programmes of the previous AWSL meetings which had been held in Pattaya,Thailand in 1982, in Cha-Am, Thailand in 1983, In Penang, Malaysia in 1985, and in Hong Kong in 1987.

The meeting made further improvements to the programme by new input from the participants at the Osaka meeting.

The meeting also endorsed the resolutions of the International Workers Conference of Osaka on 7 - 13 August 1989. The decisions of the various meetings/workshops of AWSL follow:

Trends affecting workers

The economic and political trends affecting workers in the Asia/Pacific region that had been identified by AWSL at the previous workshops were:

At the Cha-Am meeting (1983):

1. The domination by "developed" countries and transnational corporations (TNCs) to take advantage of cheap labour in Asia.

2. The dictatorial state/military systems in many Asian countries to suppress the workers movement and to assist to TNC's to dominate the economy of each country.

3. The growth of new technoloay and nanagement methods that increased unemployment on one hand and workers submissiveness on the other hand.

4. The feudal culture of many countries that brings a paternalistic/submissive relationship of workers to capital.

5. The move to industrialisation backed by national industrial development policies and Free Trade Zones which lead to repressive and unfavourable labour standard policies by Asian Governments.

At the Hong Kong Meeting (1987):

1. The trend to denationalise/privatise public sector operations.

2. The trend of de-industrialisation of the "developed" countries in Asia with industries 'running-away' to the cheap labour in the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs).

At the Osaka Meeting (1989):

1. Totalitarian Labour Movement had become part for the exploitation of workers through privatisation and deregulation - the tools which capitalist governments are using to further exploit the working class.

2. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank's demand that all debtor countries introduce privatisation or Government Asset sales thus leading to further increasing the wealth and power in private capital's hands.

3. Deregulation is proceeding hand in hand with privatisation. The tearing down of laws and regulations which had been attained by workers after many years of struggle.

4. Other regulations which were demanded by capitalists during the developing stage of capitalism were being dismantled at the demand of international monopoly and finance capital to enable monopolisation to increase even faster.

Women workers

At the Cha-Am Meeting:
To encourage the equal role of women in the movement.

At the Hong Kong Meeting:
The meeting acknowledged that the programme on women workers had not received the attention it should have over the previous 18 months. This was clearly evident by the fact that only one of the facilitators present was a woman.

The meeting noted that:

"Genuine Trade Unionism must be based not only on the class and national struggle, but also on the equal participation of women. If this participation does not happen then we cannot consider our trade union movements, or indeed AWSL, to be genuine".

Alternating men and women delegates

The meeting resolved to:

1 ."Recommend that countries alternated their delegates to National Facilitators Meetings between men and women."

2. "That AWSL seeks the assistance of the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) and the Women's Programme of ACFOD to ensure that the women workers programme of AWSL is persued with t)lese groups."

At the Osaka Meeting:

1. To seek ways of increasing women workers involvement in trade unions. For example, women taking leadership roles, asserting

the use of and the benefit of womens' ways of organising, and the recognition of the crucial need for women to address women workers issues and problems.

2. Women only meeting to address the current problems which only women encounter in their work, and to have women interpreters. While women only meetings take place men have to discuss separately the issues of women workers and how to strengthen their solidarity with the women's struggle.

Goals for AWSL

The Cha-Am workshop of AWSL set the following goals:

Short Term:

1. To solve the problems of the working conditions which affect the workers of all the countries.

2. To strengthen the peasant-workers movement.

3. To encourage the equal role of women in the movement.

4. To change the workers perception.

5. To co-operate with other organisations on the basis of common and mutual interest.

Long Term:

1. To promote an independent genuine trade union movment.

2. To bring about social justice and equity.

3.To recognise the equal role of women in society.

4. To adopt a common action programme of

   a) Solidarity support.

   b) National Newsletter.

   c) Exchange of activities.

(The programme of AWSL from this workshop had been reported to the Council Meeting of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development and was accepted and became a programme of ACFOD.)

At the Penang, Malaysia workshop:
The workshop in Penang wss to reflect on the first 18 months of AWSL's activities. It reflected on the activities and defined AWSL:

"Asian Workers Solidarity Links is an informal network of trade unionists and actvists in Asia and Pacific. It exists to link facilitate and promote genuine trade unionism amongst the countries of the region. It is governed by a programme adopted at the Cha-Am workshop on November 5 - 8 1983".

The workshop further adopted a common action programme in line with the defination of AWSL:

a) Solidarity support.

b) Action Alerts.

c) Information/Communication (Newsletter)

d) Women Workers.

Information/ communication/ newsletter

The main point had been how to improve communication within the AWSL network. It was discussed at length and decided that every National Facilitator must communicate at least every 2 months with the AWSL Secretariat.

International Workers' Conference resolution

Different countries spoke on how they would implement aspects of the Osaka International Workers' Conference recomnendations at the national levels.

The meeting noted that the previous AWSL aims and programmes were similar to the Japan International Workers Conference resolutions.

Evaluation of AWSL activities

Each participating country briefly reported on their AW5L activities over the previous 3 years, referring to the 1987 Hong Kong Meeting Report where countries had noted their objectives as National Facilitators for the following 3 years:

Aotearoa/New Zealand:

Newsletter continued.

AWSL active in trade union mowement with AWSL ideas and in opposition to yellow union trend.

Australia:

AWSL work has been incorporated into the rest of the work of Australia Asia Worker Links (AAWL).

Hong Kong:

Remains committed to principles of AWSL as stated in 1987.

Having problems with part-time worker organising.

Indonesia:

Problem is with communication, but AWSL network is improving.

Publications have not occurred because it is only a duplication of otherwork.

India:

Developing AWSL links within India has not been satisfactory due to India being geographically large and difficult to organise. Also

problems with finding time for AMSL activities outside their own (National Facilitators work).

Links with South Asia regional groups on questions of unorganised labour and child labour had been very successful.

Japan:
Currently working to build on AWSL Japan group. The current work to organise the National Council of All Japan Trade Unions (labour centre) will complement AWSL work.

South Korea:
Different people in attendance at the Japan meeting than at Hong Kong. Success in some aspects of AWSL programme.

Malaysia:
Work continues.

Sri Lanka:
Successfully involved in information to organised and unorganised sectors.

Organising the Tamil plantation sector. Racism remains an obstacle to achieving AWSL objectives.

Thailand:
Work is ongoing.

Newsletter and letters of support continue.

Education about Free Trade Zones among workers continue. (English translation remains a problem and Thailand requests countries to send information on FTZs to Thailand.

Bangladesh:
1987 was a crucial year in Bangladesh and delegate had to leave the Hong Kong meeting early.

From 1987 to 1989 AWSL work had been ongoing. A 9-member AWSL committee had been established.

A Workshop had been held and and the tea/garment workers programme continues. (Due to financial problems the garment sector organising among the urban poor failed.

The 1989 Secretariat's report was used as another framework of evaluation at the Fourth AWSL Workshop.

Regional coordination

At Hong Kong Meeting:
To facilitate coordination the Asian region was broken up into sub-regions and three Regional Coordinators were selected, one for each of the three sub-regions: South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asia/Pacific.

At the Osaka Meeting:
It was agreed to establish a fourth sub-region - the Pacific - to cater Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Fiji and other countries in the Pacific region.

Regional Co-ordinators

In keeping with equal participation policy, the following regions were asked to decide the regional co-ordinators:

South East Asia - One woman from Indonesia.

South East Asia - One man from Japan.

Pacific - One woman to be nominated by countries in the region.

South Asia - The National Facilitator for Sri Lanka.

Regional Secretariat

The Secretariat for the Regional Co-ordinating Team would continue to be based in Sri Lanka.

Change from AWSL to APWSL

Following from the decision to establish the Pacific as a fourth sub-region of AWSL, the meeting unanimously adopted the name of "**Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links**"

Future programme

The meeting agreed that the Regional Coordinating Team should meet only twice before the next National Facilitators meeting in 1992. Money saved from extra RCT meetings should go to extra womens' programmes and into national semina prorammes.

APWSL Aotearoa (New Zealand) was to try to raise money for a womens' programme.

The Osaka meeting decided that the Regional Coordinators would hold office for 3 years. Regional Coordinators were to be elected at the National Facilitators Meeting by the National Facilitators.

Functions of Regional Coordinators

a) To organise regional programmes.

b) To monitor National APWSL functions.

c) To remove ineffective National Facilitators in consultation with national APWSL members.

d) To identify and promote organisations to participants in the APWSL network.

e) To communicate with National Facilitators at least every two months.

f) Regional Coordinators should meet once between National Facilitators Meetings to decide/review national APWSL activities.

g) Inactive Regional Coordinators could be replaced by the national APWSL in consultation with other Regional Coordinators.

National Facilitators

1. National facilitation should be carried out by either an organisation or ACFOD team, depending on the requirements of each country.

2. National Facilitators should be than nominated by the organisation or the APWSL team.

3. National Facilitators to hold office for three years. Facilitators should be alternatively a man and a woman.

4. A National consultation meeting should be called before the National Facilitators meeting to elect an organisation or APWSL team to be responsible for National Facilitation.

5. National Facilitators are to be responsible for the activities of the APWSL network in each country:

a) A newsletter to be produced within each country.

b) Information to be sent regularly to the Regional Coordinators and all national APWSLs. The information required to be sent has beensents spelt out inthe various workshops.

c) To act on action alerts.

d) To organise solidarity support.

e) To organise meetings and sent minutes to Regional Coordinators/ National Facilitators.

ACFOD/ APWSL

The programme of APWSL should be independent.

The decisions on:

a) Allocation of funds

b) Programmes for National APWSLs

c) Other matters pertaining to APWSL should be made by the Regional Coordinators.

At the national level the APWSL programme is independent of the national ACFOD. The decisions for activities should be made by national APWSL. Any decision made should be communicated to the Regional Coordinators. The Regional Coordinators will then ACT upon the matters and inform the ACFOD Secretariat for follow up activities.

Responsibility of the APWSL Regional Secretariat

It is the responsibility of the Regional Secretariat to communicate immediately with the Regional Coordinators for decisions/ actions.

The Regional Secretariat will communicate with national APWSL/ ACFOD and other organisations regularly.

Resolutions of the

International Workers' Conference

Tokyo and Osaka, Japan

7 - 13 August 1989

Introduction

In most countries of the Asia/Pacific region the economies are thriving. Cities are growing, factories are increasing production and trade is increasing. In the process capitalists are accumulating hundreds of millions in profits. Workers, however are receiving an ever-decreasing percentage of the wealth they are creating.

We have heard reports of decreases in real wages for workers, increases in production speeds which are causing more injuries and deaths, long hours of work, unsafe working environments and dismissal of workers with little compensation.

We have also heard of the plight of rural workers in their struggle for survival. It is not difficult to conclude that the increasing exploitation of workers is the reason why the rich are increasing their profits.

Another phenomenon hurting workers is the reality of "runaway shops" Companies in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea are closing their factories and moving to Asian countries which offer - even advertise - "cheap labor". Pro-capitalist governments continue to change labour laws to such an extent that the laws have really become anti-labour laws.

In the past, when faced with such attacks by both employers and government officials, workers turned toward their unions for support and leadership. Unions provided the collective strength and leadership in the struggle to achieve and protect workers' rights.

The reality for workers in the Asia/Pacific region is that large numbers are not organized into trade unions. In many countries it is only the core workers in large factories who are organized.

However in many cases these workers are organized into "yellow" trade unions. These unions are not only not helping workers, they are actually assisting the capitalists to further exploit workers.

Yet, inspite of all the problems, we have seen signs of hope for workers and the workers' movement. In countries throughout the Asia/Pacific region there are trade unions and groups of workers which truly represent the interests and aspirations of workers.

We plan to build better links between these groups and to take actions which will contribute towards building solidarity between countries to enable workers to be more united in the struggle to build a more just society - a society in which workers will benefit from all the hard work they do.

Women workers

The common themes emerging from our discussion of womens' workers experiences and struggles in the Asia/Pacific region were:

The reasons why women were not fully and equally involved in trade unions.

The need for women to increase their solidarity with other womens' groups - middle class, feminists, and all races.

Ways of increasing women workers involvement in trade unions, for example women taking leadership roles, asserting the use and benefit of womens' ways of organising, and the recognition of the crucial need for women to address women workers issues and problems.

Equal pay between men and women is important as is the need for traditional types of "womens' work" to be valued as much as "male" occupations. (Womens' work also includes child-bearing and domestic work.)

Common work experiences are low wages, gender discrimination, penalisation in the labor market when re-entering after maternal duties, social pressure on married women not to work, the double duty

for women workers of domestic labour and paid labor, women's work seen as less important than men's, the failure of trade unions to seriously address women workers' problems, marginalisation of "women's issues" in trade unions, trade unions leaving women organizers to deal with women workers' problems, the use of women as cheap labor, and the experience of the women's sector of the work-force as the most exploited and the least organized.

The increasing problem of sexual exploitation of women throughout the region.

The agreement that workers' liberation cannot happen without women's liberation.

Call for working womens' charter

We call for the development of a charter for the working women of the Asia/Pacific region. This must aim to ensure that women workers will have enough time to organise within the union, through concrete provisions such as the provision of child care.

"Women-only meetings within trade unions have been recognized as valuable and necessary in addressing some of the current problems which women encounter in their work. When women-only meetings occur at international worker meetings every effort should be made to also have women interpreters.

Unorganised workers

Unorganised workers are found amongst peripheral workers. These workers include part-time or casual workers, women workers, migrant workers, unemployed workers, racial minorities, bonded labour, senior workers, and supervisory/semi-management.

Many unorganised workers suffer severe discrimination throughout the Asia/Pacific region. For example, minimum wage laws are ignored by capitalists and goverments; unpaid overtime or forced Quality Control Circles (QCC's) in the workers' own time; unfair dismissals; contracting out work from organised plants: anti-trade union labour laws; and the establishment of "Free Trade Zones" (FTZs).

It is imperative that genuine trade unionists make every effort to organize the unorganized work-force in their countries. New and

innovative methods of organising need to be used along-side traditional forms of trade union organising. Some methods discussed include:

Establishing labour information and advice centers in worker communities, available at convenient times and using the first language of workers.

Establishing community unions to help organise workers on a territorial level.

Using a variety of forms of delivering information to workers, e.g.leaflets, exhibitions, drama, music, etc.

Holding education classes on labor law, literacy, language skills, political analysis.

Linking organized and unorganized workers.

Campaigning on issues of concern to unorganized workers.

Promoting solidarity with workers in other countries.

Establishing welfare associations to draw in unorganised workers.

Campaigning for governments to ratify and make use of International Labour Organisition's conventions in order to secure the rights of unorganised workers, especially in the area of child workers and hazardous work.

Young workers constitute more than half of the active population in the Asia/Pacific region. Therefore special attention should be given to organising young workers who are at a vital formative stage of their lives.

We particularly note the serious condition of child bonded labourers who have lost their freedom of movement. They are subjected to a life and work under the most hazardous and sub-human conditions.

It is stressed however, that it is only through day to day living with, working with and organising unorganised workers, can we help them to establish genuine unions and other worker organisations to protect and promote their rights.

Japanese labour management control

Japanese Labor Management Control is nothing less than the most sophisticated method to date of the exploitation or labour by capital.

In many ways the term "Japanese" Management is a misleading description of this form of worker exploitation. It is called "Japanese" management only because it has been perfected in Japan. It should more appropriately be called "Management by Stress", "Just in Time management or "Totalitarian Management".

Through the Just in Time method both materials and the human element are exploited to perfection. The genius of this form of management is its synchronisation, i.e. highly co-ordinated, efficient and productive work-places. But it is also vulnerable. If part of the system breaks down then the whole system breaks down. This potentially means that workers have the power to bring the system to a halt.

But most vulnerability is in favor of the management. In particular, fear forces workers to submit to this totalitarian management. These management practices call for complete flexibility in assignment of work, and the abscence or subversion of collective bargaining. Wages are related to company evaluated performance and Health and Safety standards are dramatically reduced. Peer pressure is used to have workers police each other.

A yellow or company controlled union is essential for this system of management to survive. All delegates were able to provide examples of such management techniques operating in their countries. Also, some successful struggles against these methods were reported, e.g. the 10 week Nissan strike in Auckland, New Zealand

Privatisation and deregulation

If totalitarian labour management has become the tool for exploitation of workers within the company, privatisation and deregulation are the tools which capitalist governments are using to further exploit the working class.

The notorious privatisation of the Japanese National Railway was discussed. It was noted that the IMF and World Bank are demanding that all debtor countries introduce privatisation or Government asset sales. Privatisation further increases the wealth and power in private capital's hands.

Deregulation is proceeding hand in hand with privatisation. Deregulation sees the tearing down of laws and regulations that proscribe economic activities within nations. Some of these regulations, especially in the labour law area, have been attained by workers after many years of struggle by unions. Other regulations which were demanded by capitalists during the developing stage of capitalism are being pulled down at the demand of international monopoly and finance capital to enable monopolisation to increase even faster.

Free Trade Zones

A Free Trade Zone (FTZ) is the highest example of a deregulated economy, but now capital is pushing to deregulate entire countries and pull down the barriers for capital between countries. Left unchecked, this will further increase the power of capital over workers.

International organisations

There exist numerous international contacts between workers and unions in the region. A number of national labour centers are affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Also numerous national labour centers are affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). There are also several other organisations which are active, e.g. Asian American Free Labour Institute (AAFLI).

In many cases these international labour organisations have a negative impact on the development of genuine independent democratic trade unions. These organisations promote a union philosophy which tends to be bureaucratic and which supports management to the disadvantage of workers.

However, progressive unionists in a number of countries which have their trade union center affiliated to the ICFTU have been able to persuade their centre and individual unions to support some independent genuine trade unions and centres in the region.

International networks

There are also networks of workers based around several regional organisations:

The Committee of Asian Women (CAW)

International Young Christian Workers Asia Pacific (IYCW-AP)

Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC)

Labour Programme of the Center for the Progress of Peoples (CPP-LP)

Urban Rural Mission of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA-URM)

Asian Workers' Solidarity Links

These organisations are not based on traditional trade unions, but rather on links between progressive individuals, groups and trade unions. These organisations promote international solidarity amongst workers, precisely because traditional national trade unions are usually pro-government or pro-management.

Japan

In Japan, the formation of two new organisations has caused much concern. A new national labour center, RENGO, was organised in 1987, representing 5.5 million workers. This labour center is the largest in Japan with a pro-management perspective. It aims to export Japanese style industrial relations which help Japanese investments and management, and not Asia/Pacific workers.

The second organisation is the Japanese Institute of Labour Foundation (JILAF), which was set up by several large trade unions affiliated to RENGO. JILAF receives a yearly grant from the Japanese government and trade unions. JILAF has organised training sessions in Japan to which Asia/Pacific workers are invited. It also donates money and equipment to trade unions, and has begun organising similar training sessions in the region.

Progressive workers and unions in Japan fear that RENGO and JILAF will continue in the work of undermining genuine inde-

pendent democratic unions and workers' movements in the Asia/Pacific region.

Need for research

Therefore there is a need for research into organisations such as RENGO and JILAF. This research should be conducted in Japan and also in other countries, and there should be a continuous exchange.

Multinational companies (MNCs)

Japanese multinational companies are expanding their activities in the Asia/Pacific region. Some of the reasons for their expansion in these countries are the access to cheap labour, the generous facilities offered by the host countries, and the controlling of union activities.

The need for workers working for the same MNC to be entitled to equal treatment as one of the basis for unifying workers. To implement this idea it was suggested to increase the exchange of information more systematically on a regular basis.

"International comparability"

Monitoring activities of MNCs, building data banks on MNCs and encouraging unions to apply a principle of "International Comparability" for their collective bargaining activities are some suggestions to enhance solidarity and linkage among the workers.

Migrant Workers

As workers increasingly seek better lives for themselves and their their families, they often leave their home countries and emmigrate to a foreign country to seek work. In most countries of Asia and the Pacific these migrant workers face problems of racism und discrimination.

It is imperative that trade unions and community groups make every effort to assist the entry of these migrants into the general population so that they can retain their identity and culture while being part of the new country.

Some methods discussed to achieve this aim include:

Making information available in the the respective mother tongues of migrants.

To provide para-legal aid to these workers by host country trade unions and commnunity groups.

To check any kind of cheating and exploitation in the process of recruitment in sender countries and deportation in receiver countries.

Campaigning against racism andexploitation against migrants.

We hope that bridges can be built between local and migrant workers so that their common problems can be addressed.

Conclusion

The participants in the International Workers Conference having held discussions on the above topics and having participated in exposures and symposia with Japanese workers firmly believe:

1. That the struggle of workers to control and defeat the power of capital must continue - Japanese and other Asia/Pacific workersmustbe united in this struggle.

2. That Japan is becoming the dominant capitalist power in the Asia/Pacific region.

3. That finance and monopoly capital seek to place even greater burdens on workers in the future through their labor control methods.

4. That women workers suffer an even greater burden through receiving lower wages, less secure jobs, working a second shift at home and still suffering from chauvinist male practices at work and home.

5. That migrant workers are also suffering extreme exploitation in most countries.

6. That government and company controlled "yellow" unions are being used by capital to control workers in the interest of capital. Co-option and co-operation amongst yellow unions is growing throughout Asia/Pacific.

The conference endorsed the platform of the conference to build an alternative trade union movement in Asia/Pacific to stand on the side of the oppressed and exploited workers of the area.

Participants at the conference committed themselves to return to their countries, unions and work-places to put this program into effect. In this regard we must:

1. Combat yellow unionism and promote the genuine organisation of workers in our countries.

2. Oppose the spread of "Japanese" Labour Management methods in the region.

3. Struggle for the equal role of women in the labour movements.

4. Unite the workers' movement with other progressive social and cultural movements in each country.

5. Continue to build international solidarity and linkages between workers of all our countries.

6. Take concrete steps in our own countries and throughout the region to work towards the creation of a genuine alternative labour movement that will provide strength to the struggles of workers throughout Asia and the Pacific.

"The 21st Century has been described by many as the Pacific century. In the Asia/Pacific region, let us make it a century for workers.

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE ! !

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