

# GLOBALISATION AND LABOUR RIGHTS POLICY

*ACTU CONGRESS 2000*

- 1.1 The ACTU globalisation and labour rights policy and actions will give priority to the development of independent, democratic and effective trade unions in our region; building international solidarity; the defence of human rights; the provision of humanitarian assistance; building on our participation in international bodies such as ICFTU and the ILO; and the encouragement to affiliates to incorporate a higher level of international effort and understanding in their organising and industrial strategies.
- 1.2 Increased trade and economic growth is necessary for Australia's future. However globalisation and its associated elements of trade liberalisation, technological change, financial and labour market deregulation and the development of a huge speculative capital market are placing serious pressures on the ability of national economies to act independently and to balance the increasing gulf between winners and losers. In many countries there is downward pressure on living standards, reduced government services, job losses and efforts to deny workers fundamental rights as governments are forced to compete with each other through the lowering of standards.
- 1.3 This policy outlines the key areas of activity for the ACTU over the next period in regard to :
  - i) Globalisation and labour rights
  - ii) International campaigning
  - iii) Trade union development
  - iv) Defence of human and trade union rights
  - v) Promotion of humanitarian and development assistance
  - vi) Working with other institutions
  - vii) Peace and disarmament
  - viii) Support and promotion of APHEDA - Union Aid Abroad
  - ix) Broadening Australia's international involvement

## 2. GLOBALISATION AND LABOUR RIGHTS

2.1 The ACTU notes the development of a growing international coalition of trade unions, non-government organisations and progressive churches which is expressing grave concern as to the effects of globalisation on nation states, communities and workers. The defeat of the OECD's proposal for a Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the broad-based opposition to the WTO's "Seattle Round" of trade negotiations are evidence of widespread community discontent with the policies and institutions that are promoting the dismantling of the social contract in nations around the world.

2.2 Globalisation involving trade liberalisation, financial and labour market deregulation, technological change, privatisation and reducing social expenditures is putting serious pressure on workers in many countries. As part of the process of change workers must have fundamental rights respected by governments and employers. These rights include those contained in ILO conventions regarding:

- i) Freedom of association
- ii) Collective bargaining
- iii) Protection from discrimination
- iv) Freedom from child labour
- v) The elimination of forced labour

Australian trade unions will act to defend and achieve those rights for all workers.

2.3 The success or otherwise of trade liberalisation should be seen in the context of social progress and not simply in narrow economic outcomes. The ACTU recognises the importance of international trade to improving living standards in trading countries and supports a system of fair trade which promotes reform of the current free trade environment. Fair trade does not involve protectionism but means trade carried out in a manner which benefits civil society and delivers progress for all countries in terms of :

- i) employment growth
- ii) improved social protections
- iii) implementation of core labour standards
- iv) sustainable environmental standards
- v) elimination of forced labour/child labour
- vi) adherence to human rights and democratic values

The ACTU believes we must put the community and civil society at the centre of the economy. There must be values that guide and underpin the trading system so that it provides the mechanisms, incentives and

opportunity for all nations to engage in a race to the top not a race to the bottom.

2.4 In regard to the ACTU's activity in the area of globalisation and core labour standards in summary we will :

- i) Seek to have the Australian government support the ICFTU policy in regard to the WTO incorporating labour rights issues into its deliberations and establishing a permanent working group which provides for the participation of the ILO. The Working Group must have a defined work program to report on issues relating to achieving the adoption of core labour standards as part of the process of reaching trade agreements
- ii) Actively participate in ILO activity designed to promote the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. We will support activity to have the core labour standards incorporated into the work of other international institutions including the WTO, UNCTAD, the IMF and the World Bank
- iii) Support representations to provide debt relief and additional development funds to developing countries to assist in raising living standards and implementing labour and environmental standards
- iv) Support a restructuring of the WTO and other international trade and financial institutions to establish full transparency and openness, to involve representatives of civil society and to ensure that the process of trade liberalisation reduces developmental inequalities, improves the environment, opposes exploitation of workers and reduces gender imbalances
- v) Oppose any treaty governing trade in services which restricts the capacity of Australian governments to confine government funding grants to public institutions, or to limit coastal freight to Australian ships, foreign equity in telecommunications companies and financial institutions, and the proportion of programs broadcast on domestic television stations which are produced overseas
- vi) Campaign against trade treaties which remove government powers to regulate the conditions of entry for foreign investment
- vii) Support the proposal for a Tobin tax to be imposed to inhibit speculative capital flows between economies
- viii) Engage in the analytical work and political debate in order to effectively represent the interests of Australian working people in the

face of globalisation and the current 'free trade' environment. In particular we will:

- a) Monitor developments in the debate on social tariffs and effective linkages between the trade and social policies;
- b) Expose the tendency to overstate the evidence in favour of free trade;
- c) Campaign to build strong community support for Australia's manufacturing base;
- d) Support a freeze on all tariffs as they currently apply (as at June 2000). This will apply to both the actual tariff and the bound tariff. The 2003 Congress will review this position to determine whether any change is required;
- e) We note that OECD Economic Outlook analysis of tariff and non-tariff barriers shows the following levels of protection in key economies:

Australia	-	0.7%
Japan	-	10.7%
USA	-	16.8%
Canada	-	10.4%
European Union	-	19.1%
- f) Analyse the economic and social effects of actions intended to enhance our economic integration with those countries in our immediate neighbourhood;
- g) Monitor and analyse the level of social and environmental standards internationally and the effect of free trade policies on them.

2.5 Future moves involving trade liberalisation need to be accompanied by economic and social policies in Australia which ensure that :

- i) Australia builds a competitive, sustainable and balanced base of service and manufacturing industries
- ii) Employment opportunities are available in decent, full-time jobs
- iii) Training and retraining opportunities are available for workers whose employment is affected

- iv) Any opening-up of the Australian economy must be matched by reciprocal access being available to other markets
- v) There is an on-going policy commitment matched by practical actions to sustaining a viable and competitive manufacturing industry
- vi) Social audits are carried out to establish comprehensive assessments of the social effects of free trade.

2.6 The ICFTU's campaign for the inclusion of international labour standards in new rules for the global market has won widespread support for action to ensure that basic human rights at the workplace are universally observed. Congress resolves to continue to support the campaign until fundamental workers' rights are respected everywhere.

### 3 INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNING

- 3.1 The ACTU will encourage affiliates to become more involved in campaigning at international level in regard to matters such as Australian priorities, globalisation and trade union rights. Particular areas for attention will include :
- i) International corporate campaigns such as the struggle against Rio Tinto which is being co-ordinated by a network of unions in many countries. Development of strengthened solidarity links with ITS's and direct union to union relationships, particularly in our region
  - ii) Participation in developing codes of conduct consistent with core labour standards in areas such as sporting goods, surgical instruments, events such as the Olympics and with large multinational companies operating in our region
  - iii) Contributing actively to the effort designed to strengthen the provisions of the OECD/ILO guidelines on multinational enterprises
  - iv) Campaigning against the use of non-union Export Processing Zones to undercut the position of unionised workers
  - vi) Call for an Inquiry to be established to undertake a social audit into the key policy planks of trade liberalisation and globalisation. The Inquiry to make recommendations on the regulatory mechanisms for ensuring international corporate governance adopts socially responsible standards as part of the process of Globalisation

#### 4. UNION DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The ACTU will attach a high priority to activity designed to achieve the development of effective, independent and democratic unions in our region. These actions will include :
- i) Further support and development of the ACTU/APHEDA funded Union Training Centre in Indonesia
  - ii) Developing a closer relationship with the PNG TUC
  - iii) Continuing our efforts in East Timor in association with the ILO and ICFTU-APRO and ITS's to assist with the development of unions for East Timorese workers
  - iv) Participating in the development of unions in the South Pacific area and working with ICFTU-APRO, SPOCTU, APHEDA and CTUC to meet the needs of the region
- 4.2 Congress renews its appeal for continued support by all affiliates and their members, delegates and staff to the work of APHEDA.
- 4.3 Developments in modern technology, particularly in global communications, have raised the question of the very kind of international trade union cooperation required to allow our movement to achieve its objectives in a modern and ever changing world, in particular:
- i) Building union organisation world-wide and ensuring international trade union solidarity;
  - ii) Influencing the inter-governmental institutions internationally and regionally;
  - iii) Influencing behaviour of multinational enterprises; and
  - iv) Campaigning at international level to promote the policies and objectives of the trade union movement.
- 4.4 Congress welcomes the initiative of developing a united world trade union body at all levels, that is, internationally, regionally and at industry levels. A process known as the millennium debate has been put in place to consider future international trade union structures. Congress recognises the efficiencies gained from a unified world trade union body.
- 4.5 Therefore, Congress directs the ACTU to play an active role in this millennium debate, ensuring that any merger of the world trade union bodies is a proper merger achieved through appropriate consultation and agreements.”

## 5. DEFENCE OF UNION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- 5.1 In the Asia Pacific region there are many examples of human rights abuses. Unions are repressed, unionists are arrested for attempting to organise and bargain, free speech and rights of protest are either not recognised or are circumscribed by law.
- 5.2 The most horrific abuse of human rights in our region is the activity of the military junta in Burma which has refused to recognise the results of free elections in 1990 and has imposed military rule on the Burmese people. In relation to Burma, the ACTU and its affiliates:
- i) Condemn the Government (State Peace and Development Council) for its use of forced labour;
  - ii) Condemn the Australian Government's plan to assist the junta in the setting up of the National Human Rights Commission, and the provision of Human Rights Training for the military;
  - iii) Support the call for severance of all government ties until the convening of the democratically elected parliament;
  - iv) Call for the release of all political prisoners;
  - v) Support the ILO resolution calling for the end of forced labour by 30 November. Further if the junta fails to comply, the ACTU and its affiliates resolve to consider actions against the regime; and
  - vi) Support the call for a free and independent Burma.
- 5.3 ACTU actions in defence of human rights will include :
- i) Working with supportive organisations to secure the restoration of democracy in Burma
  - ii) Co-operating with human rights bodies such as Amnesty International to address specific instances of human rights' abuses
  - iii) Paying particular attention to cases of human rights which involve unionists throughout our region
  - iv) The ACTU will continue to support human rights and independence struggles including those in Zimbabwe and the Western Sahara. Specifically the ACTU in Western Sahara supports a free and fair referendum in accord with UN resolutions.

## 6. HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

- 6.1 Australia's aid budget has failed to increase to reflect the growth of the economy. Our contribution to foreign aid is now only 0.25% of GNP. The ACTU will support actions designed to :
- i) Increase Australia's foreign aid to 0.7% of GNP in line with UN targets
  - ii) Call for the cancellation of debts by the world's 52 poorest countries with the requirement that monies saved are expended on health, education and building a sound economy. Support the Jubilee 2000 International Debt relief campaign
  - iii) Campaign to have the Australian government allocate at least 10% of its overseas aid budget through Australian international development NGO's

## 7. WORKING WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- 7.1 The ACTU international work must necessarily be undertaken with a range of international bodies including unions, tripartite forums and NGO's. The ACTU will continue to build linkages with relevant bodies at the international level. This will include :
- i) Strengthening our relationship with the ICFTU, especially at the regional level through ICFTU-APRO
  - ii) Continuing to play an active role in the ILO
  - iii) Calling on the Australian government to restore the level of Australia's involvement in the ILO and to ratify conventions related to OH&S, Child Labour and Homeworkers
  - iv) Working to strengthen the national centre to national centre relationships with the key national centres in the region
- 7.2 The ACTU will also participate in the union bodies Asia Pacific Labour Network (APLN), TUAC, South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Free Trade Unions (SPOCTU), Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) and CTUC paying particular regard to campaigns which affect our region.

- 7.3 The ACTU will again call on the government to bring its Workplace Relations and Trade Practices Act into conformity with our obligations under ILO Conventions.
- 7.4 The international work of the ACTU will continue to be resourced by the activities of the two nominated full-time officers and an Industrial Officer. We will be active in the range of international organisations with which we are affiliated and associated – these include ICFTU, ICFTU-APRO, ILO, CTUC, APHEDA, SPOCTU, TUAC and APLN. This work will be supplemented by affiliate activity in a range of areas to enable the limited ACTU resources to be utilised as effectively as possible.

## 8. PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

- 8.1 The ACTU will seek to have a higher level of attention paid to peace and disarmament issues. This will include :
- i) Press the Australian Government and Parliament to continue to support the negotiation, ratification and implementation of UN treaties on peace including the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Chemicals Weapons Treaty and the Mine (Landmines) Ban Treaty
  - ii) Taking whatever action is appropriate to contribute to the cessation of hostilities in conflicts throughout our region and beyond
  - iii) Supporting and encouraging greater priority for the ICFTU's activities to achieve reductions in expenditure on armaments
  - iv) Support the *Olympic Peace Truce* to coincide with the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, 2000 as part of a campaign for the *International Year for a Culture of Peace* and promote the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence by encouraging affiliates and their members to sign the Manifesto 2000 for a culture of peace and non-violence

## 9. SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF APHEDA – UNION AID ABROAD

- 9.1 APHEDA is the ACTU's international humanitarian aid agency. Its programs support overseas education, training and union development projects.
- 9.2 The ACTU will be continuing to support the valued work of APHEDA and encouraging all affiliates to associate and involve themselves with the work of the organisation.

9.3 The ACTU notes the development of state based APHEDA activist groups and will :

- i) Continue to provide core funding to APHEDA
- ii) Promote APHEDA to all affiliates
- iii) Continue to work actively to support APHEDA projects in the region including such initiatives as overseas study tours for union members
- iv) Support greater public resources being made available for APHEDA projects

9.4 Build the capacity of the ACTU's aid arm APHEDA to provide direct humanitarian assistance

## 10. AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

10.1 The ACTU believes that there is a need for greater efforts and public resources to enable a better understanding of and improved relations with the people of the countries in our region.

10.2 The ACTU will develop a proposal for the establishment by the Federal Government of a publicly funded program to promote greater opportunities for study visits and development training of trade unionists from the region and for Australian workers to obtain a greater understanding of union, social and political developments in the Asia-Pacific region.

## 11. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

11.1 In promoting the involvement of women and young members in issues relating to Globalisation and Labour Rights the ACTU will take action which includes :

- i) Within the limits of the international budget, participate in ICFTU and ILO activities which relate to women and young people
- ii) Seek to develop networks between Australia and other national centres involving women and young members
- iii) Seek the ratification of ILO Conventions which have specific reference to women and youth for example, Maternity Protection and Child Labour
- iv) Encourage the formation of support groups from women and young members to become active in pursuing ACTU policy objectives in the area of Peace and Disarmament

## 12. CONCLUSION

12.1 The ACTU will continue to work with affiliates on the priority areas of international activity. Our priorities are :

- i) Union development
- ii) Defence of Human Rights
- iii) Participation in the globalisation debate
- iv) Support for poverty eradication and humanitarian needs
- v) Action in support of peace and disarmament
- vi) Building international solidarity

12.2 The key countries and regions for our activities will be :

- i) East Timor
- ii) Indonesia
- iii) South Pacific
- iv) Papua New Guinea
- v) Burma
- vi) Cambodia
- vii) Other South-East Asian countries

12.3 The institutions and organisations we will work with include :

- i) APHEDA
- ii) ICFTU
- iii) ICFTU-APRO and the ITS's
- iv) APLN
- v) TUAC
- vi) ILO
- vii) SPOCTU
- viii) CTUC
- ix) SIGTUR

12.4 We will also seek to develop closer relations with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions – Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (ICFTU-APRO) and key national union centres in our region.

12.5 We will work with other supportive organisations in Australia such as Amnesty International and ACFOA to further the aims of greater understanding between countries of the region, international development, human rights and peace.