Global Unions

Past Efforts and Future Prospects

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International trade unionism faces a major challenge. Historically, Global Union Federations have been small and relatively remote international union secretariats with limited capacity to mobilize and speak on behalf of local members. However, with the changing architecture of international capital and nation states, these union bodies have started to renew themselves. The argument is that the emergent political economy provides the base upon which these unions can begin to campaign and represent members in more dynamic ways than in the past. Critical to these developments has been the promulgation of International Framework Agreements which adapt and extend familiar tools of representation. The outcome is the possibility of a multi-faceted form of trade unionism.

From the 1970s onwards, the architecture of international capital changed dramatically. One development involved the changing role and character of the state; another has been the growing prominence of transnational corporations (TNCs) as defining institutions of the international economy (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 89). Organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have acquired new

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capacities to direct the international economic order, a situation that was consolidated with the founding of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. These developments have been analyzed by O'Brien and colleagues (2000) as a complex state-centred multi-lateralism (c.f., Gill, 1995). Underlying this changing institutional focus was a recomposition of class relations at the international level, based on a profound restructuring of labour processes and established patterns of production and consumption (van der Pijl, 1998; Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994).

These changes pose major challenges for trade unions. The initial response took place in the early 1970s when the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) launched its campaign to regulate TNCs. Then, the issue was a choice between focussing on institutional channels such as the United Nations (UN) and particularly the International Labour Organization (ILO), and attempting to transpose forms of bargaining at the international level. These steps faltered after a short while. Subsequent attempts in the 1990s were more successful for two reasons. First, international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and, in particular, the WTO, emerged as leading bodies defining a new global political economy, thus providing a focus for union policy and activity. Second, there has been a shift in focus from nationally-based multi-national corporations (MNCs) to TNCs (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 89). With the expanding integration of local and national labour processes into global commodity chains, and the internationalization of business strategies, the material base for international trade union bodies seeking agreements with MNCs/TNCs has been established (c.f. Northrup and Rowan, 1979).

Although past forms of representation and organization may have sufficed, in the changed international order trade unions also have to look to themselves and their forms of organization and operation. Surprisingly, there has been relatively little discussion of international unionism in the debates about trade union renewal or revitalization (e.g., Turner, Katz and Hurd, 2001; Lévesque and Murray, 2002; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003; Gall, 2003). The prevailing focus has been on national unions (e.g., Fairbrother, 2000: 17–22 and 326–334; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003). Where the focus has been on international trade unionism as such, accounts have been presented on the way campaigning can build international solidarity based on local action (Fantasia and Voss, 2004; Herod, 2001; Anner, 2000). Regarding the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and Global Union Federations (GUFs), a number of narrative histories or institutional analyses present accounts of the development of such unionism (Carew *et al.*, 2000; Windmuller, 1979; 2000). In a different vein, Ramsay

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(1997) and Harrod and O'Brien (2002) advance an analysis of international trade unionism that explores the political economy of such unionism.

We draw on these analyses as a way of focusing the argument. First, we consider the conditions for global unions to renew themselves, identifying the processes of change that may enable them to develop in new and distinct ways (e.g., Fairbrother, 2000 and Voss and Sherman, 2003). Here the emphasis is on internal organizational relations and the tension between different forms of organization and action (Voss and Sherman, 2000). The implication is that a renewed form of unionism involves both a reconstitution of internal and external relations at the local and at the international level, as well as between the different levels that make up international unionism. Second, this aspect is complemented by an examination of union capacity, in the context of globalization (e.g., Lévesque and Murray, 2002). Here the focus is on the "power resources" available to unions, covering the development and implementation of union agenda, internal solidarity, exemplified by forms of democracy within union organizations, and external solidarity, namely the embeddedness of unions within their communities (pp. 45–46). The task is to draw these two types of analysis together, in relation to global unionism.

As an initial step towards a thesis of international union renewal, we argue, first, that during the 1990s, international union bodies found themselves in a position where they could make use of the changing architecture of the international political economy in ways that had not been the case earlier. Second, the global unions began to address the circumstances of corporate decision-making and policy development, as well as the role of supra-national agencies, such as the WTO in differentiated ways, in line with an emergent division of labour between the ICFTU, on the one hand, and the GUFs, on the other. These approaches are even more pertinent as a variety of different fora (e.g., World Works Councils) increasingly provide a platform for international union bodies to address international policies and practices (e.g., Tørres and Gunnes, 2003; Müller, Platzer and Rüb, 2003; Wills, 2002). The resultant process of union change can be viewed as a matrix, linking the local with the global.

To explore these themes, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section outlines the key international trade union bodies, the ICFTU and the GUFs. In the second section, an overview is presented of global union attempts to secure some degree of regulation over the organization and activity of transnational/multinational corporations. This section covers Codes of Conducts, Labour Rights campaigns, and International Framework Agreements. The third section develops the analysis about the advent of multi-faceted trade unionism. This section is followed by an assessment

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of these developments. Finally, in the last section, the threads of the analysis are drawn together with a brief conclusion.

THE PUZZLE ABOUT GLOBAL TRADE UNIONISM

In the 1970s, international trade union bodies, such as the ICFTU and the then International Trade Secretariats (ITSs, redesignated Global Union Federations in 2000) pursued initiatives such as the establishment of world company councils and the promotion of Codes of Conduct. However, for nearly two decades, these initiatives were relatively underdeveloped and did not signify a critical development either in the form of unionism that prevailed or in their impact on global capital and the international institutions of the time. The material and ideological frameworks in which these union bodies operated were neither conducive to addressing global issues, nor were they enabling in their outcome (Carew *et al.*, 2000). Against this background, the important question we seek to address is why it was only in the 1990s that international campaigns on these and equivalent initiatives took off. In order to deal with this puzzle, we first start out with a brief overview of international trade unionism.

In 2005, the ICFTU had 233 affiliated organizations in 154 countries and territories on six continents, with a membership of 145 million (40 per cent of whom are women). It is a confederation of national trade union centres, each of which links together sets of trade unions of that particular country. It has three major regional organizations, Asia-Pacific Regional Organization (APRO) and the African Regional Organization (AFRO), and Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) for the Americas. It also maintains close links with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (which includes many European ICFTU affiliates plus other union bodies) and GUFs. Together with the ICFTU, the GUFs have the possibility of extending the local into the international arena. The last two decades have seen a transformation of GUFs as relatively bureaucratic offices, with their headquarters in Europe, into more regionally spread and functionally differentiated support organizations.

Alongside the ICFTU, in 2005 there were ten Global Union Federations:

— EI – Education International

— ICEM – International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions

— IFBWW – International Federation of Building and Wood Workers

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— IFJ – International Federation of Journalists
— IMF – International Metalworkers' Federation
— ITF – International Transport Workers' Federation
— ITGLWF – International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
— IUF – International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
— PSI – Public Services International
— UNI – Union Network International

The global unions represent industrial sectors, and combinations of sector workforces worldwide. They are associated with the ICFTU but are independent organizations in their own right. While they set their own program and rules, determine their own policies, structure, requirements for admittance, they work with the ICFTU, to promote and defend human and trade union rights as well as independent trade union activity.

The task is to explain why it was in the 1990s and early 2000s that international trade union bodies could begin to assert themselves in relation to the emergent architecture of the international political order. To address this shift in focus by the global unions, the authors undertook a focused research programme. The analysis is supported by interviews with senior officials from all but three GUFs (11), sequential interviews with staff from the ICFTU in 2000 and 2001 (5), interviews with staff from the International Labour Organization – ILO (8), WTO (2), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD (1), Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (1), Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (2) and International Chamber of Commerce (1). In addition, during this period interviews were conducted with Institute of Applied Social Science – Norway (FAFO) (1), European Trade Union Confederation (2), European Public Services Union – EPSU (2), European Mining Chemical and Energy Workers Federation – EMCEF (2), European Metalworkers Federation – EMF (1), European Regional Organization of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation – ERO-ITGLWF (1), EI-Asia Pacific (1), PSI-Asia Pacific (1), ICEM-Asia Pacific (1), Asian and Pacific Regional Organization of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation – TWARO-ITGLWF (1), Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations – SOMO (2), Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO-Norway) (1), Pakistan Confederation of Traded Unions (1) and Federatie Nederlands Vakbeweging – FNV (1).

One caveat is in order about the research approach. The primary focus in the analysis is at the international level of union organization. It is a

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perspective that is largely based on the views and understandings of international union officials and their counterparts. In this respect, it is a partial account since the day to day realities of union members and their local leaderships are not part of this analysis, although, where evidence exists, it remains a valuable reference point for the analysis. These other dimensions of global unionism must wait further research and analysis.

GLOBAL UNIONISM: THREE DECADES OF STRUGGLE

Broadly, there have been three phases to the development of negotiated relationships between global unions and transnational/multinational corporations as well as state institutions. In the first phase, the ITSs sought a voluntary form of regulation via Codes of Conduct. When the inadequacy of this approach became apparent, and with a decisive shift in the international architecture of supra-national organizations, such as the establishment of the WTO in 1995, the global unions sought legal regulation via the "social clause" campaign. The outcome of the initial stages of this campaign was that the global unions established a new division of responsibility between the ICFTU on the one hand and the Global Union Federations, on the other. Building on this platform, the Global Union Federations returned to the pursuit of a negotiated relationship between them and transnational/multinational corporations, via International Framework Agreements (IFAs).

Codes of Conduct

In the 1980s and 1990s, the ITSs pursued Codes of Conduct, as a way of regulating corporate behaviour. A body of research addresses the political economy of transnationals, raising questions about the processes and regulatory shifts in Codes of Conduct (see e.g., Gendron, Lapointe and Turcotte, 2004; Sobczak, 2004). These codes are written statements, aimed at regulating behaviour by these corporations and their subsidiaries, in terms of their relations with employees and suppliers. Some of these codes include a focus on labour rights, the implications of corporate practice for the environment, and related practices (e.g., CCC, 1998).

Codes of Conduct were originally formulated and promoted by international organizations, such as the OECD and the ILO. In 1937, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) drafted a Code of Conduct on commercial advertising (Scherrer and Greven, 2001: 76–80). More significantly, in the early 1990s, GUFs and a range of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began to campaign for and pressure transnational corporations to adopt Codes of Conduct. According to Scherrer and Greven

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(2001: 78), this took place against a background that the working conditions in many Southern production facilities had deteriorated. However, these Codes had a relatively limited impact on these conditions of work and employment.

In 1998, using a relatively wide definition, the ILO analyzed 215 Codes of Conduct (ILO, 1998). More recently, Urminsky re-examined 258 Codes of Conduct. Three issues were evident from these studies. First, a distinction was drawn between model codes, as recommended templates, and operational codes, which define "commitments to specific conduct". Whereas the origin of the model codes (13%) was relatively evenly divided between employer organizations, trade unions and NGOs, the bulk of the operational codes (87% of the overall figure) was developed by companies (69% of the overall figure) (Urminsky, n.d.:·15).

Second, the focus and content of Codes of Conduct highlights the way they were distanced from the "frontier of control" at the workplace. Urminsky, for example, summarizes these codes as follows:

> While 72 per cent of the codes reviewed mentioned health and safety ... relatively few codes (33 per cent) addressed one or both of freedom of association and collective bargaining. A review of references to international labour standards yields similar conclusions. (Urminsky, n.d.: 21)

These Codes of Conduct were broadly unilateral in their focus (Urminsky, n.d.: 26–7). Where trade union bodies have promoted Codes of Conduct, such as the Textile Workers' Asian regional office (Interview, ITGLWF-TWARO, May 2000), they found it difficult to shift the focus towards labour rights. Thus, Codes of Conduct contained a variety of problematic features: access to information; range of applicability; coverage; level of commitment; and monitoring and sanctions (Scherrer and Greven, 2001: 79–80).

Third, there has been a recent increase of what Urminsky calls multi-stakeholder codes, involving enterprises, trade unions and NGOs. We argue that the advent of multi-stakeholder codes is an important stage in the development of what have come to be known as International Framework Agreements (IFAs). These agreements involved the GUFs (and national and local trade union bodies) and a TNC, and signified the advent of collective bargaining at an international level. IFAs often start from a Code of Conduct, thereby retaining their company focus, but over time develop and extend the scope and coverage of the substantive and procedural provisions of the code (see for example the IFAs between the IUF and the French corporation Danone and the hotel chain ACCOR as well as that of the IFBWW with the Swedish retailer IKEA – Danone and IUF, 1994; Accor and IUF, 1995; also Wills, 2002; IKEA and

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IFBWW, 2001). However, a further (historical and logical) precondition that shaped the Codes of Conduct into more comprehensive International Framework Agreements was a sharpening of issues around core labour rights, which was achieved in the 1990s via the "social clause" campaign.

However, the pursuit of Codes of Conduct may remain an important objective for trade unions. Where unions, and others, have sought Codes of Conduct, and achieved them, they may provide the opportunity or occasion for questioning corporate practice over a range of issues, such as child labour, via different actions, such as pickets and lobbying (on the importance of law in this process, see Vallée, 2003). Such possibilities mean that for global unions, where the prospects of negotiating with international employers are limited, as in the public sector, or where Codes of Conduct are viewed as the first step in the process of seeking to influence corporate behaviour, then Codes of Conduct may remain an important objective, despite the limitations already noted.

Social Clause to Labour Rights

Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, labour rights campaigns focused the activities and organization of the ICFTU and the GUFs. The origins of the social clause campaign, whereby trade agreements are to be linked to core labour rights, dates back to the 1970s. In 1973 at the beginning of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations on trade liberalization, the ICFTU and the International Metalworkers' Federation argued for a "social clause" and related arrangements (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2000: 508). However, it was only in the 1990s that these demands took on a political salience as core issues pursued by the international labour movement (for a history, see Van Roozendaal, 2002). The significance of this campaigning for international trade unionism is that it provided the basis for focusing and developing trade union activity at an international level.

The focus on the "social clause" campaign was further supported by the 1998 ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work which underlined core labour standards. These standards are commonly covered in eight ILO conventions relating to (1) the abolition of forced labour (Conventions 29 and 105), (2) freedom of association and the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining (Conventions 87 and 98), (3) equal remuneration and freedom from discrimination (Conventions 100 and 111) as well as (4) the minimum age of employment and the abolition of the worst forms of child labour (Conventions 138 and 182). Taken together, these conventions comprise core labour standards.

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In the debate about labour rights the ICFTU acquired a lead role in relation to the GUFs. Its active program has been developed against the background of concern regarding the ineffectual role it played at the Singapore Meeting of the WTO in 1996 where the WTO formally rejected the demand for a social clause (Interview, EI, June 2000; for a detailed account of these events see O'Brien *et al.*, 2000: 85-92). The ICFTU responded to the criticism it received from affiliates, and in particular the GUFs, by devoting significant resources to the promotion of a link between labour standards and trade and by focusing on the building of an ongoing campaign (see Anner, 2000; O'Brien *et al.*, 2000: 97-102). ICFTU officials insist that the degree of effort directed towards the issue was justified given that support for the demand was widespread amongst its affiliates and opposition was confined to small pockets in a handful of countries (Interviews 2000 and 2001).

The campaign over labour rights is multi-layered, involving work with media, civil society and employers' organizations; multilateral organizations; governments; and non-trade related bodies (ICFTU, 2000a). It also involves a division of labour that is designed to build consensus behind the campaign for global labour rights and to capture the divergent strengths of the different sectors of the labour movement.

> There is an agreement that the ICFTU take the lead in WTO matters. We use the expertise of the [Global Union Federations] and it makes sense for them to handle some of the sectoral discussions themselves, like PSI is taking the lead on the health sector discussions now, EI on the education, UNI on the financial services aspects of the WTO, for example. So there's that sort of sectoral breakdown when it comes to a particular sector specific issue. But when it comes to the overall issue of labour standards and some of the institutional questions about the WTO, dispute settlement procedures, and NGO representational rights and so on, then it's accepted at the ICFTU that they'd do that. (Interview, ICFTU, June 2000)

While the ICFTU has largely taken charge of the broader promotion and development of the campaign, it has actively sought to involve other labour organizations at all levels. Through 1999 it conducted a programme of seminars throughout the regions, actively encouraged greater involvement of individual confederations and unions in the campaign, and in 2000, undertook "further work with those developing country trade unions that have continuing questions about the merits of a workers' rights clause to try and convince them to become more supportive of the issue." (ICFTU, 2000a: 12) This approach was appreciated by the GUFs in both the centre and within the regions:

> I think that the process that [the ICFTU] has developed [in relation to trade and labour standards] has been a very inclusive one. It has allowed us all to, you know, be part of the process. I think it's why it's got such wide, wide support throughout the [GUF] community. (Interview, EI, June 2000; the Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator expressed similar views, Interview, March 2000)

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When the rules of international trade and investment are debated, unions appear to be winning an enhanced capacity to demand a hearing. In 2000, the ICFTU called for a series of practical steps to incorporate enforceable core labour standards into concrete actions by the WTO (ICFTU, 2001: 1). At the WTO talks in Doha in 2001, for example, labour rights were a key issue, although ultimately the WTO refused to enter into dialogue with trade unionists about these rights. The importance of the campaign for the GUFs and the ICFTU was that it indicated the limits of attempting to formalize relations with the international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. The GUFs, in particular, subsequently refocused their efforts on transnational corporations.

International Framework Agreements

With the separation of responsibility between the ICFTU and the GUFs for international representation over labour rights, as well as a strategic campaigning focus on TNCs and labour rights, the GUFs were able to pursue a more formalized and potentially substantive recognition of labour rights with international employers. The form this has taken is through the pursuit of IFAs, in particular from the late 1990s (for an overview, see Hammer, 2005). Although the origins of IFAs lie with wide-ranging and incremental agreements between the IUF and Danone in the mid-1980s, it was not until the TNCs were operating within an internationalized trade environment that the GUFs began to succeed in securing such agreements. Overall 37 IFAs had been concluded by March 2005, with 32 of these being drawn up since the beginning of 2000 (Table 1).

TABLE 1

International Framework Agreements, July 1998 to March 2005

Employer	*Date*	*Trade Unions*
Statoil	1998 (July; renewed March 2001 and again in August 2003)	ICEM, NOPEF
Freudenberg	2000 (August; renewed to end of 2002)	ICEM, IG BCE
Endesa	2002 (January)	ICEM, FIA-UGT, FM CC.OO
Norske Skog	2002 (June)	ICEM, Fellesforbundet
Anglogold	2002 (September)	ICEM, NUM
ENI	2002 (November)	ICEM, FEMCA-CISL, FILCEA-CGIL, UIL-CEM-UIL
SCA	2004 (April)	ICEM, Swedish Paper Workers Union, European Works Council

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TABLE 1 (continued)

Employer	*Date*	*Trade Unions*
Lukoil	2004 (May)	ICEM, ROGWU
Electricité de France	2005 (January)	ICEM, PSI, IFME, WFIW and national unions in EDF Group
Rhodia	2005 (January)	ICEM
IKEA	1998 (May; revised in December 2001)	IFBWW
Faber-Castell	1999 (March)	IFBWW, GHK (IG Metall)
Hochtief	2000 (March)	IFBWW, IG BAU, Hochtief General Works Council
Skanska	2001 (February)	IFBWW
Ballast Nedam	2002 (March)	IFBWW
Impregilo	2004 (November)	IFBWW, FENEAL-UIL, FILCA-CISL, FILLEA-CGIL
Veidekke	2005 (March)	IFBWW, Fellesforbundet, Norsk Arbeidsmandsforbund
Merloni	2001 (December)	IMF, FIM, FIOM, UILM
Volkswagen	2002 (June)	IMF, Global Works Council
Daimler Chrysler	2002 (September)	IMF, DC World Employee Committee
Leoni	2002 (October)	IMF, European Works Council
GEA	2003 (June)	IMF, EMF, European Works Council
Rheinmetall	2003 (October)	IMF, EMF, European Works Council
SKF	2003 (November)	IMF, European Works Council
Bosch	2004 (March)	IMF, Bosch Group European Works Council
Prym	2004 (July)	IMF, European Works Council
Renault	2004 (October)	IMF, Renault Group Works Council
Danone	1994 (May)	IUF
Accor	1995 (June)	IUF
Fonterra	2002 (April)	IUF, NZDWU
Chiquita	2001 (June)	IUF, COLSIBA (Latin American Coordinating Committee of Banana Workers' Unions)
Club Méditerrannée	2004 (February)	IUF, EFFAT
Telefónica	2000 (March)	UNI, UGT, CC.OO
Carrefour	2001 (May)	UNI
OTE	2001 (June)	UNI, OME-OTE
ISS	2003 (May)	UNI
H&M	2004 (January)	UNI

Source: GUF web sites; ILO-BASI database (http://www.ilo.org/dyn/basi/VpiSearch.First?p_lang=en)

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IFAs are negotiated at the international level and require the participation of the relevant trade unions. In the case of one GUF, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), ten IFAs have been signed, with Bosch, DaimlerChrysler, GEA AG, Leoni, Merloni, Prym, Renault, Rheinmetall, SKF and Volkswagen. The IMF argues that IFAs are "negotiated on a global level but implemented locally" (International Metalworkers' Federation, 2003: 1). They normally include a recognition of the ILO Core Labour Standards, often have further provisions (e.g., a commitment to decent wages and working conditions and provision for safe and hygienic working environments), trade union involvement (in particular that of a GUF), an implementation process as well as the right and a procedure to deal with complaints. Such agreements are not restricted to the signatory company, as there is usually a stipulation that suppliers must also be persuaded to comply with the provisions of the IFA.

A number of related trends are evident. Initially, the GUFs began to build from the basis of the few Codes of Conduct negotiated at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The clearest example of this practice is the international agreement between Danone and the IUF (Danone and IUF, 1994). Beginning in 1985, management and trade unions met regularly over international issues and in 1989, they negotiated two agreements on equality and information (Danone and IUF, 1989a, 1989b). Danone's 1994 IFA with the IUF built on this history (Danone and IUF, 1994) which again provided the context for a further agreement relating to the restructuring of the company's European operations (Danone and IUF, 1997). Under this agreement, the company committed itself to provide training, to maintain benefits for transferred workers as well as to pay the wages of former employees on probation with another employer as well as to find jobs for its former employees at "generally comparable pay rates" (Danone and IUF, 1997). More recently, however, IFAs were negotiated on the basis of world company councils and global trade union networks, for example the agreement reached at Volkswagen (Volkswagen, Group Global Works Council and IMF, 2002; see also Tørres and Gunnes, 2003: 36; Müller, Platzer and Rüb, 2003).

The structure and organization of industries as well as the history of union-employer relations in different sectors also provide the parameters of the variations between different IFAs (see Hammer, 2005). These agreements range from very general rights-based statements (IUF) to more elaborate collective agreement-type documents (ICEM). Complementing this distinction, a number of GUFs act as global links in fragmented sectors (IUF, UNI) while others have strong national affiliates who have gained roles in facilitating and monitoring their IFAs (IMF).

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A further feature of IFAs is that they begin to address issues relating to the transformation of corporate governance structures, as embodied in supply chains (Fichter and Sydow, 2002). ICEM has achieved agreements with the multinationals Statoil and Freudenberg. In the revised global agreement involving Statoil, the company commits itself to "notify its sub-contractors and licensees of the accord and encourage compliance" (Statoil, NOPEF and ICEM, 2003). In another case, the Chiquita IUF agreement requires suppliers, contract growers and joint venture partners to provide evidence that they respect national legislation and the core labour standards referred to in the agreement. However, the agreement also acknowledges that this depends on the company's influence over suppliers as well as the availability of "appropriate and commercially-viable supply alternatives" (Chiquita, IUF and Colsiba, 2001).

A crucial element of global labour standards agreements concerns the provisions for monitoring. This feature significantly distinguishes framework agreements from internal Codes of Conduct or declarations of corporate social responsibility. At Freudenberg, for example, an annual meeting is held to assess implementation of the agreement (Freudenberg, ICEM and IG BCE, 2000). In the case of Chiquita, a procedure has been established to deal with conflicts as well as a review committee which meets twice a year and has the authority to convene extraordinary meetings for urgent cases. Another agreement, between Skanska and the IFBWW, provides for an independent workplace inspection procedure as well as for binding arbitration where appropriate (Skanska and IFBWW, 2001). Finally, the agreement at the German construction multinational Hochtief includes the appointment of a special officer who will monitor the application of the agreement (Hochtief, IG Bau and IFBWW, 2000).

Even so, a new development with IFAs appears to be in the making, in relation to the scope and scale of IFAs. One recent IFA, signed with Electricité de France is both comprehensive in its coverage and detailed in its application. It is signed by two GUFs for the first time ever (Public Services International and International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) and two other international bodies (International Federation of Mining and Energy and the World Federation of Industry Workers). In addition, the agreement is signed by a number of national unions from Argentina, Brazil, France, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, United Kingdom, and Slovakia, and the elected representatives of the Asia Pacific Concertation Committee. The agreement draws on the political developments that have taken place in relation to corporate social responsibility, involving multinationals/transnationals, governments and supra-national agencies as well as global unions (Boys, 2005; Electricité de France *et al.*, 2005). Thus, there appears to be a process of cumulation

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taking place, whereby earlier agreements are drawn upon to provide the reference point for this recent comprehensive one.

The pursuit of IFAs can be seen as the sharp end of a focus on labour rights in relation to TNCs and state governments. However, in practice, questions remain about the organization, operation and implementation of IFAs: the relation between different levels of trade union as signatories and/or as monitors; the relation between GUFs with overlapping constituencies, but who may not be signatories to the IFA; and the complex relation between the centre and the periphery (with most IFAs signed by unions based in corporate home countries, usually in the north, but covering the MNC/TNC world operations, often in the south).

THE ADVENT OF MULTI-FACETED TRADE UNIONISM

The puzzle is why international trade union bodies, and particularly the GUFs, were able to take key steps over the last decade towards establishing themselves as more effective international trade union bodies, negotiating the recognition of trade union rights and not earlier. After all, the ICFTU and the GUFs have relatively long histories; and they have long attempted to influence international employment policies. The critical feature of the last decade is that a multi-faceted form of trade unionism is in the process of emerging. Such a unionism is a layered form of organization, with different levels working to achieve recognition and an impact in international sectors and regions. It means that international union bodies are beginning to review and reconsider past approaches in the distinctive circumstances of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The limitations of the past are twofold. First, the global unions were unable to secure any real leverage over the enforcement of Codes of Conduct. Global unions neither had an effective platform whereby they could engage with the corporations, nor were they organized in ways that enabled them to act effectively (on this aspect for national unions, see Fairbrother, 1996, 2000 and 2005; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003). Second, and related, the then ITSs and the ICFTU did not have the capacity to realize the potential of the Codes of Conduct (on this aspect for national unions, see Lévesque and Murray, 2002; Fairbrother and Yates, 2003). The outcome was that the initial efforts by these organizations were at times marked by insufficient organizational resources, whereas the second time around, these union bodies were in a position to take decisive steps to realize their aims and objectives, at an international level. It was against this background and in the context of a radically transformed international political economy that the GUFs began to seek International Framework Agreements.

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By the 1990s the GUFs, rather than the ICFTU, were in a position, and organized, to not only pursue the signing of IFAs but also to establish rudimentary processes of monitoring (often based on existing institutional structures such as world company councils or European Works Councils). The reasons for this shift in capacity are firstly, that IFAs focus on trade union rights whereas Codes of Conduct attempt to regulate the behaviour of companies (specified in Table 2). Thus, the IFAs provide a formal platform or occasion for trade unions to voice their concerns on a range of recognized items. Secondly, IFAs establish procedures for the GUFs, along with their affiliate unions, to monitor these core labour rights in ways that were not possible for national trade unions in an earlier period. Thirdly, the international basis of the GUFs and the ICFTU mean that they are potentially in a position to negotiate internationally, providing they have both the competencies and delegated authority to do so.

TABLE 2

Codes of Conduct versus International Framework Agreements, 2004

Codes of Conduct	*International Framework Agreements*
Unilateral initiatives	Negotiated between labour and corporate management
Do not necessarily recognize all core labour standards	Recognize all core labour standards
Rarely cover suppliers	Usually cover suppliers
Monitoring, if any, controlled by management	Unions involved in implementation
Weak basis for labour-management dialogue	Strong basis for dialogue between trade unions and management

Source: IMF, http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?id=47&lid=2&cid=7798 [accessed 07/01/04]

Another indication of an emerging complex union strategy is provided by the sophisticated interplay by GUFs in their promotion of IFAs, and the growing critique in some quarters of world company councils. IFAs have often been initiated on the back of trade union networks or world company councils in TNCs (Tørres and Gunnes, 2003: 36). Increasingly, there is a reconsideration of the role and place of world company councils by the GUFs. The International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), for example, recently questioned the role of some of its 24 world company councils. The general secretary Marcello Malentacchi stated that the IMF World Auto Company Councils are no longer appropriate and their structures should

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be reassessed: "At this point, it is silly for the Nissan Council to meet in the absence of Renault and ditto for the Mazda and Mitsubishi Councils." (IMF 2000).

However, such strategies always depend on the specific circumstances of the global industry structure; a similar coverage in the electrical industry or the mechanical and engineering industry would require around 60 world company councils. Russo (1998: 10) underlines the role of the IMF in the establishment of world company councils:

> As perhaps the most influential [global union federation], the IMF and its affiliated unions have developed in the 1990s World Company Councils that have brought together workers from the same company employed in different countries. To support their efforts, the IMF has allocated forty-percent of future income for international solidarity assistance. But like FIET [Fédération Internationale des Employés et des Techniciens], IMF has yet to lead any sustained strategic corporate campaign.

Thus, the crucial issue in this context is whether these approaches can be developed into a flexible repertoire for international trade unionism (Steiert, 2001).

Overall, it would appear that we are witnessing the emergence of a multi-faceted approach to labour questions by the GUFs. This approach became apparent in the late 1990s in a campaign against the Dutch retail grocer Royal Ahold NV which focussed on the latter's restructuring plan as well as basic labour rights. In this campaign the International Brotherhood of Teamsters developed a research-based agenda, built co-operations with a number of local NGOs and lead its campaign on a global level (see Russo, 1998). The then international trade secretariat Fédération Internationale des Employés et des Techniciens (FIET, subsequently merged with other global unions to form UNI) developed from providing mainly a research, co-ordination, organizational and solidarity function towards "becoming more aggressively involved in the establishment of basic social, political and economic rights in the global economy" (Russo, 1998: 7). Success came when Royal Ahold NV finally agreed to establish a World Consultation and Information Committee and to respect basic labour rights. Yet, although FIET barely participated in specific struggles, this campaign was important in changing its vision regarding global bargaining and corporate campaigns (Russo, 1998: 7).

AN ASSESSMENT

The adoption of a multi-faceted approach to negotiation, representation and action by the GUFs over the last few years is the outcome of a complex

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history involving the pursuit of Codes of Conduct in the 1970s and 1980s, the advocacy of labour rights in the 1990s and the elaboration of IFAs toward the end of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. While any one phase of this history does not constitute a "new" approach by trade unions, when taken together and set against the background of the GUFs as relatively isolated, bureaucratic and remote organizations, a sea-change is in process. Under the mantle of pursuing the recognition of core labour rights the GUFs are setting out demands that indicate that the balance of power within trade unions is shifting towards the international level (albeit in an embryonic form) and towards trade unions in their relations with the seemingly over-powerful TNCs that are dominant in the current moment. It is in this respect, that the pursuit of IFAs represents a singular accomplishment by trade unions at all levels of organization and representation.

An important point to note in the changing history of these global unions is that the circumstances in which they operated began to change in decisive ways from the 1970s onwards. The transformation of the international political economy over the last three decades created a new framework for union organization and activity at an international level. As indicated, the global labour process has transformed the material base of established patterns and class compromises (van der Pijl, 1998; Burnham, 1999; Rainnie and Fairbrother, forthcoming). This process provided the class base for the political radicalization of an international campaigning unionism. A related aspect for international union renewal is the way in which capital has been recomposed and reconstituted as an international managerial class, expressed and located within major international corporations, as well as in the international organizations. The latter decisively influenced the direction and the circumstances of international restructuring, involving governments as well as TNCs. Such developments provide the terrain for an increased saliency of international union representation across a range of themes, but particularly in relation to labour rights.

However, context alone does not explain why these trade union bodies were able to acquire an effectiveness in the 1990s and 2000s and not earlier. This aspect draws attention to the representational base and form of international trade union bodies. The international level of representation was by and large remote, bureaucratic and isolated for much of its history. The reason for this situation was that the locus of unionism was in the workplace and at a national level. These trade unions were organized on occupational, sectoral or general bases, often driven by a relatively strong societal logic (e.g., on Anglo-American unions and related unions movements, see Fairbrother and Griffin, 2002; on European unions, see Hyman, 2001; Hege and Dufour, 2002). They addressed the political and economic

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circumstances of the states in which they were located, and international questions were of secondary interest and concern. With the relative and in many cases absolute decline in union membership, influence and relevance during the 1980s, the balance of relations between the nationally-based forms of unionism and the international trade union bodies began to shift.

The experiences gained by both national unions as well as regional forms of union cooperation also underwrote the increasing relevance of more international forms of representation. An example of such an analysis is that by Wills (1998), studying the potential of European Works Councils as a platform for trade unions to review the implications of the internationalization of finance and manufacture (see also Müller, Platzer and Rüb, 2003 and Steiert, 2001). In establishing a role in the new economic order, leaders of these international trade union bodies have both drawn upon familiar tools of representation, such as framework agreements, and on the rationales of representation, stressing accountability and participation. The GUFs have been involved in a long process of elaborating established methods and modes of representation in distinct and relevant ways. While negotiation and campaigning at an international level is not new, what is novel is the ways in which framework agreements, the negotiations that lead up to them, and associated campaigns are rooted in the day-to-day realities of members, and not the musings of remote international leaders. While the emphasis here has been on international union leadership, the shifts in focus and the division of labour between the global unions would not have been possible without the beginnings of recognition, implicit or otherwise, of the changing circumstances of union representation and action. Of course, such connections and articulations may have different sources, ranging from the requests of beleaguered union groups (see Russo, 1998) to the energetic internationally driven campaigns by the ITLGWF over the use of child labour in the production of soccer balls and the IUF/EI on child labour in agriculture (ILO, 2002).

The GUFs, as international trade union bodies, are part of a process of developing multi-faceted approaches towards international employers and supra-national agencies. These unions are working alongside the ICFTU in an agreed division of labour so as to address complex social and economic relations at a global level. They have begun to develop the capacities to negotiate such agreements, with a coverage that would not have been expected, or even sought, a few years earlier. Underpinning these agreements is a complex and emergent relationship between national unions and their memberships, and GUFs. In these respects, the global unions are engaged in a process of union renewal, at an international level. While the actual impact and potential of these developments, and in particular, the signing and initial implementations of IFAs for the global unions and

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their affiliates remain to be seen, the platform for negotiating regulatory frameworks may be there. Thus, not only is this a multi-faceted form of trade unionism in process of emerging, but it is also a trade unionism that is reshaping the tools of action in an on-going and reflexive manner.

CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, the initiatives by global unions in relation to the international political economy indicate a process of adaptation and effectiveness that was not evident in the 1970s and 1980s. There are two aspects to this shift. The recomposition of the international political economy in the 1980s provided the opportunity for global unions to address the international features of work and employment. Simultaneously, the global unions forged a distinctive division of responsibility, particularly between the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Global Union Federations. Against a background of remoteness and very attenuated forms of representation, these global unions embarked upon a complex process of renewal.

It is important to note that these unions did not necessarily develop new tools of action. Rather, they were able, for the first time, to make use of negotiating spaces provided by corporate councils, trade union negotiating bodies, states, and supra-national agencies. The means of securing this opportunity came with building on the long established Codes of Conduct and securing framework agreements. In principle, these agreements provide platforms for the global unions, their affiliate unions and members to act in ways that will enhance the position of their memberships worldwide. While the evidence of actual involvement in putting these frameworks into effect is limited, the potential remains and is a prospect for the future. They provide an opportunity for the further renewal of the global unions as the "new" international political economy develops and matures.

With the pursuit of such initiatives by global unions, there is a possibility of a process of union renewal, based on complex relations between the local and the global as well as the development of an effective repertoire of tools. Increasingly, the thrust of globalization is driven by and qualified by the complex relation between governments and international organizations, international enterprises and complex financial arrangements. However, the emerging complex of relations is beginning to address this shift in the new international political economy. As part of this process, a genuine international and renewed trade unionism becomes a possibility.

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RÉSUMÉ

Le syndicalisme international : efforts passés et perspectives d'avenir

Le syndicalisme international a connu des développements majeurs en réaction à la configuration mouvante du capital international depuis le début des années 1970. La clef de ce phénomène réside dans la place prépondérante qu'occupent des firmes transnationales en s'imposant comme institutions de l'économie internationale et comme initiatrices des changements dans les structures de classe qui s'ensuivent. En partant de cela, la Confédération internationale des syndicats libres (CISL) et les Secrétariats professionnels internationaux d'alors (renommés en 2000 sous le vocable de Fédérations syndicales internationales) ont commencé à gérer cette situation stratégique nouvelle. De façon croissante, les centres d'intérêt que constituent les canaux institutionnels bien établis tels que les Nations Unies et, plus particulièrement, l'Organisation internationale du Travail, se

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sont déplacés et il s'établit graduellement un processus de développement et de raffinement d'instruments de négociation au niveau de l'entreprise. Quoique des efforts, tel que celui de la création des comités d'entreprises internationaux, ont connu un échec au cours des années 1960, on prétend que les années 1990 ont marqué un regain chez les institutions syndicales, basé sur un changement des conditions matérielles de l'ordre international.

Deux développements sont au cœur de ce changement. D'abord, les trois dernières décennies ont fourni une plateforme pour le développement d'un éventail d'instruments organisationnels et de représentation, des forums tels que des codes de conduite, des réseaux internationaux de syndicats, les comités d'entreprises européens, les comités d'entreprises internationaux et les accords-cadres internationaux. Alors que les trouées effectuées dans la promotion et la stabilisation de ces instruments ou forums étaient souvent mineures sur le moment, on y voyait là la formation en partie d'un répertoire cohérent de relations industrielles à l'échelle internationale. L'importance dans l'avenir de ces initiatives réside dans le fait qu'elles centrent l'action syndicale sur les entreprises transnationales et qu'elles fournissent la base pour l'établissement d'un lien entre le local et l'international.

Ensuite, un deuxième mouvement important s'est produit avec le développement des campagnes pour les droits des travailleurs, qui ont accaparé les activités et l'organisation de la CISL et des fédérations syndicales internationales au cours des années 1980, et plus particulièrement au cours des années 1990. À l'origine, ces campagnes ont pris le nom de campagne pour la « clause sociale ». Alors que le lien entre le commerce international et les normes principales du travail ne s'était jamais réalisé, cet événement prenait une importance durable, en ce sens qu'il façonnait une partie clef de l'agenda du syndicalisme international. Ce processus a également débouché sur une répartition de la responsabilité, alors que la CISL assumait un rôle de leader en transigeant avec les agences supranationales, telles que l'Organisation mondiale du commerce et le Fond monétaire international; les fédérations syndicales internationales envisagèrent la possibilité de négociations internationales impliquant des syndicats nationaux, des entreprises transnationales, des associations d'employeurs et, à l'occasion, des États.

En centrant leur attention sur les entreprises transnationales, au moment où se développait la première vague des comités d'entreprises internationaux et des codes de conduite, de même que l'attention accordée au noyau des droits des travailleurs, les fédérations syndicales internationales sont parvenues de façon croissante à mettre ensemble les fragments d'une structure de base de relations industrielles internationales. Cela prit forme dans la poursuite d'accords-cadres internationaux, plus particulièrement vers la fin des années 1990. Même si les origines des accords-cadres internationaux

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datent des années 80 avec Danone et l'Union internationale des travailleurs de l'alimentation, ce ne fût pas avant que les entreprises transnationales œuvrent dans un environnement d'échanges internationaux que les fédérations syndicales internationales commencèrent à connaître le succès dans la réalisation de telles ententes. En tout et partout, 37 accords-cadres mondiaux ont été conclus avant le mois de mars 2005, dont 32 ont été signés depuis le début de l'an 2000.

Chose étonnante, on a relativement peu discuté du syndicalisme international dans les débats sur la revitalisation ou le regain du syndicalisme, sauf quelques exceptions qui ont abordé l'analyse du syndicalisme mondial sous l'angle de l'économie politique. En s'appuyant sur deux courants d'analyse au sein des débats sur le regain du syndicalisme : les conditions de changement et la capacité émergente d'un syndicalisme mondial, on développe une analyse particulière. L'argument qu'on met de l'avant est à l'effet que bien que les formes antérieures d'organisation et de représentation du syndicalisme international étaient adéquates (quoique fermées, voire même cloîtrées) au sein de l'ordre international, elles ont dû revoir leurs modes d'organisation et d'opération en regard du nouvel ordre international. Cela a amené un ordre international restructuré et un ensemble reconstitué de relations entre les syndicats internationaux, les agences internationales et les organisations à vocation économique. Alors qu'au cours des décennies 1960 et 1970 des éléments de production et de fabrication à l'échelle mondiale étaient présents, sous formes d'alliances, de partenariats, d'ententes de marchés, d'accord de commerce et autres, ils n'étaient pas complètement développés, ni appuyés par des institutions supranationales matures. Ce n'est qu'en 1990, dans un contexte de pratiques émergentes au plan du syndicalisme international, et en harmonie avec le caractère matériel et institutionnel modifié de l'ordre économique mondial, que ces initiatives syndicales ont connu un changement majeur au plan de leur préoccupation, de leur vision et de la création d'outils et de forums propres à l'organisation et la représentation à l'échelle internationale.

L'aboutissement de ce processus historique se présente sous une forme de syndicalisme en émergence qui comporte de multiples facettes. Un tel syndicalisme adopte le type d'organisation à paliers multiples, avec différents niveaux d'organisation et de représentation, qui fonctionnent de manière inégale en vue d'atteindre la reconnaissance et d'exercer une influence dans les secteurs et les régions à l'échelle internationale. Cela signifie aussi que, parmi les institutions syndicales professionnelles, une division du travail plus cohérente émerge entre les fédérations syndicales internationales et la Confédération internationale des syndicats libres; ce même phénomène se produit également chez d'autres entités du mouvement syndical mondial. De plus, cela signifie que les fédérations syndicales internationales commencent

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à réviser de façon active et à reconsidérer des approches antérieures dans les circonstances particulières de la fin des années 1990 et celles du début de l'an 2000. Alors que les efforts initiaux déployés par ces organismes, au cours des décennies 1960 et 1970, étaient marqués au coin d'une absence d'appariement entre leurs ressources et leurs ambitions politiques, ces institutions syndicales se trouvent dans une position de poser des gestes en vue de réaliser leurs aspirations et leurs objectifs à l'échelle internationale. C'est dans cette perspective que les institutions syndicales internationales, et plus particulièrement les fédérations syndicales internationales ont fait les démarches nécessaires au cours de la dernière décennie en vue de s'affermir comme institutions syndicales internationales plus efficaces en négociant la reconnaissance de droits syndicaux.

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