

**FOUNDING CONGRESS OF
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)
Vienna, 1-3 November 2006**

**PLENARY PANEL II
“GLOBAL UNIONS - GLOBAL BUSINESS”
15.00 – 16.30, THURSDAY 2 NOVEMBER**

Notes from Mr. Larry Cohen, President, Organising Committee of AFL-CIO, USA

1--While both are important we need to distinguish between internal organizing or recruitment and campaigns to build a union and win recognition where employers can resist. There is no need for ITUC to focus on recruitment. National labor centers, global unions and unions themselves can handle recruitment with the right resources.

2--The ITUC needs to primarily focus on situations where employers or governments resist union recognition and collective bargaining rights for workers, particularly governments and large multi-national corporations.

3--There is a nearly universal connection between political action and collective bargaining and organizing rights. In nations with active worker based political movements there is much more likely to be strong collective bargaining and organizing rights. These rights are likely to change as governments change and the orientation of the governing party towards collective bargaining and organizing rights changes. This connection between Collective bargaining and Organizing rights and political action is a perfect focus for the ITUC, bringing to bear pressure from stronger areas to support workers in weaker areas and isolating the governments and employers that resist collective bargaining and organizing rights.

4--Much is written elsewhere on definition of collective bargaining and organizing rights but at the minimum we are demanding union recognition whenever a majority of workers support it in any appropriate bargaining unit. We are demanding neutrality from employers which at minimum means no resources from governments or corporations utilized to oppose workers who want to join a union.

5--As for the corporate focus, the ITUC should primarily focus on corporations which cut across sectoral or GUF lines like General Electric or Accenture and where little progress is being made in other forums. For example GE dominates 14 industries from finance and insurance to locomotives, plastics, appliances, lighting and broadcasting, based in the US but the majority of their revenue is now generated outside the US. Accenture leads global outsourcing in a cycle of cutting workers rights and conditions to the global bottom while their own profits grow, based in Bermuda but operating globally. More importantly these campaigns can serve as a model for other multi national work that is coordinated through GUFs or by unions bilaterally.

Larry Cohen
CWA
October, 2006