

# Building internationalism

## Why build internationalism?

*Yoon Youngmo, KCTU, Korea:* 'Only world wide solidarity and struggles can defend our rights and defeat neo-liberalism. I appeal for strong international struggle.'

*Chittabrata Majumdar, CITU, India:* 'We must have one objective - to unify the entire working class. The capitalist class is united - we are not... Our experience tells us that without unity, irrespective of affiliation, you cannot successfully struggle against globalisation.'

*Paddy Crumlin, MUA, Australia:* 'We love our country but we also love our comrades internationally. We organise, discuss, train and educate. We are inclusive not exclusive. We share and are honest. We find political and economic solutions. Justice, community and collectivism - we'll work with those who support this. We ask people to forget media distortions and listen to their head and their heart.'

This is not an MUA formula but an international formula. Every dispute is a collective dispute. Every failure is a collective failure. Every victory is a collective victory.'

*John Maitland, CFMEU, Australia:* 'Traditional militant action alone cannot defeat a TNC. This action needs to be

*Tanya van Meelis documents Sigtur delegates' comments and responses to a range of questions.*

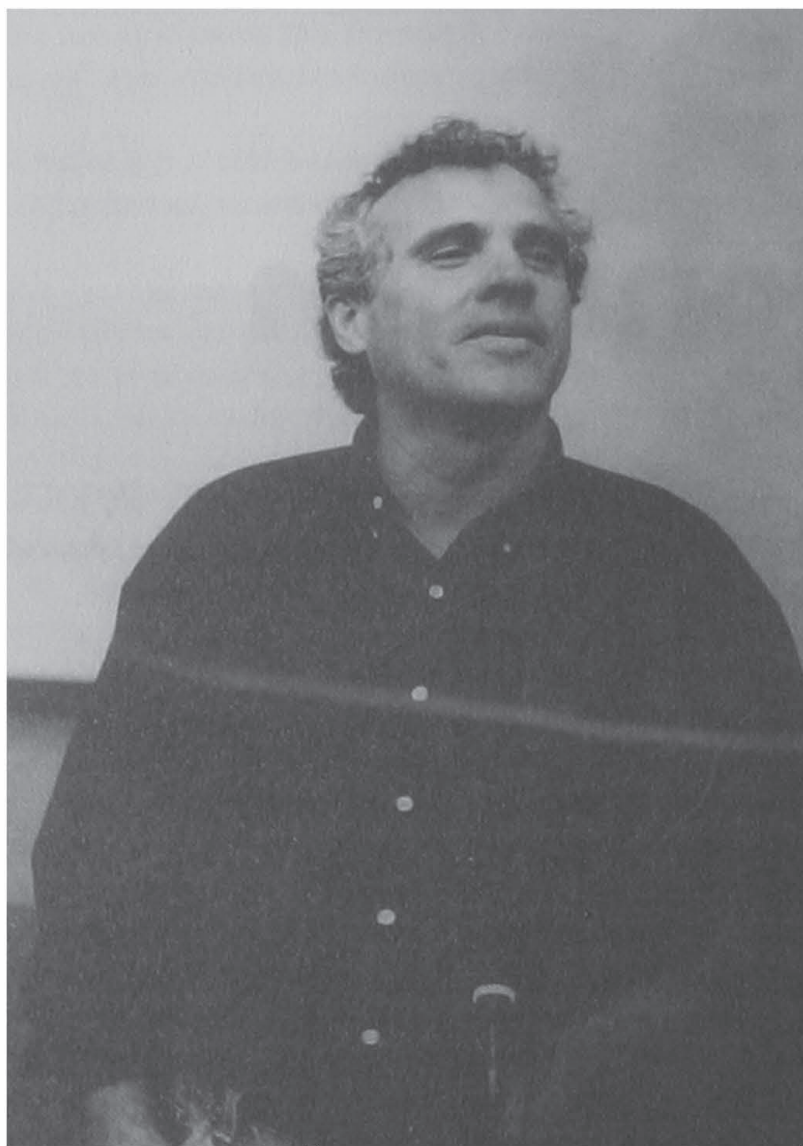
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supported by unions inside and outside the country.'

## Building alliances/broadening campaigns

*Chittabrata Majumdar, CITU, India:* 'The struggle against globalisation is not the struggle of the working class alone. We approached all other organisations - youth, women, students, peasants - and brought them onto one platform.'

*John Maitland, CFMEU, Australia:* 'Rio Tinto now also faces action from Norway, Portugal, the Philippines and Indonesia. Working with different groups is not easy. Using technology helps - the page on the ICEM website is very useful. But we need more than the Internet and enthusiasm. We need trust and support. We need to make sure that we use our collective strength to defend ourselves. This is a simple extension of what national unions do. In a global context, workers must have international organisations - we must move across borders to consolidate campaigns.'



*Paddy Gumlin, MUA, Australia.*

**John Mattland, CFMEU, Australia:**  
'You need spousal involvement in campaigns. When we demonstrated at Rio Tinto's headquarters, workers were there with their wives and their children.

This caused the company considerable embarrassment. The company also was unsure how to handle security around the demonstration. They would have taken a very different position if there were only mineworkers demonstrating.'

**Peter Malepe, COSATU, South Africa:**  
'No struggle is a complete struggle without the participation of women.'

## **Impediments to internationalism**

**John Mattland, CFMEU, Australia:** 'Impediments to internationalism are when one's own membership doesn't know enough - the union needs to develop and extend education programmes. Another concern a union may have regards resource allocation to international activities - some members who are inward looking may complain. We need to explain that we operate in a global village and can't be left behind. We now put a large amount of resources into sophisticated training - we have focused on political training and have been very successful. People need to understand their industry's place in international trade.'

**Maxine Gay, New Zealand Trade Union Federation, New Zealand:** 'The major impediment to building worker internationalism is ourselves as trade union leaders. The

globalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange provide the objective basis for a strong and vibrant international working class movement. Yet in spite of our rhetoric we are timid and impotent in the face of globalisation and seek to collaborate with international capital rather than oppose it. The international trade union movement must undergo a complete transformation itself if it is going to try and transform the most exploitative international economic order that this century has seen.

'Workers of the world unite!' must be more than a slogan, it should be our guiding principle if we are going to build a



workers' counter power to that of international capital. Those who wish to surrender to capital before the fight has begun are not wanted or needed in the strong and fighting international trade union movement that we must build in the 21st Century.

### **The role of the South**

**Peter Malepe, COSATU, South Africa:**

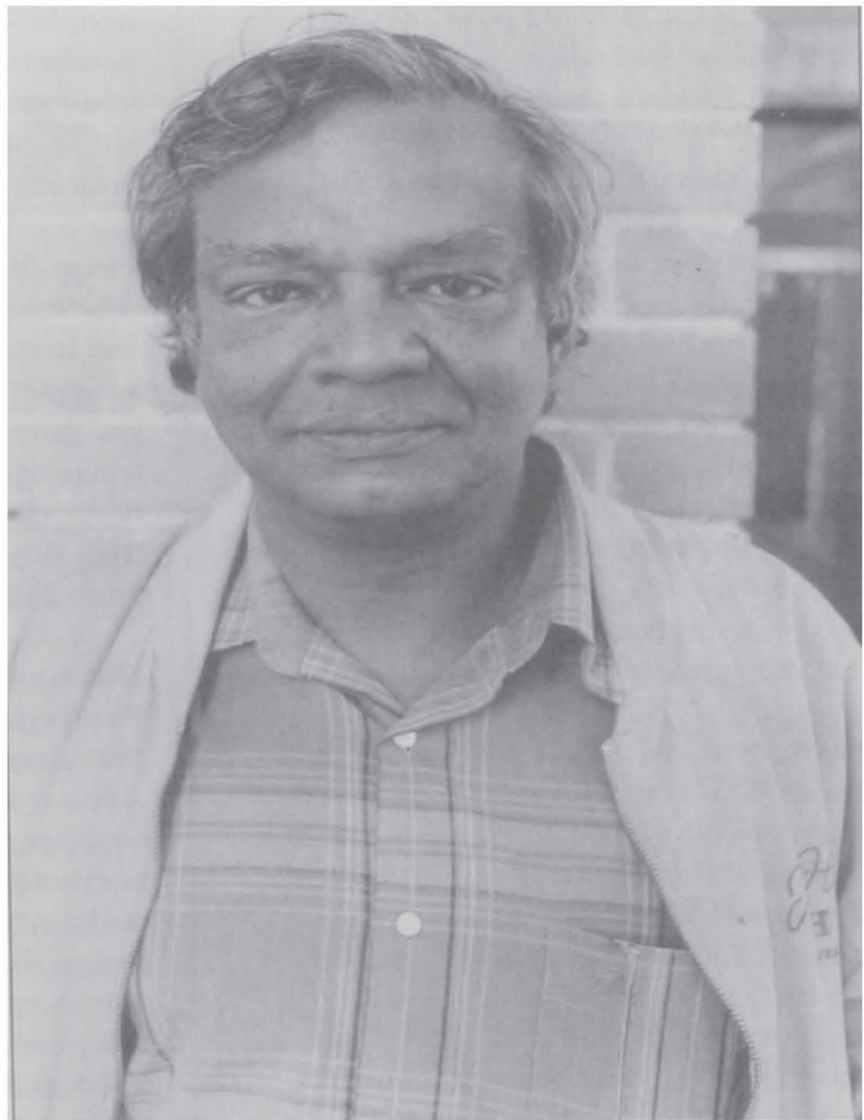
'Underdeveloped countries must give direction to the new world order. No one else will do it. Don't expect imperialists to wake up and understand the trade union movement... we can't sit in meeting after meeting and complain and do nothing about it.'

### **On the conference**

**Emilia P. Dapulang, Kilusang Mayo Uno, Philippines:** 'The

workshops were useful. Delegates had direct communication with what was happening at grassroots level. I found the workshops more fruitful than the plenary, since not all the countries spoke in the plenary... I am hoping that the conference will strengthen union leaders and prevent them from being co-opted to implement globalisation.'

**Nelson Mibombeni, CEPPWAWU, South Africa:** 'We need to start the process of engaging on a one-to-one basis so that we can understand how the other unions work, how they are organising and can identify common issues as trade unions... As South Africa, we are lagging behind on many



*Arokia Dass Victor of Malaysia.*

aspects. For example, we are hosting, but other visiting unions brought more memorabilia. We were not as well prepared. I'm glad that as CEPPAWU we brought 50 books to give to the visiting delegates.'

**Park, In-sook, KCTU, Korea:** 'When we first heard we were going to South Africa, we were more interested in COSATU than Sigtur itself. However, during Sigtur, we found many common issues with each unions' activities and situation. We were happy to hear a lot of good impressions of KCTU struggles from other comrades. Through the true sincerity of those participants in the conference, we were



assured of the growing possibility of international solidarity.'

### **On South African unions**

**Arokia Dass Victor, Labour Resource Centre, Malaysia:** 'I was involved in the 1991 initiative. I saw COSATU then and was encouraged by their spirit. Now I see that the enthusiasm is no longer here. I can understand the struggle against apartheid is over. But when you lose your spirit, you lose the soul of your struggle... If you lose your spirit, you lose everything. I'm worried that the South African unions will become like unions in our country. We need new thinking. Once complacency sets in, it starts off something.'

**Park, In-sook, KCTU, Korea:** 'When we saw COSATU comrades, we felt COSATU was more developed and more stable than KCTU and the Korean labour movement. The structure and role of each of the affiliates and COSATU are well established. We also saw that comrades are very dedicated and committed. COSATU acts as a very good national centre. It connects with shopstewards at the workplace and is quite vigorous. What meant a lot to us was COSATU's policy towards women workers and its dedication to organise and work for them. We saw that COSATU still has many tasks and difficulties facing it, like we have in Korea. However, we still firmly believe that COSATU is taking care of its tasks and members.'

### **What next?**

**Chittabrata Majumdar, CITU, India:** 'We need to expand this forum to make it more effective. One problem though is finding money for third world countries to attend. For us, we had to collect about \$1 500 per delegate - we could do it but smaller organisations couldn't. We could hold smaller conferences to include more

people - for example a conference for Southern Africa, Asia etc... The communication network must be strengthened, for example, spreading information about Rio Tinto.'

**Peter Malepe, COSATU, South Africa:** 'The message from what we have watched and heard is clear. This is about class struggle, about exploitation by capitalists and governments. If Australia can do it in terms of solidarity - we cannot fail. All of us are duty bound to take the resolutions from this conference forward, implement them and build solidarity.'

**Hemasari Dharmabumi, Social Workers Union of the LBH Bandung, Indonesia:** 'We must ensure that the local union is strong. We need to approach each member of the union about internationalism - this will ensure that the nucleus (the membership) of the union is strong. We must also make sure that unions remain independent financially and independent from government and political party control... Among the unions there are different political perspectives. How can we build internationalism with these gaps or differences? We have to put our red line together - identify our common interests - and build our power. Unless we do this we will be divided, separated and weakened. This internationalism must be built on our common interests. We can still respect our differences and argue about them. But when facing globalisation, we find that we have the same interests.'

**Arokia Dass Victor, Labour Resource Centre, Malaysia:** 'The South African experience will be useful for others to hear. COSATU affiliates should send comrades on exchange programmes - hopefully something should rub off...' ★