



English for European trade unionists



Level 4

**Workers of the World**

**Study Guide**



The ETUI-REHS is financially supported by the European Commission

## Workers of the World

### Study Guide

#### Lead-in activity 1

##### Solidarity links (p.4)

- How far do you think trade unions' priorities are different in the developing world?
- In general terms all trade unions will have similar objectives in increasing the living standards of their members and improving their working environment.*
- Trade unions in the developing world may prioritise establishment of recognition rights and collective bargaining arrangements. They may be concerned with the human and democratic rights of their leaders and members. They will also be concerned to establish minimum standards of pay, holidays, health and safety etc. They are more likely to be concerned with political and economic development and the impact of structural adjustment programmes or their methods.*
- Does your union have links with unions in the developing world?
- Many European trade unions will have links with unions in the developing world. Formal links are likely to develop at a national level and through bodies such as the International Trade Secretariats or The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. More informal links may be made at lower levels within trade unions and especially between worker in the same multinational companies.*
- What are the benefits of international trade union links between the developed and the developing world?
- There are many benefits of international trade union links and these include:*
- *awareness of conditions in other countries*
  - *mutual support in disputes*
  - *the exchange of information*
  - *learning from each other new and improved methods of conducting trade union activities*
  - *counterbalancing the power of multinational companies*

## Communication Activity 1

### The Brandt report: North – South (p.5)

- 1 The position of the line will depend on the basis on which you decided to divide the rich north from the poor south; one possibility is according to relative levels of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Here are some figures for GDP in various countries in 2003, calculated on a per capita basis according to the methodology adopted by the World Bank Atlas (Quid 2006, p. 1979). You may decide that all the countries with per capita GDPs below the \$5500 median figure given for the world as a whole are in the poorer 'south', and all the rest in the richer 'north' – which would give some very interesting results for your line, including placing Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia in the 'south'. The important thing is to agree on what criteria or indicators to use which could be GDP, infant mortality rates, life expectancy, education levels, etc.

Country	GDP Per capita [US \$]	Country	GDP Per capita [US \$]
<b>WORLD</b>	<b>5500</b>	Israel	16020
Algeria	1890	Ivory Coast	660
Australia	21650	Japan	34510
Bangladesh	400	Kenya	390
Bolivia	890	Lithuania	4490
Brazil	2710	Mexico	6230
Bulgaria	2130	Nicaragua	730
Chad	250	Nigeria	320
Chile	4390	Norway	43350
China	1100	Peru	2150
Congo	100	Philippines	1080
Denmark	33750	Poland	5270
Egypt	1390	Russia	2610
Estonia	4960	Saudi Arabia	8530
Germany	25250	Sierra Leone	150
Hong Kong	25430	South Africa	2780
India	530	Spain	16990
Indonesia	810	Turkey	2790

- 2
1. half of the world's population
2. 0.4%
3. 10% of the world's population
4. 80% of the world's income
5. 1%
6. Half are corporations
7. 80% of worldwide trade
8. 70%
9. 25%
10. 81 years
11. 36 years
12. 3 times

## Working with reading 1

### What's in a name? (p.9)

- 1 The title tells us that the article is about how we refer to the "Third World". The phraseology of the title, which includes a phrase from the Lord's Prayer (*"Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, world without end, Amen"*) perhaps indicates the scepticism of the author of the article through the use of irony.  
  
As well as the *Third World*, in English we refer to the *Developing World*, as well as the *South*.
- 2
  - 1 Because there was no longer a Second World since the collapse of Communism, so the term *Third World* was inappropriate.
  - 2 Because *all* countries, even 'developed' countries are still 'developing' and anyway the term is too long, and indicates a patronising attitude on the part of the user.
  - 3 The division into North and South over-simplifies: not all the North is rich nor all the South poor.
  - 4 Most aid goes to middle income countries rather than the low income countries who need it most.
  - 5 Other indicators include 'human development' rates or child mortality rates.

3

<b><u>Division according to purchasing power</u></b>		
<b>Term</b>	<b>No. of people</b>	<b>income p.a.</b>
1st World	900 million	above \$6,000
2nd World	1 billion	between \$1,500 -\$6,000
3rd World	3.5 billion	less than \$1,500
	includes 2.9 billion	less than \$500

4

<b><u>Abbreviation</u></b>	<b><u>In Full</u></b>
LICS	Lower Income Countries
MICs	Middle Income Countries
HICs	High Income Countries
NICs	Newly Industrialised Countries
LDCs	Least Developed Countries

## Working with video 1

### The work of an international trade union (p.13)

#### Interview with Tim Noonan (Australian)

Note: The full transcript of the interview is given here; specific answers to questions are underlined.

- 1 a) + b) We have a total membership of around about 155 million workers and our membership is of the national trade union centres so we are a confederation of confederations, if you like.
- c) Our primary function is to look after global economic and social questions International Labour Organisation work, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation, of course the United Nations, and we reinforce the work at that level by our campaigns and communication work in favour of trade union rights, of women workers, migrant labour, young workers, and specific work with different sectoral, global union federations.
- d) I've been here for about 19 years now. I think the organisation is better known, although it still remains far too much unknown.

**e) Past achievements**

We've certainly had an impact, a major impact on situations.... obviously supporting the workers of Poland, and the whole implication of that in terms of the end of the Cold War. We have been, I think, a significant player in bringing to an end apartheid in South Africa.

We've had a degree of impact on situations like the... that in Chile...we've got a lot of people out of jail, who've been put there by regimes and as a result of unscrupulous action by employers.

We've kept alive the notion that there needs to be a social dimension to the global economy at a time when it's been a very hostile environment for that kind of philosophy. It would have been easy for trade unions to just give up and to say – the approach that really originated with the Thatcher and Reagan governments– that, OK, it's lost and we might as well give up and go home. But we haven't allowed that to happen and we are beginning to see some signs, now that politicians are finally beginning to realise that the way that world trade rules are now set up, the way that the policies of the international financial institutions, the World Bank, and the IMF (*International Monetary Fund*), are being implemented is just plain wrong, and that we have to find new ways of doing things that put social standards and in particular, labour rights at the centre.

**2 Current campaigns – five Special Action programmes**

We are focusing on five what we call special action programmes at the moment as the ICFTU and one of those is dealing with the political process of globalisation where we are talking to progressive leaders around the world about building a social version of globalisation and replacing the current neo-liberal or utter free-market approach.

The second of our special action programmes relates to global action against poverty. There we have been working with Non Governmental Organisations in the global call to action against poverty – and that's a campaign about debt, aid and trade...

The third special action programme is about helping workers in Export Processing Zones (EPZs). These are zones mainly in developing countries, where in order to attract international investment, governments remove taxation burdens, they apply all kinds of incentives to get investors in, and amongst those incentives often is, either an explicit or an implicit denial of fundamental trade union rights.

The fourth area deals with International migration, migrant workers. and there, we are trying to *direct* action in favour of migrant workers, and this involves partnerships between sending and receiving countries, and bringing in the expertise of a number of our, particularly but not only, industrial country affiliates to help member organisations in Gulf States, or in West Africa, East Africa, Asia, Latin America...

And the fifth special action programme concerns China and there are two elements to that: one is maintaining the vigilance and the oversight to the extent that it is possible, about what's happening to workers and workers' rights in China. But the second aspect of that is seeking to find practical ways of influencing the situation in the workplace inside China.

## Working with words 2

### Phrasal verbs (p.16)

- 1 After trying several times to get the job, he just GAVE UP trying.
- 2 As a rule spoken agreements must be SET DOWN in writing if not they'll have very little validity in face of the law.
- 3 Due to pressure from international trade union federations in the textile industry, there is talk about SETTING UP a Global Works Council.
- 4 Many young university qualified people ARE LOOKING FOR jobs these days are rarely offered more than a short-term contract of a couple of years.
- 5 Multinational companies are reluctant to GIVE AWAY any information concerning their production supply chains.
- 6 Multinationals are slowly GIVING IN and allowing dialogue in the workplace because of pressure from the trade union organisations.
- 7 The job of international trade unions confederations is to LOOK AFTER the welfare of these workers who work in companies where there is no worker representation.
- 8 Trade union federations ARE LOOKING INTO the cases of repression against unionised workers especially in the Export Processing Zones.
- 9 When Manuel SETS OFF to work at 7.30am he's never sure at what time he'll be back home.
- 10 When there's a word you don't know the best thing to do is to LOOK it UP in the dictionary.

## Working with language 1

### Modal verbs (p.18)

*Put the followings sentences in order of politeness/formality by writing 1 by the most casual, 2 by the next most casual, and 6 by the most formal.*

- a. May I use your computer?
- b. Do you think I could use your computer?
- c. Can I use your computer?
- d. Is it alright if I use your computer?
- e. Might I use your computer?
- f. I wonder if I might use your computer?

4
3
1
2
5
6

Put the following sentences in order of probability by writing 1 by the most certain, 2 by the next most probable and so on:

That **could be** the postman now.

That **must be** the postman now.

That **might be** the postman now.

That **may be** the postman now.

2
1
4
3

In the following sentences, note that there is more than one possibility:

- 1 He **may/might/could/** have left his office by now but ....
- 2 She asked if she **could/might** attend the meeting.
- 3 .... you **won't/can't have** heard the latest ....
- 4 The line **can't have been** engaged all this time. There **could/might/may be** a fault on it.
- 5 She **might/may/could/have** missed her flight and taken a later one.
- 6 Where **might/could** I find a car to rent?
- 7 ....I'd like to know if I **might use** your telephone?
- 8 People **must/will have been** looking everywhere for it.
- 9 You **might/may not** even **have** to show ....
- 10 She **won't/can't have** changed ....

## Working with speaking 1

### Earning a living (p. 24)

There are no 'right' answers in this activity, as the idea is for people to describe what they see, and try to guess where the images are, using as many modal constructions as possible.

*-They could be in...*

*-It looks like they might be/ may be/ could be....*

*-They may be.....*

*-They might be....*

*-They must be (if you are sure).....*

etc.

- A. This photograph shows people (especially young people) working on a rubbish tip on the edge of Manila in the Philippines, and was taken in 2003. You can tell it's a warm country because of the cotton clothes people seems to be wearing. They are sorting through the rubbish, scavenging for useful bits and pieces that can be sorted, graded and packaged together and sold on for small sums of money. One of the more notorious of these tips, known locally and ironically as Smoky Mountain (a local beauty spot and tourist attraction) was closed down by the authorities, but in practice this just means that the problem moves elsewhere. People actually live on these rubbish tips, as they are near their work, and have all the materials for building their shanty town dwellings.
- B. This photograph shows a Bangladeshi family breaking or crushing bricks by the side of the road in Dhaka. It was taken in 2000. You can tell it is the Indian subcontinent because of the clothes people are wearing (saris). They are breaking up red bricks, reducing them to powder. In spite of this being dangerous work, because of the fine powder generated, no-one is wearing protective clothing, and several very young children are involved. The fragments are sold and used in the construction industry.

## Working with reading 2

### My traitor's heart (p.26)

Discssion points

- The major reason why workers are suffering from these sorts of conditions is because their economies are dominated by unfavourable terms of trade, debt, and multinational companies.
- European trade unions should ensure that they are not undermining their colleagues in the developing world. By establishing contact with a relevant trade union organisation, European trade unionists can obtain information about working conditions etc, and can publicise these and generally raise awareness among their members. "Twinning" which involves visits and

exchanges can help to strengthen these links. Trade unions can organise campaigns and boycotts to help protect colleagues elsewhere.

**Suggestions for trade union activity:**

- \* Seek information from international trade union organisations
- \* Twinning
- \* Ensure social clauses included in trade agreements
- \* Support solidarity campaigns
- \* Familiarise yourself with ILO conventions
- \* Education programmes

## Communication Activity 2

### Export Processing Zones (p.29)

#### 1 Setting the situation

Divide the class into two groups. One group concentrates on the video clips on the Philippines the other on the video clips on Honduras. As they watch, they note down what they see.

Get the learners to practise the present continuous for describing what is going on, for example:

- clothes they are wearing
- the actions taking place outside and inside the factories

Elicit the use of *must* for drawing conclusions about a present situation, e.g.

- it *must* be hot, noisy, tiring, hard-going, repetitive

Useful vocabulary:

- crowded
- stiflingly hot
- tiring
- to cut
- to stitch
- to fold
- to dye
- to iron
- to sort
- to bundle
- public transport
- food vendors

## 2 Role-play

The role-play is designed for ten participants. There are four role cards for the workers of each country and two "researcher" roles.

Depending on the number of learners in the class, the tutor will decide on how to divide them up and how many role cards to use. If there are fewer than ten participants, the roles can be combined and if there are more, three groups can be set up, which would mean duplicating some of the roles.

### Preparation phase

The "researchers" prepare the questions they would like to ask the workers based on the background information they have put together about each country. They are encouraged to use the functional language for discussion on p.39.

The "workers" should be encouraged to invent information about their working conditions and personal lives so as to make their situation more realistic. The tutor will help with the language needed to do so (talking about one's family, education, working conditions, prospects for the future...). The participants may need help with the vocabulary in their role cards.

## Working with words 3

### Verbs 'make' and 'do' (p.40)

MAKE	DO
an offer	harm
a suggestion	business
a decision	a favour
a mistake	a good turn
use of	damage
an enquiry	one's best
a choice	one's duty
sure	
work <sup>1</sup>	work
war	
a noise	
the most of	
room for	
a complaint	
an excuse	
an attempt	
certain	
a profit	
fun of	

<sup>1</sup> We say "What work do you do?" To *make* work means to create unnecessary or extra work, as in "He insists on double-checking everything. He's just *making work* for himself."

## Working with reading 3

### Woolworth's in Ghana (p. 42)

- 1 A supermarket chain
- 2 Unfavourably
- 3 She was dismissed because she attempted to set up a workers' committee.
- 4 Long working hours
- 5 On an individual level with the worker
- 6 So it seems. They help improve the communities where they are located.

## Lead-in activity 2

### Multinational companies (p.44)

*Discussion points:*

- Multinational companies are those with a headquarters in one country and subsidiaries in at least one other country.
- There can be advantages for the workers employed in that, as in most large organisations, union organisation is possible although the company may wish not to recognise this. IN the industrialised world, multinationals can be associated with good terms and conditions of employment resulting from their dominant market position.
- The disadvantages of working for multinationals result from their power to move capital and investment on a global scale which can lead to increased job insecurity. Some multinationals have clear anti-union policies and, in the developing countries, are associated with high levels of economic and environmental exploitation and poor pay and working conditions.
- Trade unions have tried to counter multinational power by
  - consumer boycotts - asking the public not to buy their products
  - corporate campaigns - targeting a company for a recognition campaign or to use publicity to try to improve its policies
  - Global Works Councils - meetings of trade unionists from different countries within the multinational
- What factors are required if a consumer boycott or corporate campaign is to be successful?

To be successful in their campaigns, trade unions will need to:

  - generate a high level of support from workers and the public
  - negotiate with the real decision makers in head office
  - seek government support where appropriate
  - generate high levels of media coverage
  - build strong links between trade unionists in different countries

**Working with reading 4**

**Book reviews (p.46)**

- 1 A Countdown to a Fairer World
- B Another World Is Possible If...
- C Consuming Cultures : Globalization and Local Lives
- D Ripped And Torn

2

1. serving as a warning (B)	cautionary
2. very fast (C)	hurtling
3. making use of (C)	harnessing
4. burning (D)	searing
5. evil (D)	sinister

3

<b>Verbal adjectives</b>	<b>Participles</b>
startling	harnessing
hurtling	befriending
building-blocks	helping
moving	
wide-ranging	
exciting	
searing	

## Working with video 2

### Targeting multinationals (p.49)

Interview with Doug Miller

- 1
  - a. The aim of this work is to help protect workers' rights by introducing agreements (international framework agreements) in multinationals which would apply in all the supplier companies, which would have to be disclosed.
  - b. Sometimes companies are reluctant to disclose their supply chain, and they also think they don't need these framework agreements because they already have codes of conduct in place.
  - c. It's not hard for companies to see the benefits of an agreement because codes of conduct (and they often have more than one) require constant monitoring and checking, which means lots of time-consuming 'compliance visits', whereas a single agreement is much easier to implement and respect, as the partners to the agreement are on the spot all the time.
  - d. The day conferences bring people together – supplier firms and brand owners – and gives them an opportunity to look at the issue of freedom of association, and collective bargaining. Doug Miller says he hopes that these discussions will create opportunities for workers to organise and reach agreements in these companies.

### 2 Words + Meanings

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. h | 7. f  |
| 2. c | 8. e  |
| 3. d | 9. i  |
| 4. a | 10. j |
| 5. b | 11. k |
| 6. l | 12. g |

### 3 Prepositions

1. The project I work **ON** is called "targeting multinationals".....
2. ....to find **OUT** where their production is
3. ....build a network for the purpose **OF** assisting.....
4. to move **TOWARDS** dialogue with the company...
5. ....getting employers to get **ROUND** the table on this
6. we have succeeded **IN** convincing them.....
7. the best way **OF** maintaining a watch over worker rights.....
8. this will create a space **FOR** organising....

*NB. The verb that follows a preposition is in the gerund form (-ing)*

**🔊 TRANSCRIPT Interview with Doug Miller**

*Multinationals coordinator, ITGLWF (International Tailor, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation)*

The project I work on is called targeting multinationals. Initially it was essentially to profile multinational companies to find out where their production is, establish whether we have trade union membership at those sites, organise workshops to bring them, those worker representatives together, build a network for the purpose of assisting the ITG to move towards dialogue with the company and hopefully achieve an international framework agreement to protect worker rights along those supply chains.

A key part of that agreement was always going to be ...that the company would disclose its locations of production. We've had some difficulties shall we say in the six years I've been working on this project, in getting employers to get round the table on this. Why? Because a lot of companies in textile, clothing and footwear have these codes of conduct and they turn round and they say, well, we've got this, why do we need a framework agreement? Significantly, last year, Nike finally disclosed its supply chain, largely because of pressure from the ITG and very quickly a number of leading companies followed: Puma, Timberland, Reebok, Levi's....so we're quite excited about this, because basically what that means is we're able to provide that information of locations to our affiliates. At the same time with some of the leading sportswear companies in the world and other brands like Gap and Levi's, we have got a constructive dialogue. We meet them at various multi-stakeholder initiatives so we know the corporate social responsibility managers really quite well. We have succeeded in convincing them, and it hasn't taken much to do this really, of the benefits of trade unionism in the workplace and collective bargaining.

It would make their lives so much easier because the current audit model where you have a code of conduct that needs to be monitored and verified is unsustainable, partly because a lot of supplier firms have lots of contracts with lots of buyers which means they're governed by in some cases up to 12 codes of conduct. There are stories around of some suppliers having 52 compliance visits in the year, which is just ridiculous and the best way of maintaining a watch over worker rights is having a trade union in the workplace with grievance procedures, disciplinary procedures and collective bargaining.

So our purpose at the moment, the way that the project has changed is that, in selected countries, we have commenced research in a number of supplier firms that we know are supplying particular companies with which we have a dialogue, and we will be scheduling day conferences really which will involve our affiliates, those supplier firms and the brand owners to really look at this whole issue of freedom of association, collective bargaining because of all the principles that you'll find in a code of conduct these are the ones that are implemented last, if at all and not satisfactorily and aren't very well monitored. And we're hoping that this will create the space for organising.

## Working with speaking 2

### Fair Trade (p.52)

Your group may like to discuss the effectiveness of these or other examples of fair trade adverts in your own country. Perhaps you could design an advert for another fairly traded product from the developing world.

#### Fair Trade Overview

Fair Trade is an innovative, market-based approach to sustainable development. Fair Trade helps family farmers in developing countries to gain direct access to international markets, as well as to develop the business capacity necessary to compete in the global marketplace. By learning how to market their own harvests, Fair Trade farmers are able to bootstrap their own businesses and receive a fair price for their products. This leads to higher family living standards, thriving communities and more sustainable farming practices. Fair Trade empowers farming families to take care of themselves - without developing dependency on foreign aid.

#### Social Benefits

The [Fair Trade Certified](#)<sup>™</sup> label guarantees:

- *A fair price*

The Fair Trade Certified label guarantees that farmers and workers received a fair price for their product. The Fair Trade price means that farmers can feed their families and that their children can go to school instead of working in the fields.

- *Quality products*

By receiving a fair price, Fair Trade producers can avoid cost-cutting practices that sacrifice quality. The Fair Trade producers' traditional artisanal farming methods result in exceptional products.

- *Care for the environment*

Most Fair Trade Certified coffee, tea and chocolate in the US is certified organic and shade grown. This means that the products you buy maintain biodiversity, provide shelter for migratory birds and help reduce global warming.

- *Community impact*

Empowered by the economic stability provided by Fair Trade, members of the COSURCA coffee cooperative in Colombia successfully prevented the cultivation of more than 1,600 acres of coca and poppy, used for the production of illicit drugs. In Papua New Guinea, the AGOGA cooperative, is investing in a medical team to meet the healthcare needs of its isolated rural community. In the highlands of Guatemala, indigenous Tzutuhil Mayans in the La Voz cooperative are sending local kids to college for the first time. Near Lake Titicaca, in Peru, the CECOVASA cooperative is assisting members from Quechua and Aymara indigenous groups in raising coffee quality and transitioning to certified organic production.

*"The fair price is a solution. It has given us the chance to pay a good price to our farmers. Those who are not in Fair Trade want to participate. For us it is a great opportunity. It gives us hope."*

-Benjamin Cholutío

### Environmental Benefits

Fair Trade guarantees that farmers use eco-friendly practices. The result is responsibly grown products that are healthy for you and for the world we live in.

## Working with speaking 3

### Trends in international migration (p. 54)

Some examples of sentences to describe trends shown in Figures 1 & 2:

#### Figure 1

1. Fewer people emigrated to major OECD countries in 2003.
2. In all, more people have emigrated to the EEA, Switzerland and the US than to the other OECD countries.
3. Australia and New Zealand had their highest the immigration rate in 2003.
4. Japan has the lowest immigration rate.
5. Permanent immigration to the EEA and Switzerland was a little more in 2003.
6. Permanent immigration to the US was a lot lower in 2003 than in 2002.
7. The US has the highest foreign-born population; Japan and Korea have the lowest.
8. More than 600.000 people acquired "European" nationality in 2003.
9. The percentage of foreign-born people in the US is higher than in the EEA.

#### Figure 2

1. According to the graph, there was a steep increase in asylum seekers in the EEA in the late 90's.
2. As is shown in the graph, there has been a steady decline in the number of asylum seekers in the EEA and Switzerland since 2002.
3. There was a very dramatic peak in the number of asylum seekers in Germany in 1992.
4. Between 1992 and 1994, the asylum seeking population dropped sharply in Germany.
5. The asylum-seeking population has remained fairly steady in the UK.
6. The asylum-seeking population slumped between '95 and '97 in the EEA and Switzerland (exc. Germany and UK).

7. Inflows of asylum seekers to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US decreased gradually in the late 90's.

## Working with language 2

### The Present Perfect tense (p. 59)

- 1 emigrated
- 2 has improved
- 3 has been
- 4 were removed
- 5 have exhibited
- 6 had - had fallen
- 7 has experienced                      has continued
- 8 saw
- 9 has been composed of
- 10 have become

## Working with speaking 4

### Pooling information (p.63)

*Note: The three articles used here have been adapted and shortened for the purpose of the activity*

The class is divided into small groups of three to four. The participants are given one part of a newspaper article; one of the participants gets the headline. The aim of the activity is that the participants find those who have information belonging to the same article. The participants will firstly need to figure out what the article is about and the ideas that they think will be developed. They will need to practice modal verbs for expressing possibility and certainty.

The participants move around the classroom asking and giving information as appropriate.

When the participants sharing the same article have found each other, they pool the information and make sense of the general theme developed in the article. They then prepare a short talk on the subject that they will deliver to the other groups

**NB.** The parts of the article combined do not make up the whole article. The original article is given here as a reference for the tutor.

**ARTICLE 1**

**1 An Indian takeaway that should make the banks think again**

*Patrick Collinson June 25<sup>th</sup> 2005*

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- 2** All those people who have seen their jobs outsourced to call centres abroad must be rubbing their hands in glee at the Sun's front page exclusive this week, detailing how - for as little as £3 - it bought hundreds of British names and banking details from crooks in Indian call centres.

To some people, there will be vague undertones of racism. After all, why should Indian call centre workers be any more crooked than those in Britain? But the ease with which personal details can be bought does raise legitimate concerns, and experts say data theft from overseas call centres has been a time bomb waiting to go off.

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- 3** Says the Lloyds TSB Group Union "The EU recognises that India does not meet the same rigorous standards of data security as European countries, so why cannot customers insist on not having their personal information transferred to India?"

The Financial Services Authority does not agree. It said this week that Indian call centres pose no greater risk to security than ones in the UK.

It says its research has found that security in Indian call centres is very good and in some cases more controlled than in this country.

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- 4** Call centre operators can only access data to answer a specific customer inquiry, no members of staff have access to a customer's full Pin or code words, and the software is specially designed to prevent data downloads.

But the worries remain. Companies that outsource to India pay their staff a fraction of the salaries paid in the UK. It's why they go there. Fraud will flourish more easily in an environment where workers are underpaid and the victims live on the other side of the globe.

Indian call centres have brought cost-savings for UK consumers, and are generally well run and efficient. Economists also insist that outsourcing brings net job gains rather than losses. Anti-globalisation campaigners tell a different story.

© Guardian News & Media Ltd, 2005

## ARTICLE 2

### 1 "People in England live differently"

*Christina Zaba, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2005*

Polish migrants work for tiny wages that British workers won't accept. But many have only the haziest idea of how cynically they are being exploited.

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- 2 Welcome to the new Europe, a world of opportunity for the enterprising, of cross-border flexible working, deregulation, outsourcing and price-cutting. Since the ten accession countries joined the EU last May, many Poles are recruited in their home villages by Polish reps of employment agencies based abroad, and they all too easily end up cut off from any notion of their rights while working hard in the UK and Ireland, the two countries quickest to open their borders to the new waves of eastern European workers.

Their inability to speak, read, write or understand English makes them vulnerable; their shifting location keeps them disorientated. So they stick together, do their best, endure, dream of home, hope to get paid, hope to save up. They have only a hazy idea of how cynically they are being exploited, not only by the agencies that brought them here, but by an overall economic structure that gives a flexible, disposable workforce priority over welfare - a structure that neither the British nor the Polish government seems in any hurry to dismantle.

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- 3 Marek rummages in his pockets, pulls out a few well-thumbed bits of card. "Tell me what these payslips say," he pleads. "I can't understand them." It's the only documentation he has.

I peer at them: the cards are tiny, the print more so. There is no company name, no contact address or phone number, no identifying registration number, no date. Marek doesn't know what the agency employing him is called, where its head office is - though he knows it's not in England - or the name of his local manager. His own name is printed on the payslip, then his hourly rate as a skilled craftsman builder (£6.50). He has earned £1,010 for the past month. Deductions are listed below: income tax £231, council tax £15, rent £220, transport £89, "debt" (a registration payment to the agency) £300. For a month's work he is left with £155, out of which he has to buy food and other essentials. It doesn't leave much to send home. But if Marek manages to send £60 a month, that's roughly equivalent to what he would have earned in Poland.

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- 4 In Poland, where setting up in business is still beset with expenses and difficulties, and where even professionals and skilled workers usually earn only between £100 and £150 a month, people take a calculated risk. They know that not everything is easy in western Europe; but if they can earn even a little more there, it's worth it.

The economies of the host countries, meanwhile, are prospering. Unregistered migrant workers cost very little; they can claim no benefits, and are generally afraid to ask for help. Others pay their way. The TUC estimates that since 1 May 2004, registered migrant workers have contributed more than £4m a week to UK gross domestic product and are paying more than

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£0.5m a week in tax and National Insurance. Few want to stay here long-term.

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### **ARTICLE 3**

#### **1 Living longer must mean working longer, says OECD**

In an era of population ageing, we can no longer afford to waste the valuable resources that older workers offer to business, the economy and society.

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#### **2** At present, many public policies and workplace practices discourage older people from carrying on working. On average in OECD countries, fewer than 60% of people aged between 50 and 64 have a job, compared with 75% of people in the 25-49 age group

If there is no change in work patterns, the ratio of older inactive persons per worker will almost double in the OECD area over the next decades, from around 38% in 2000 to just over 70% in 2050. This, in turn, would lead to higher taxes and/or lower benefits, coupled with slower economic growth.

To avoid such an outcome, the OECD argues, age-friendly employment policies are needed to encourage older people to remain longer in the workforce.

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#### **3** The OECD recommends action in three key areas:

- Governments should ensure that pensions and other welfare arrangements encourage rather than discourage work at older ages. They should also devote adequate resources to help older jobseekers find a new job.
- Employers must end discrimination and adapt work practices to an age-diverse workforce. The practice of mandatory retirement in firms should be questioned, as it is inconsistent with the general objective of providing greater choice to older workers on when to retire.
- Older workers themselves will need to change their attitudes towards working longer and acquiring new skills – there is a training gap between older and younger workers in all countries, but in some countries it is particularly large

*OECD, news releases 10/10/2005*

## ***The original articles used in the exercise:***

### **An Indian takeaway that should make the banks think again**

*Patrick Collinson, editor, Jobs & Money*

All those people who have seen their jobs outsourced to call centres abroad must be rubbing their hands in glee at the Sun's front page exclusive this week, detailing how - for as little as £3 - it bought hundreds of British names and banking details from crooks in Indian call centres.

To some people, there will be vague undertones of racism. After all, why should Indian call centre workers be any more crooked than those in Britain? But the ease with which personal details can be bought does raise legitimate concerns, and experts say data theft from overseas call centres has been a time bomb waiting to go off.

The Lloyds TSB Group Union, which represents 45,000 of the bank's staff, says it has been highlighting concerns about the potential risks of offshore call centres for some time.

It asks: "The EU recognises that India does not meet the same rigorous standards of data security as European countries, so why cannot customers insist on not having their personal information transferred to India?"

The Financial Services Authority does not agree. It said this week that Indian call centres pose no greater risk to security than ones in the UK.

It says its research has found that security in Indian call centres is very good and in some cases more controlled than in this country.

The big banks were, of course, swift to assure customers that they are safe. HSBC, for example, says the security measures it uses in India are identical to those used in the UK.

Call centre operators can only access data to answer a specific customer inquiry, no members of staff have access to a customer's full Pin or code words, and the software is specially designed to prevent data downloads.

But the worries remain. Companies that outsource to India pay their staff a fraction of the salaries paid in the UK. It's why they go there. Fraud will flourish more easily in an environment where workers are underpaid and the victims live on the other side of the globe.

Indian call centres have brought cost-savings for UK consumers, and are generally well run and efficient. Economists also insist that outsourcing brings net job gains rather than losses. Anti-globalisation campaigners tell a different story.

The pace of outsourcing has been frenetic; now may be the time for banks to take stock before shifting more operations overseas.

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## "People in England live differently . . ."

Christina Zaba

*New Statesman, Monday 7th March 2005*

Polish migrants work for tiny wages that British workers won't accept. But many have only the haziest idea of how cynically they are being exploited. **Christina Zaba** reports

Marek was bearing up bravely when I met him before Christmas. He was pleased to get away from the Berkshire cottage where he and nine other Polish builders were sharing three bedrooms, paying a total of £2,200 a month for the privilege. He'd put on a good shirt, looked elegant, pulled-together. He seemed a different man from the one who had been weeping on the phone just a few weeks earlier, begging me to go down and see him.

As we walked into the village pub he glanced around, shook his head, smiled. "People in England live differently," he told me in Polish. "You've no idea." He would have loved to buy me a drink; but, without a word of English, he was stuck, humiliated. He naturally assumed it was his own fault.

Welcome to the new Europe, a world of opportunity for the enterprising, of cross-border flexible working, deregulation, outsourcing and price-cutting. Since the ten accession countries joined the EU last May, men like Marek have become a cliché. Family men and breadwinners, they are typically recruited in their home villages by Polish reps of employment agencies based abroad, and they all too easily end up cut off from any notion of their rights while working hard in the UK and Ireland, the two countries quickest to open their borders to the new waves of eastern European workers. Their inability to speak, read, write or understand English makes them vulnerable; their shifting location keeps them disorientated. So they stick together, do their best, endure, dream of home, hope to get paid, hope to save up. They have only a hazy idea of how cynically they are being exploited, not only by the agencies that brought them here, but by an overall economic structure that gives a flexible, disposable workforce priority over welfare - a structure that neither the British nor the Polish government seems in any hurry to dismantle.

Marek rummages in his pockets, pulls out a few well-thumbed bits of card. "Tell me what these payslips say," he pleads. "I can't understand them." It's the only documentation he has.

I peer at them: the cards are tiny, the print more so. There is no company name, no contact address or phone number, no identifying registration number, no date. Marek doesn't know what the agency employing him is called, where its head office is - though he knows it's not in England - or the name of his local manager. His own name is printed on the payslip, then his hourly rate as a skilled craftsman builder (£6.50). He has earned £1,010 for the past month. Deductions are listed below: income tax £231, council tax £15, rent £220, transport £89, "debt" (a registration payment to the agency) £300. For a month's work he is left with £155, out of which he has to buy food and other essentials. It doesn't leave much to send home. But if Marek manages to send £60 a month, that's roughly equivalent to what he would have earned in Poland.

He is a textbook case. A [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) document, "Nowhere to Turn", quoted by TUC South West in its 2004 discussion paper *Migrant Working in the South-West*, lists common themes of 21st-century agency migrant working in the UK: misleading recruitment of workers in their own country; a reality of extremely long hours, low pay and poor accommodation; excessive deductions from pay; failure to provide a contract of employment or payslips; denial of basic

employment rights; confusion over who the employer actually is; frequent failure to ensure that the worker has a National Insurance number, with the apparent failure of the employer to pay tax and National Insurance; summary dismissal and immediate eviction of workers who assert their rights.

Marek is no fool. He knows he is unregistered, that he is at risk; he understands my suspicion that his so-called "income tax" might not be reaching the Revenue. What he doesn't see is the key part all this is playing in the creation of that very wealth that seems to him so unattainable, a standard of living that smacks him painfully in the face every day as he humbly restores antique brickwork, lays parquet floors and fixes windows in the valuable homes of well-off Thames Valley professionals - people who are all too happy to buy in fine workmanship at a keen price. "I see how they live," he says. "Two cars in the drive, she's off at the gym, he sits in front of his computer all day, they want for nothing. Beautiful children, well-mannered. They're relaxed, they've got time to be friendly. Not like us."

He is thinking, I know, of his home, his teenage children, doing well at school and with innocent hopes for the future; of his wife Anna, a textile worker, unemployed since the unwieldy, ex-communist concerns closed a few years ago; of his sick and elderly parents-in-law who live with them, and whose care falls to his wife; of his own vanishingly slight prospects of employment there. They live a half-hour's bus ride out into the country, in a self-build house they can't afford to finish. It stands on the family land, a smallholding acquired by Anna's great-grandmother in the time of the Russian tsarist occupation in the 1850s. Through all the turbulence of that period, and the Bolshevik wars, the First World War and the return of Polish independence, the Second World War and Nazi occupation, and then the long years of communism, this eight-acre holding was the family home.

In communist times it was a going concern. Anna, her brother, parents and grandparents all lived in the old wooden, single-storey cottage under the trees along the dusty, winding village road. There were chickens and ducks, a shiny chestnut horse in the stable, a cow grazing on a medieval strip of meadow, tethered to stop it nibbling at the neat rows of potatoes, wheat, beet and barley further along. The family shared the work and lived off the results, selling and bartering their surplus produce locally to augment the pittance paid to them for state-sponsored employment.

It was a living of a kind, though they resented the back-breaking labour, the primitive and crowded living conditions and narrow prospects. Everyone yearned to modernise. When Anna and Marek married they left the cottage to her parents and built the modern house, with hot and cold running water, across the yard where the stable used to be. Anna filled in the duck pond, planted a lawn. Their mood was more optimistic then.

On the phone to Poland, I ask her how the farm's going. She is dismissive. "A bit of wheat and potatoes, four chickens. Most people aren't even doing that. They're just letting the forest grow back. You can't sell anything, so what's the point? Practically every home in this village has someone in the west now, anyway." There's no space to be sentimental about the loss of tradition and farming practices when families are being ripped apart on this epic scale. Anna gets £8 a month child benefit; just one pair of trainers costs twice that. Although wages are very low, prices of consumer goods are high in post-communist Europe. In Poland, where setting up in business is still beset with expenses and difficulties, and where even professionals and skilled workers usually earn only between £100 and £150 a month, people take a calculated risk. They know that not everything is easy in western Europe; but if they can earn even a little more there, it's worth it.

The economies of the host countries, meanwhile, are prospering. Unregistered migrant workers cost very little; they can claim no benefits, and are generally afraid to ask for help. Others pay their way. The TUC estimates that since 1 May 2004, registered migrant workers have contributed more than £4m a week to UK gross domestic product and are paying more than £0.5m a week in tax and National Insurance. Few want to stay here long-term.

While the TUC, jobcentres and big employers are starting to liaise with community groups and workers themselves in delivering support and advice to migrants, legislation to deal with the anomalous position of agency working, in which migrants do not qualify as employees but as workers on contracts to provide services, has been slow to follow. An EU-wide agency workers' directive, which would have helped to regulate the flexible working market, was blocked by both the UK and Polish governments, nervous that it could undermine existing regulations. The UK has since changed its position, but progress is slow. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority will begin work in April to curb abuse of migrant workers in the agricultural industry.

Marek was looking forward to going home for Christmas when I met him. "I'll kiss my wife. I'll hug the kids," he said. "And I've saved a bit of money. It's three times as much as I'd have earned in Poland. That can't be bad, can it?"

Three weeks later he was back in Berkshire, with a new group of men, waiting to be called for work. Anna won't see him again until June. "He might as well stay there. At least he's earning something," she says on the phone. "I'd do it as well if I could. Most of the time, I just pray. That's what keeps me going."

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### **Living longer must mean working longer, says OECD**

10/10/2005 - In an era of population ageing, we can no longer afford to waste the valuable resources that older workers offer to business, the economy and society. That is the message from a new OECD report to be discussed at a high-level forum on Ageing and Employment Policies in Brussels on 17-18 October.

At present, many public policies and workplace practices discourage older people from carrying on working. On average in OECD countries, fewer than 60% of people aged between 50 and 64 have a job, compared with 75% of people in the 25-49 age group ([see Chart 1](#)).

Such policies and practices are relics of a bygone age and unsustainable at a time when population ageing is straining public finances and holding back higher living standards. If there is no change in work patterns, the ratio of older inactive persons per worker will almost double in the OECD area over the next decades, from around 38% in 2000 to just over 70% in 2050.

This, in turn, would lead to higher taxes and/or lower benefits, coupled with slower economic growth. On the basis of unchanged patterns, OECD analysis shows, GDP growth per capita in the OECD area could shrink to around 1.7 % per year over the next three decades, about 30% below the average annual rates witnessed between 1970 and 2000.

To avoid such an outcome, the OECD argues, age-friendly employment policies are needed to encourage older people to remain longer in the workforce. At present, average effective retirement ages are well below official retirement ages in many countries, especially European countries ([see Chart 2](#)). While countries have begun to take action – notably in the area of pension reform – more needs to be done.

The OECD recommends action in three key areas:

- Governments should ensure that pensions and other welfare arrangements encourage rather than discourage work at older ages. They should also devote adequate resources to help older jobseekers find a new job.
- Employers must end discrimination and adapt work practices to an age-diverse workforce. The practice of mandatory retirement in firms should be questioned, as it is inconsistent with the general objective of providing greater choice to older workers on when to retire.
- Older workers themselves will need to change their attitudes towards working longer and acquiring new skills – there is a training gap between older and younger workers in all countries, but in some countries it is particularly large ([see Chart 3](#)).

On 17 October, government officials, social partners, academics and representatives of civil society will meet at Palais d'Egmont in Brussels to discuss the main lessons that have emerged from an OECD review of policies in 21 OECD countries to promote employment of older workers. **These discussions will be open to the media.**

On 18 October, ministers and senior officials will meet in closed session to discuss a range of issues, including: how best to make later retirement more attractive; how to change entrenched attitudes; and how to promote the employability of older workers. **A press conference will be held at 3.00 p.m. on Tuesday 18 October at Palais d'Egmont.**

Information on the forum and access to summaries of the separate country reports that have been prepared for 21 OECD countries can be found on the following site: [www.oecd.org/olderworkersforum](http://www.oecd.org/olderworkersforum).

[OECD, news releases](#) 10/10/2005

## Working with words 4

### Racial discrimination (p. 64)

#### 1 *Category B*

An employer applies a requirement or condition which, whether intentional or not, adversely affects a considerably larger proportion of one racial group than another which cannot be justified on independent grounds

#### *Category C*

Where an employer treats a person less favourably because the employee has used the law to complain of discrimination, give evidence or make allegations

#### *Category A*

A person discriminates against another if on racial ground he/she treats that other less favourably than he/she treats or would treat other persons

- 2 1 This is racial discrimination within the scope of the Act. *Showboat vs. Owens* 1984 (Direct Discrimination).
- 2 This would be indirect discrimination. Company should apply agreed selection criteria.
- 3 This was victimisation. *Sandhu v. H M Customs and Excise* November 1992. The tribunal concluded that the allegation had been made in good faith.
- 4 *Auto Alloys v. McAuley* 1994. Mr McAuley won his case and was awarded £9,500 damages.
- 5 *Singh vs. Rowntree*. No case. Company was operating the policy on grounds of hygiene.

### 3 **DISCUSSION : RACIAL HARASSMENT**

Racial harassment is a humiliating and degrading experience. The extent of racist behaviour is too often under-estimated and its impact too often ignored. Racial harassment can take many forms both physical and verbal.

Examples of racial harassment include:

- a) Repeated and unwelcome comments
- b) Racist name calling
- c) Racist abuse and jokes
- d) Insulting and abusive behaviour and gestures
- e) The display of racially offensive written material and images
- f) Racist graffiti

- g) Threatened assault or physical attack
- h) Assault or physical attack
- i) Denying access to benefits such as training and overtime
- j) Refusal to investigate complaints of racial harassment/discrimination
- k) Selected for redundancy
- l) Denying holiday entitlement

4 Shades of Meaning?

Noun	Personal Noun	Adjective	Adverb
patriotism	patriot	patriotic	patriotically
jingoism	jingoist	jingoistic	* jingoistically
nationalism	nationalist	nationalistic	* nationalistically
chauvinism	chauvinist	chauvinistic	-
racism	racist	racist	-
xenophobia	xenophobe	xenophobic	-

**\*Note:** Awkward-sounding adverbs are usually replaced by adverbial phrases in English, hence *in a nationalistic manner* is usually preferred to *nationalistically*, or *in a jingoistic way* to *jingoistically*.

Working with reading 5

Migrant workers (p. 67)

Australia needs you!

meanings	words in article
1. hard to bear	abiding
2. visited	set foot on
3. explorer-type person	pioneering
4. supply	restock
5. too much in demand	overstretched
6. approximately	in the region of
7. incentive	bribe
8. easy-going	laid-back

9. attraction	draw
10. most important	paramount
11. tired, worn	beaten-down
12. simple and clear	straightforward
13. future (adjective)	would-be
14. attach value or importance to	weighted towards
15. crucial	dire

**Out of Africa**

<i>meanings</i>	<i>words in article</i>
1. coat	gown
2. washes up	scrubs up
3. persistent lack of	shortage-dogged
4. driven by danger	crisis-led
5. satisfaction from achievement	fulfilment
6. stealing	poaching
7. prohibits	bans
8. in large numbers	droves
9. work periods	shifts
10. overcrowded	brimming
11. attributable to	down to
12. began	launched
13. increase	top up

## Communication activity 5

### Dubai - Paradise Lost? (p.74)

Divide the class into small groups. Cut out and share out the bits of information among the groups. Ideally, each group should have a variety of information so as to get a overall picture of life in Dubai. The tutor will decide on how to share out the bits of information. The participants are not expected to reconstruct a story. The participants are to imagine that they have overheard or read about or been told informally about what is going on in the Gulf States. The aim of the exercise is to share their impressions with the members of their group and at a second stage, with the members of the other groups, to trigger a discussion about development in general and the cost of this kind of development to the migrant workers lives; the extravaganza of such projects and what trade unions can do to curb exploitation of workers and disrespect of basic workers' rights.

Sources: BBC News Dubai (Feb.2005); Human Rights Watch (New York 30/3/2006), The Hindu Business Line (9/5/2006); Eric Weiner (15/8/05), slate.com; Reuters (2/12/2005); nosweat.org (March 2006); The Guardian (23/3/2006); Common Dreams News centre (14/7/2005)

*"Migrant workers constructing the world's largest skyscraper, Burj Dubai, went on strike for several days and trashed offices and equipment in unrest over sweatshop conditions."*

*The stoppage triggered a sympathy strike at Dubai International Airport also Wednesday, when thousands of labourers building a massive new terminal also laid down their tools, airport and labour officials said.*

*In five decades, Dubai has mushroomed from a primitive town of 20,000 to a gridlocked metropolis of 1.5 million.*

Workers' grievances often centre on poor living conditions and non-payment of wages. According to the UAE labour ministry there were 5,486 complaints about non-payment of wages last year.

In recent years Dubai has been the scene of an extraordinary construction boom. Most of the work is done by poor Asian migrants who have been growing increasingly restive amid reports of mistreatment and exploitation. Last September about 7,000 labourers staged an unprecedented three-hour demonstration.

*A section of the tower is to host a 172-room luxury hotel operated by Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani.*

The strikes and riots by Al Naboodah workers marred what otherwise appeared to be smooth construction of the Burj Dubai, which is to be a spire-shaped, stainless-steel-skinned tower expected to soar far beyond 100

Trade unions, strikes, and agitators are illegal, and 99% of the private-sector workforce are easily deportable non-citizens.

*"Everyone is angry here. No one will work," said Khalid Farouk, 39, a labourer with Al Naboodah. Other workers said their leaders were asking for pay raises: skilled carpenters on the site earned just US\$7.60 per day, with labourers getting just US\$4 per day.*

South Asian contract labourers, legally bound to a single employer and subject to totalitarian social controls, make up the great mass of the population.

Forced labour

Some companies have been accused of retaining and "losing" migrant workers' passports to stop them returning home.

Each time you spent \$40 to fill your tank, you are helping to irrigate Sheik Mo's oasis.

*...an apotheosis of neo-liberal values...*

"Bangkok of the Middle East"

The old colonial masters lead the pack as Brit expats and investors have become the biggest cheerleaders for Sheikh Mo's dreamworld: David Beckham owns a beach and Rod Stewart, an island (rumoured, in fact, to be named Great Britain).

Next, the native 15% percent of the population -- whose uniform of privilege is the traditional white dishdash -- constitutes a leisure class whose obedience to the dynasty is subsidised by income transfers, free education, and government jobs.

At the top of the social pyramid, of course, are the al-Maktoums and their cousins who own every lucrative grain of sand in the sheikhdom. A step below, are the pampered mercenaries: 150,000-or-so British ex-pats, along with other European, Lebanese, and Indian managers and professionals, who take full advantage of their air-conditioned affluence and two-months of overseas leave every summer.

*..a broad tolerance of booze, recreational drugs, halter tops, and other foreign vices formally proscribed by Islamic law...*

There are two sounds you cannot escape in Dubai: the call to prayer ringing out from the city's mosques five times a day and the 24-hour clunking and grinding of construction.

Dubai lifestyles are attended by vast numbers of Filipina, Sri Lankan, and Indian maids, while the building boom is carried on the shoulders of an army of poorly paid Pakistanis and Indians working twelve-hour shifts, six and half days a week, in the blast-furnace desert heat.

*Staffed mainly by South Asian migrant workers, it is a 24-hour operation, run from specially-built labour camps.*

*"I heard a lot of things about Dubai, about how great it was. But when I came here, I hated it", Avdesh, Dubai worker.*

...the whores are essential to keeping all those five-star hotels full of European and Arab businessmen...

*The UAE is not a party to key international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

"One of the world's largest construction booms is feeding off of workers in Dubai, but they're treated as less than human," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "It's no surprise that some workers have started rioting in protest. What's surprising is that the government of the UAE is doing nothing to solve the problem."

Mr Johns, the manager of the company admits the company holds all its employees' passports - a common practice in the UAE even though it is illegal.

*I asked him why the salaries had not been paid. "Our company has gone through certain financial crises for the past one and a half years," Mr. Johns says.*

It is also illegal for workers to strike, which means the employees of Mr Johns' company are being asked to work without pay and without the documents to return home.

"Thanks for Your Hard Work. Now Get Out!"

The authorities in Dubai have pledged to act, threatening to impose stiff penalties on firms that do not pay workers on time.

Foreigners do most of the work.

Their rights disappear at the airport where recruitment agents confiscate their passports and visas to control them

With oil prices at record highs, there is little incentive for gulf Arabs to get their hands dirty, or even a bit dusty.

A construction worker here can earn up to 10 times what he would get in India.

If you are a citizen the government will pay for your education and then provide you with a generous monthly stipend for life. They'll give you a plot of land and build you a house. Oh, and there are no taxes.

The worker can stay in the country only for as long as the sponsor supports him. In some cases, sponsors confiscate the worker's passport, raising valid concerns about indentured servitude.

Workers can switch sponsors but not easily and sometimes at great cost. In some gulf countries, foreign workers need exit visas to leave the country. Ostensibly, this is to ensure that they don't leave behind a pile of debt. But in practice it often means that employers can hold workers hostage.

*What happens to a country when most of its workforce is foreign?*

Arab culture and language are being swamped by the flood of foreigners

...a bored, underemployed citizenry is ideal fodder for radical Islamic groups.

The governments of the United States, the European Union, and Australia are currently negotiating free trade agreements with the UAE. Human Rights Watch called on these governments to require improvement of UAE's labour practices and legal standards before signing such agreements.

"Does Dubai feel like home?" I asked my Indian driver. It seemed like a reasonable question. He had lived in Dubai for 18 years. "No, sir," he said, incredulously, "This is not home." Nor will it ever be. No matter how long he stays, he can't become a citizen.

For countries like India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, the money that these workers send home represents a huge source of hard currency.

*So far there have been few reports of actual action taken against specific companies and protests have continued.*

I visited Kerala, the Indian state that provides the gulf with thousands of workers. Most houses were the faltering shacks you'd expect to see in rural, impoverished India. Every once in a while, though, I'd spot a house that was bigger, more elaborate, designed to impress. I asked my guide to explain. "Gulf worker," he chirped. Nothing more needed to be said. They may be on the bottom rung of the ladder in the gulf, but the foreign worker is a pasha at home.

"I don't ever want to come back here. My family is pleading with me to come home: 'whatever condition you're in', they tell me, 'just come back!'"

*Dubai, like its neighbours, flouts ILO labour regulations and refuses to adopt the international Migrant Workers Convention.*

The government said companies delaying payment would not be awarded government or semi-government contracts or allowed to recruit more workers

"I spend 150 dirhams on my food, and 50 for soap and other things. On the Friday holiday, I barely have time to clean up the house and cook food. "They said I would find a better life in Dubai, but I didn't. Once I pay off my loan, I'm leaving"

Khalid has no health insurance and he had to borrow 135,000 Pakistani rupees (\$2,256) to get himself to Dubai. "I don't get a monthly salary. If I lay the required 200 bricks, I get 25 dirhams, if not, then I get less. And they didn't pay me the first two months"

*There is an unwritten caste system for guest workers. Nepalis work on construction sites, Indians drive taxis. Egyptians and Jordanians work in government offices. There is also a sliding-pay scale based on nationality or, to put it more bluntly, prejudices. Filipino maids earn more than Indonesian maids who, in turn, earn more than Sri Lankans.*

Just as Americans hire Mexicans to do the jobs we don't want to do, the gulf Arabs import workers to do the work they consider beneath them.

These labourers are laying foundations of a frenetic construction boom in this Gulf city of wide highways, crane-speckled skies and cool shopping malls stocked with the latest in designer chic for customers flush with petrodollars.

*Only 17 percent of the population of Dubai, for instance, is local. The rest are foreign workers. You won't find gulf Arabs waiting on tables or, for that matter, managing restaurants. You will find precious few working for travel agents or hotels or anywhere other than the cushiest of government positions.*

*They drive along crowded U.S.-style highways, past the gleaming towers that they have helped build, heading to another day toiling in stifling heat and humidity*

He lived in a labour camp provided by the company - 85 men in a nine-roomed house. The bedrooms sleep eight, sometimes 12, people. The bathrooms are squeezed into cupboards and are shared by 25 men.

Dozens of outlandish mega-projects -- including "The World" (an artificial archipelago), Burj Dubai (the Earth's tallest building), the Hydropolis (that underwater luxury hotel, the Restless Planet theme park, a domed ski resort perpetually maintained in 40C heat, and The Mall of Arabia, a hyper-mall -- are actually under construction or will soon leave the drawing boards.

After Shanghai (current population: 15 million), Dubai (current population: 1.5 million) is the world's biggest building site: an emerging dreamworld of conspicuous consumption and what locals dub "supreme lifestyles."

*Migrant workers comprise nearly 90 percent of the workforce in the private sector in the UAE. They are denied basic rights such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.*

When the plane lands and you are welcomed into an airport emporium where hundreds of shops seduce you with Gucci bags, Cartier watches, and one-kilogram bars of solid gold. You make a mental note to pick up some duty-free gold on your way out.