

Trade and the Rights of Labour: Views of Teacher Unionists

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Abstract

The notion that the right to engage in international trade should be linked to respect for core labour standards has become one of the most contentious issues in the current globalisation debate. Arguments surrounding a workers' rights clause have often been presented as a case of "North" versus "South", with the governments of the latter countries asserting that the promotion of workers' rights is a protectionist ploy by the North designed to undermine the comparative advantage of the South. It is generally assumed, in both academic literature and by Non-Government Organisations, that the positions advocated by Southern governments are shared by the workers of these developing nations. This paper tests the validity of this claim by comparing and contrasting the views and opinions of Southern trade union activists and leaders in the education industry with those of their Northern colleagues. We argue that Southern unionists are strong supporters of linking trade and labour standards.

TRADE AND THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR: VIEWS OF TEACHER UNIONISTS

Introduction

Immediately prior to the November 2001 Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) issued a statement in which it called on the WTO to embrace a series of proposals that included: (1) the adoption of effective measures to provide improved market access for developing countries and redress the imbalances against these states created by the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations; (2) reform of the WTO to make it more democratic and gender sensitive; (3) incorporation of core labour standards into the program of the WTO; and (4) adoption of a legally binding statement that WTO rules are secondary to the protection of human rights, the environment and health and safety (ICFTU 2001). The first of these demands and possibly the second is in line with the views of those Governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) of the developing world that are convinced the WTO has failed to provide adequately for the needs of developing societies, commonly-titled countries of the South. However, demands three and four are very much at odds with the position embraced by most Southern governments and by those NGOs that believe labour and human rights issues should not be incorporated into the WTO's agenda. This diversity of views begs the question, just who should speak for Southern workers on questions relating to trade and labour rights. The contenders who have claimed this role include the governments of the South, Southern and Northern intellectuals and NGOs, and the international trade union movement. While activists and scholars tend to assume that trade union organisations are the bodies best suited to advance the case for labour rights, the assumption is commonly discounted by critics of a trade-labour rights link. The latter hold that organisations such as the ICFTU do not express the views of Southern workers or unionists because they are dominated by the unions of the North and consequently promote protectionist views at odds with the views of their peers in the South. In this paper, we seek to assess the validity of this last claim by determining if the opinions of Southern trade unionists regarding trade and labour rights are in harmony with those of their Northern colleagues and of the ICFTU. We begin with some observations regarding the manner by which the protagonists in trade-labour rights debate have advanced their respective positions. We then proceed to present empirical evidence, gathered in July 2001, that details the views of trade unionists in the field of education from some 70 countries.

The Trade-Labour Rights Debate

Many of the contributors to the trade-labour rights debate who claim to express the views of Southern labour have failed to provide empirical evidence to show that this is the case. For example, opponents of a trade-labour rights link continue to insist that respect for core labour rights necessarily undermines the competitiveness of the South without providing any empirical evidence to substantiate this claim. This is despite the fact that the 2000 OECD *Report on Trade and Labour Standards* argues that:

Countries which strengthen their core labour standards can increase economic efficiency by raising skill levels in the work force and by creating an environment which encourages innovation and higher productivity. Some recent studies consider the links between trade, democracy and wages. The results suggest that countries that develop democratic institutions – here taken to be core labour rights – before the transition to trade liberalisation will weather the transition with smaller adverse consequences than countries without such institutions (OECD 2000, 10-11).

The discounting and/or ignoring of the necessity to provide empirical evidence is also manifest in Southern governments' tendency to simply assert that their views are those of the workers of their societies. Such assumptions by governments are far from unusual, but what is at odds with normal practice is the fact that a great many scholars have accepted these claims at face value. Bhagwati (1997), for example, commonly shades the fact that many Southern workers do not share his views and the views of their governments by asserting his views are those of the "developing countries". Maitland (1999) has been more explicit declaring the trade-labour rights demand enjoys no support amongst the people or the trade unions of the developing nations and supports this claim by citing Southern governments. Others are not so extreme in their quantification but manage to convey much the same message, thus Newland (1999) uses the word 'often' to cloud her lack of empirical data:

Workers in poorer and less-developed nations often view unions based in the advanced industrial countries as defenders of privilege. Their suspicions persist that such unions' insistence on increased wages, conformity with labour standards, and environmental safeguards for Third World workers is simply a disguised form of protectionism, designed to undercut the developing world's main source of comparative advantage: low labour costs (Newland 1999, pp. 56-57).

But if those opposed to a trade-labour rights link are guilty of failing to provide solid empirical evidence that their views are shared by Southern labour the international trade union movement is also not totally innocent of this failing. A degree of support for a trade-labour rights link clearly exists amongst some Southern unionists. Union leaders from countries at all levels of economic development have expressed support for this demand in fora such as the International Labour Conference. However, within the South, there has long existed a degree of concern amongst unionists regarding the demand for a trade-labour rights link. This concern has, for example, been manifest in India where major trade union centres have expressed opposition to a WTO social clause. Commenting on the diversity of views that have been expressed by Indian unionists, John observed:

Some preferred an outright rejection of the proposed link with international trade. Others favoured strategic use of the proposal to demand better standards for workers ... [while some] openly advocated the need for an external pressure to improve the working and living conditions of the workers in the informal sector (John 1996, p. 11).

This diversity of views among southern unionists was also evident at the 1996 meeting of the Democratic Labour Caucus, in Manila. In a statement titled *A Conditional "Yes" on the Issue of Social Clause in Trade Agreements*, participants offered qualified support for a social clause. The statement rejected a framework of trade without social responsibility and favoured the inclusion of a workers' rights clause within the WTO. However, participants argued that such a development should be conditional on agreement being reached that only core labour standards would be linked to trade and that outright sanctions would not be allowed. Rather, trade incentives and trade preferences would be encouraged, and sufficient compliance time would be given to violators (Salingan 1996). The statement included twenty-six signatories from trade unions and labour organizations from Hong Kong, South Africa, the Philippines and Germany. Similar caution was manifest in 1998 at a conference organised by Solidar and the Spanish Trade Union Institute for Co-operation and Development (ISCOD). Held in Madrid, the conference explored the possibility of linking "The World Trade Organisation and Core Labour Standards" and was attended by thirty-five participants from Northern and Southern NGOs and trade unions. At the conclusion, of the debate worker representatives from Senegal, Gabon, Mauritius, Malawi, Madagascar, Ivory

Coast, Morocco, Tunisia and the Philippines expressed support for the social clause proposal whilst those from Egypt, Zimbabwe and Tanzania did not (Solidar 1996).

The caution and diversity illustrated in these exemplars make it apparent there is a range of views within the world labour movement. That this situation requires exploration and debate is accepted by the international trade union movement, as indicated by ICFTU documents. However, it remains true that on occasion labour leaders have shaded the existence of these divisions as is exemplified in the contribution to the trade-labour rights debate made by Jay Mazur (2000), Chair of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Committee. When discussing labour's 'new internationalism' Mazur speaks of the 'position of the labour movement' on trade as if the views of the movement are homogenous. It is true he justifies this stance by noting that: "Virtually every independent labor federation has endorsed the ICFTU's call for building labor rights into the global trading system" (Mazur 2000). However, he does not explain why the qualifier "virtually" is applied and he offers no empirical evidence to support his implied claim that there is a unity of views amongst the world's trade unionists. This is despite the fact that he clearly believes such evidence is important as is shown by his provision of survey data regarding the relevant views of the AFL-CIO membership.

Clearly, one of the problems within the trade-labour rights debate has been the fact that many participants have failed to show that their perspective is compatible with that of Southern labour. A second is that much of the debate is characterised by strategic moves that appear designed primarily to capture the moral high ground. While this is an acceptable debating tactic, resort to morality in debate becomes a matter of concern when this is done in order to cloud the fact that one does not have the support of those for whom one asserts the right to speak. This is a particularly difficult problem for the opponents of a trade-labour rights link because organised labour has the advantage that it can at least claim that it directly represents working people. Moreover, organisations such as the ICFTU have been careful to contain their opponents' capacity to establish a sound moral argument by highlighting the fact that what they demand is respect for fundamental human rights. As David Smith, Director, Office of Public Policy, AFL-CIO, takes care to stress, organised labour does not seek to impose minimum wages or employment conditions on the South. Rather, the trade-labour rights reforms that labour demands are qualitative, particularly democratic participation in relation to conditions and decisions pertaining to employment. The rights promoted by labour are essentially civil and political rights:

They are, simply put, , a prescription against forced labor, a prescription against exploitative child labor, an affirmation of the right to freedom of association ... the right of men and women who work together to associate in the work place; and, lastly, an affirmation of the right of those men and women to collectively bargain (Smith 1999).

The care taken by the international union movement to make it clear that its trade demands are not quantitative makes it difficult for their opponents to argue from a high moral position. This is because they are forced to argue against procedures that aim to provide workers with basic bulwarks that can protect their humanity. The weakness of the critics moral situation has, unfortunately, induced some of these contributors to adopt offensive arguments. Thus Bhagwati has sought to give a moral basis to his position by putting himself forward as the defender of non-whites. Playing the race card in this manner, he has asserted that the labour rights demand is in reality an attempt by Northern unionists to "secure the 'white man's gain'" (Bhagwati 1997, 501). Similarly, Krugman (2000) defends his opposition to a trade-labour rights link by arguing that Northern advocates of this reform are guilty of the sin of selfishness in that they would deny to the South the affluence they themselves enjoy.

An example of this latter form of argument appeared in the *Bangkok Post* in an article Krugman titled 'One in the Eye with an American Pie'. This refers to an incident at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Bangkok in 2000, at which a U.S. citizen hit the head of the International Monetary Fund with a pie. Krugman ignored the fact that at the conference Juan Somavia, Secretary-General of the ILO, warned that there is growing backlash against market liberalisation, in both the North and the South, due to the fact that a "growing number of people across the world are feeling a heightened sense of insecurity and anxiety [induced by] social disruptions such as sudden and severe financial crises and abrupt plant closures that so hurt communities" (Somavia 2000). Instead he focussed on the pie incident, asserting that it was a classic example of the arrogance of what he termed the "Seattle types", that is those who would impose "labour and environmental standards on countries that cannot afford them." (Krugman 2000)

At the end of his denunciation, Krugman observes that what the poor of the South do not want is "affluent Westerners telling them ... what a terrible thing the modern world is." However, he appears unaware that in so doing he too is guilty of telling the South how to perceive the world. Krugman's advice is particularly misplaced given that a document distributed by Thai participants at the UNCTAD demonstration makes it clear that his perspective was not accepted by many of these individuals. Produced by two local NGOs, the Civil Society Forum and the Thai Working Group of the Civil Society, the document expressed opposition to paleo-liberal theories and programs incorporating "selective deregulation, privatization and commercialization of all aspects of human life and endeavors" and proposed "the development of a system of global governance that respects local democratic prerogatives and is based on global conventions agreed to at the United Nations." The civil society groups also called on UNCTAD member states to guarantee the "fundamental labour rights of their citizens" by (1) immediately ratifying and ensuring effective implementation of core ILO conventions; (2) allowing labour "to play a significant role in designing and deciding on all aspects of trade and development policy"; and (3) embracing a new development paradigm that recognises the contribution that respect for labour rights can make to the growth process." (Civil Society Forum and the Thai Working Group of the Civil Society 2000)

The document produced by the Thai civil society groups at the UNCTAD forum made it clear that they support the notion that worker rights must be a key element of the globalisation debate. Fuelling the concern of such groups is the fact that many of the governments of the South that claim to speak for labour are using the expansion of globalism as an excuse to suppress worker rights. This trend was highlighted by an editorial in the Indian *Economic and Political Weekly* (1999) which warned that the government of India is using the threat posed by globalisation as an excuse to perpetuate anti-labour policies.

At least seven WTO-related bills are expected to be brought before parliament, which include the proposed amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act Trade Union Act, Contract Labour (Regulations and Abolition) Wages Act, among others. These changes reflect a confluence of interests of the Indian industrial class and the Indian state, where both agree on the need to minimise legal protection of employment and conditions of work and curtail the legal right and power of unions to bargain, in order to make the laws compatible with the demands of global capital.

In order to show that they are not acting as the agents of such states and that their support in the South extends beyond "corporate interests and malign governments" a number of the Southern intellectuals and NGOs opposed to linking trade and labour rights issued a declaration in September 1999. Titled *Third World Intellectuals and NGOs' Statement*

Against Linkage (TWIN-SAL) this document, initiated by Bhagwati, was prepared by the Indian based *CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CITEE)*. This is a consumer group governed by a self-described body of "progressive intellectuals and NGOs in the Third World" but which in fact includes many individuals such as Bhagwati who are firmly ensconced in the North. The signatories to the document declared that they unambiguously opposed any linkage of labour and environmental standards by the WTO or the inclusion of any labour provisions in trade agreements. The premise of their statement is that growth and prosperity are best achieved by unhindered free trade. Those opposed to this perspective are characterised as falling within two groups; "the politically powerful lobbying groups that are protectionist" and "the morally-driven human rights and other groups". The humanitarian concerns of the latter are "falsomely applauded" but their means are rejected because the standards they promote have supposedly been chosen to highlight outrages in the South while violations of labour standards in the North are ignored.

The ICFTU responded to the CUTS document with a statement titled *Enough Exploitation is Enough: a response to the Third World Intellectuals and NGOs Statement Against Linkage (TWIN-SAL)*. Denying the charge of selectivity the ICFTU noted that the standards it emphasised were not determined arbitrarily but were "the ones which have been endorsed explicitly time and time again by all UN member states in global conference." (ICFTU 1999) As for the charge that violations of core labour standards in industrialised countries are ignored, the ICFTU observed that it seeks to promote respect for core standards in all nations. Indeed it was noted that many of the complaints brought to the ILO by the union movement have been from industrialised countries and that in almost all cases the ILO has found in favour of the unions.

In shaping its reply to the CUTS document the ICFTU took care to challenge the signatories' claim that they spoke for 'the poor in the South' by pointing out that the ICFTU represents 124 million workers in 143 countries and that two-thirds of their affiliates are from developing nations. What makes this a telling point is that an examination of the CUTS statement reveals that, of the 99 signatories, 57 are associated with universities or research centres, the great majority being professors; 31 are professionals associated with NGOs in the areas of aid and development, consumer protection and the environment; 3 are lawyers, 2 are public servants, 2 from church organizations, 1 a retired foreign secretary, 1 a Judge and 2 unknown. In short, those who signed the CUTS document opposing the introduction of instruments designed to protect the fundamental human rights of workers are decidedly of the middle class and include no workers or worker representatives.

Why CUTS has failed to provide any evidence that its views are shared by Southern labour is difficult to understand given that it is true some union bodies in the South have expressed concern at the notion of a trade-labour rights link. One difficulty for CUTS that may explain this omission is that the number of union bodies that have expressed such views is small. Another problem is the fact that an increasing number of Southern unions have joined in issuing public statements endorsing a trade-labour rights linkage (see, for example, ORIT 1997, Salingan 1996). CUTS has sought to avoid this embarrassing development by asserting that in many countries governments dominate the trade union movement. The implication appears to be that the views of union bodies in countries such as Mexico and Malaysia that support a trade-labour rights link can be ignored because of the repressive nature of the prevailing governments. This an interesting claim if true, but the logic is difficult to follow given the governments of the nations cited oppose any linkage of trade and labour rights (CUTS 2001).

The failure of the Southern based middle-class activists who oppose a trade-labour rights link to provide evidence that Southern workers endorse their views is also manifest in publications generated by their peers in the North. This omission was highlighted, for example, by an open letter published by the United State-based Academic Consortium on International Trade (ACIT), issued in July 2000. The letter was addressed to presidents of American universities that are imposing, or are considering responding to the anti-sweatshop campaign by imposing, Codes of Conduct on American firms that manufacture apparel in poor countries that bear university/college logos. By June 2001 some 352 academics had signed this letter with the signatories including a number of the leading members of the economics profession.

The letter charged that many institutions are establishing codes of conduct without:

- adequately consulting experts knowledgeable in the relevant fields
- ensuring there exists monitoring bodies capable of ensuring an effective and unbiased regime of governance
- confirming the views of the anti-sweatshop movement are representative of the views of governments, non-governmental organizations and workers in developing countries directly involved in the apparel industry
- ensuring that activists and the main monitoring organizations understand that establishing codes of conduct may actually harm the very low-wage workers in developing countries they are trying to help.

The signatories declared that "decisions on these matters by universities and colleges should be made only after careful research, discussion, and debate in a manner appropriate to informed decision-making." In concluding their letter, the ACIT signatories invited the recipients to visit the ACIT web site where "further information on this and other issues involved in the anti-sweatshop campaign is posted". As the ACIT invitation suggests, a visit to its web site is indeed illuminating. However, this is not necessarily in the ways implied by the signatories, for one of the most revealing aspects of the site is the fact that ACIT does not include any endorsements of its views from labour organisations. In short, as with CUTS, it is the views of the middle class and of intellectuals that are presented, while the opinions of workers, that is, those whose rights are being debated, are simply missing.

In response to ACIT's lobbying of university administrators the US-based *Scholars Against Sweatshop Labor* (SASL) produced a statement discussing the anti-sweatshop movement on college and university campuses in the United States. The overarching aim of this body is simple:

[T]o make a contribution toward eliminating 'lives of fines and beatings' for workers throughout the world, in the same way that previous generations of activists fought to eliminate slave labor, child labor, and the 12-hour workday. The anti-sweatshop movement wants workers worldwide to be able to work under decent conditions, exercise basic human rights, and earn at least decent minimum wages (SASL 2001).

Released on October 22, 2001, the SASL document was sent to the chief administrative officers of more than 1,600 colleges and universities in the US together with endorsements of some 434 scholars. It highlights a number of key problems with the ACIT document but most importantly for our purposes it takes up the charge that the views of the anti-sweatshop movement are not representative of the views of workers in the developing countries. The SASL signatories replied to this charge by noting that at least one of the key monitoring bodies that SASL believes may be capable of providing an effective monitoring service - the

Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) - has governing and advisory boards comprised of academics, university administrators, labor rights activists and NGOs from developing countries and is committed to maintaining transparent procedures for monitoring firms and disclosing the results of their inspections. An examination of the WRC website confirms that on its Advisory Council are worker representatives of the South. These include Homero Fuentes - Commission for the Verification of Corporate Codes of Conduct (Guatemala), Girlie Guzman - Asian Coordinator, Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions, Pedro Ortega - General Secretary, Federation of Apparel Leather and Textile Workers, (Nicaragua), Maritzah Paredes - Collective of Honduran Women, Ebrahim Patel - Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and Monina Wong - Labor Rights in China, (Hong Kong). Together, this body of Southern activists certainly gives strong support to SASL's claims that it is sensitive to the need to ensure that the views it promotes are in accord with the views of workers in the South.

Given this background of vigorous debate, of claim and counter claim, we decided to research the views of labour at what might be termed the meso level. While it would obviously be of great value to assess the attitudes of workers, such a task was beyond our resources. Instead, we chose to focus on the views of union officials, both full- and part-time, at the international level and using the medium of the International Trade Secretariats. The next section of this paper reports on the results of a multilingual questionnaire survey administered to delegates to the world Education International (EI) Congress held in Jomtien, Thailand, from 25-29 July, 2001. The attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of delegates regarding the inclusion of core labour standards in international trade agreements was the focus of this questionnaire. A number of interviews were also conducted with Congress delegates.

The Views of Labour

EI is a world wide trade union organization of educationalists, whose 24.5 million members represent all sectors of education from pre-school to university, covering 304 national trade unions and associations in 155 countries and territories. EI has regional offices located in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Caribbean. It is the world's largest International Trade Secretariat (ITS) and is an affiliate of the ICFTU. It holds consultative NGO status with UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNAIDS, the International Bureau of Education (IBE), and the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

Prior to administering the questionnaire survey in Thailand, draft copies were provided to EI and its Australian affiliates, the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU). A number of officials provided feedback on the questionnaire contents. The Australian delegates were of the view that globalism would not necessarily be a primary issue at the Congress. The previous Congress, held in Washington DC in July 1998, while addressing many issues of global concern such as child labour, universal free public education for all children, and education and the economy, did not place specific significance on globalism or its implications for education. However, contrary to this expectation, globalism was one of the primary topics of debate, indicating an evolution in awareness of the scope and impact of international trade agreements particularly in relation to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and its implications for the provision of public services such as education. One of the interviewees, Herb Magidson, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers, confirmed that there had been a significant shift in awareness relating to globalism since the 1998 Congress. He argued that the change had occurred because teachers believe that trade agreements such as GATS could be a threat to

public education. He explained that there had been a tremendous attack on the concept of public service and public education, the private sector promotes the view that the solution to the problems in public education “is the magic of the profit motive and competition”. He contended that teachers see that the same people who oppose funding for public education are the same people espousing the benefits of globalisation and that, accordingly, there is a perceived connection between privatisation and globalisation, they are seen as different facets of neo-liberalism. This in turn, he believed, has created more awareness of global economic issues and caused a reinvigoration of teacher unions particularly in the United States.

One of the resolutions adopted at the Congress, titled ‘Educating in the Global Economy’, was that EI and its member organisations “monitor closely moves through the WTO and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to liberalize the provision of education services in a manner that fails to take account of cultural diversity or promotes commercialisation at the expense of equity, non-discrimination and democratic values”. With regard to worker rights, it was recommended by Congress that all affiliates “work with the ICFTU and the ITSs to encourage the governments and employers on the Working Party of the ILO Governing Body on the Social Dimensions of the Liberalisation of International Trade to enter into a dialogue with the Worker’s Group to consider how the procedures of the WTO can be adapted to promote the observance of core ILO Conventions”. Further, Congress resolved to “continue to work to promote the inclusion of core labour standards in trade agreements”.

The survey we conducted consisted of 24 questions. Part 1 contained the first 14 and related to personal information regarding the participant’s gender, educational level, length of employment with the union, what position they held in the union and size of the union. In the more detailed Part 2, questions 15 to 24 were designed to ascertain the participant’s views on a range of issues related to core labour standards and workers rights. For example, whether they agreed with the ILO definition of core labour standards, whether provisions are needed in international trade agreements to protect such standards and, if so, which international body should enforce core labour standards, the ILO, WTO or a body consisting of both? There were 1181 participants at the Congress classified as follows; 647 delegates, 393 non-delegate union members, 25 accompanying persons, 22 Executive Board Members and 34 invited guests. The survey was carried out only amongst the delegates, of whom 248 completed useable questionnaires, a response rate of 38 per cent. In terms of North-South representation, 113 delegates were classified as being from the "North" and 131 from the "South". This categorisation was based overwhelmingly upon country membership of the G-77, the group of countries classified as developing economies, but, based on economic criteria, three non-G-77 countries, Croatia, Bulgaria and Latvia, were also grouped in the South.

Findings

This section of the paper reports the findings from our survey questionnaire. We present descriptive statistics comparing and contrasting the views and attitudes of respondents from southern and less developed countries with those of their fellow unionists from developed economies. Specifically, we examine respondents views on the meaning of core labour standards and the perceived need for such standards; the current level of implementation of such standards and the appropriate method of future implementation; the use of both positive and negative measures to ensure implementation; respondents’ attitudes on the roles of unions, employers and governments in the debates around core labour standards; and, finally, their attitudes towards the contention that the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements is really a form of protectionism by developed economies. We

then explore any “intra-south” differences, particularly between respondents from the Asian, South America and African continents.

Meaning and Need

There has been a long-term debate on what exactly constitutes core labour standards. For this research, we utilised the now widely accepted International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition covering four areas that have been deemed as fundamental human rights. These areas, and the relevant ILO Conventions, are:

- Freedom of association and the right to organise (Conventions 87 and 98)
- Freedom from forced labour and abolition of forced labour (Conventions 29 and 105)
- Freedom from discrimination (Conventions 100 and 111)
- Minimum age for employment/elimination of child labour (Conventions 138 and 182)

This definition was widely accepted by the significant majority of respondents (91.6 per cent). A lower number of northern respondents (89.1 per cent, n=110) than southern unionists (93.8 per cent, n=129) accepted this definition but, using chi-square analysis with 95 per cent confidence levels, the difference was not statistically significant. Of those respondents who disagreed with the definition, most wished to add one or two extra ILO Conventions.

A crucial issue on which we wanted to collect empirical data is the level of support among southern workers and trade unionists for the inclusion of core labour standards in international trade agreements. Table 1 reports education unionists’ responses to the question: do you agree that provisions are needed in international trade agreements to protect core labour standards. Clearly, the overwhelming majority agreed that there was indeed such a need, with only two respondents, one from the south and one from the north, disagreeing. Crucially, no significant differences exist between the attitudes of southern and northern respondents.

We then sought to determine respondents’ perceptions of the levels of support among members and officials of their national unions for the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements. Tables 2 and 3 detail these views; again, the data is broken down into north and south responses. Overall, respondents were strongly of the view that both members and officials of their unions would support such incorporation. Interestingly, a statistically significant ($p = .002$) higher percentage of southern respondents believed that their members would support this incorporation; similarly, a higher percentage believed that their fellow union officials would support incorporation but this difference was not statistically significant ($p = .059$).

Overall, on these data, there can be no doubt that, worldwide, both north and south, officials and delegates of education unions, strongly perceive both the need for core labour standards to be included in international trade agreements and that their members and colleagues support such a development.

Table 1

Respondents' perceptions that provisions are needed in international trade agreements to protect core labour standards.

Response	North (N = 110) %	South (N = 130) %
Yes	96.4	94.6
No	0.9	0.8
Unsure	2.7	4.6

Table 2

Respondents' perceptions that most members of their union would support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements

Response	North (N = 111) %	South (N = 111) %
Strongly agree	45.0	57.7
Agree	38.7	40.5
Uncertain	15.3	1.8
Disagree	0.9	0.0
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0

Table 3

Respondents' perceptions that most officials of their union would support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements

Response	North (N = 111) %	South (N = 108) %
Strongly agree	53.2	63.9
Agree	38.7	34.3
Uncertain	8.1	1.9
Disagree	0.0	0.0
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0

Implementation: current and future

A majority of respondents held the view that core labour standards have been implemented in their countries, with a higher percentage of northern respondents (88 per cent, n = 109) than southern respondents (69 per cent, n = 128) holding this view; this difference was statistically significant ($p = .007$). It could be argued that this level of implementation is surprising, particularly among southern countries. However, it is worth pointing out the obvious: these

responses come from only a minority of the world's countries, a minority in which, self evidently, education unions are recognised and operate.

Turning to the future, a majority of respondents held the view that trade standards could be an effective mechanism for ensuring that core labour standards were not undermined. This was the view of 79 per cent of southern respondents as opposed to 70 per cent of northern respondents. Some 12 per cent of southern respondents did not support this view with a further 9 per cent unsure; equivalent figures for northern respondents were 15 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. We asked respondents to indicate their degree of support for the different levels at which core labour standards could be applied. All possible levels drew significant majority support, highlighting the underlying support for the application of core labour standards. Most support was evident for the application of standards at the institutional level, for example, agreements negotiated between trade unions and companies; at the multilateral level, for example, through an organisation such as the World Trade Organisation; and at the regional level, for example, within the European Union or ASEAN. The bilateral level, agreements between two countries, was the least supported but still attracted significant majority support (see Table 4). Only on the regional level was there a statistically significant divergence ($p = .005$) between the views of southern and northern respondents, with the northerners being more favourably disposed to this level.

We explored the issue of multilateral interaction in more depth. Specifically, we asked which bodies would respondents consider to be the most effective for enforcement of core labour standards. Table 5 highlights the perceived attractiveness of the ILO or a combined/linked ILO/WTO body. Equally clearly, there is practically zero support within EI affiliates for the WTO to be the enforcement mechanism for core labour standards.

Carrots and Sticks

Given the level of support for core labour standards the perennial issue of enforcement arises. Should this be via “positive” measures - the carrot, or “negative” measures – the stick. Given the focus of respondents on the ILO noted in Table 5, this section initially examines respondents’ views on how that body, if it were to be given responsibility for enforcement, should operationalise this enforcement. It then examines a range of options for enforcement in general.

Respondents were presented with a scenario of the ILO being given responsibility for the enforcement of core labour standards and were asked to indicate, in this scenario, their support for strengthening the ILO complaint system, increasing on the ground monitoring and making ILO aid conditional upon compliance with core ILO Conventions.

Table 4
Respondents’ views on the levels at which core labour standards should apply

Level	North (N = 106) %	South (N = 117) %
Multilateral level	96	92
Regional level	97	85
Bilateral level	76	80
Institutional level	97	92

Table 5*Respondents' views on the most effective mechanism to enforce core labour standards*

Mechanism	Northern Respondents %	Southern Respondents %
International Labour Organisation (ILO)	34	45
World Trade Organisation (WTO)	4	3
Create a link between the ILO and WTO	41	43
Create a new organisation or institution	7	2
Other (including a combination of the above)	1	5
None of the above	3	2

Table 6*Respondents' views on possible ILO enforcement mechanisms*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
The ILO complaints system should be Strengthened (n = 228)	66.2	29.1	4.9	0.4	0.4
"On-the-ground" monitoring should increase (n = 202)	64.9	28.2	5.4	1.5	0.0
ILO aid, such as technical assistance, should be made conditional upon compliance with the core ILO Conventions (n = 204)	51.0	31.4	11.3	3.9	2.5

Table 6 shows that all three measures would receive very strong support from respondents: the “carrot” approach attracted support well in excess of 90 per cent but even the “stick” measure of conditional aid would be supported by more than 80 per cent of respondents. We compared the views of southern and northern respondents on these issues. There were statistically significant differences between these two groups with regard to on the ground monitoring ($p = .035$ with a higher proportion of southern respondents more in favour of increased monitoring) and making ILO aid conditional ($P = .020$, with southern respondents again more in favour of conditional aid). This last finding is worth stressing: respondents from the G77 countries were significantly more in favour of making ILO aid conditional on compliance with core labour standards than were their northern counterparts. In other words, the stick approach was favoured by teacher union officials in developing economies.

Turning to the issue of compliance in more general terms, Table 7 details respondents' views on the possible use of a range of negative measures. Respondents were less enthusiastic about these measures than they were about the role of the ILO. Equally, some significant differences emerged as between measures. A significantly higher level of support was evident for the possibility of denying countries without core labour standards access to markets, with nearly 80 per cent of respondents supporting this possibility. Much less support was evident for either an increase in general tariffs or a removal or reduction of development aid to such countries. Indeed, nearly 30 per cent of respondents were opposed to this last action with a further 28 per cent being unsure. Clearly, respondents were differentiating between different levels of punishment. Statistically significant differences emerged between southern and northern respondents with regard to increasing general tariffs ($p = .024$) and the use of development aid ($p = .000$). In both cases, however, southern respondents were significantly more likely to favour the use of sanctions. For example, some 60 per cent of southern respondents supported the removal or reduction of development aid, a measure supported by

only 37 per cent of northern respondents. Equally, on the other two measures, while the differences were not statistically significant, southern respondents also indicated higher levels of support for punitive measures than did northern respondents. Based on these data, teacher unionists from G77 countries would support harsher action to ensure compliance with core labour standards.

Finally in this section we gauge the extent of respondents support for two “positive” measures, grant of preferences and reduction in general tariffs, to encourage compliance. Table 8 reports these data. There was little disagreement with the potential use of positive measures. Approximately one-quarters of respondents did not, somewhat surprisingly, have an opinion on this issue. Nevertheless, majorities of respondents supported the use of positive incentives as a method of encouraging the adoption of core labour standards.

Table 7
Respondents’ views on the use of negative measures to encourage compliance with core labour standards

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Removal of preferential tariffs(n=174)	31.0	32.8	25.9	5.7	4.6
Denial of access to the market for the incriminating product (n = 176)	43.3	35.9	11.5	5.2	4.1
Increase in general tariffs (n = 170)	22.5	27.2	27.7	15.4	7.2
Removal or reduction of development aid (n = 179)	23.7	25.2	21.9	16.3	12.9

Table 8
Respondents’ views on the use of positive measures to encourage compliance with core labour standards

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Grant of preferences (n = 197)	34.0	36.0	25.4	1.5	3.0
Reduction in general tariffs (n = 174)	31.0	32.8	25.9	5.7	4.6

Roles of unions, employers and governments

This section examines respondents' views on the roles that the three major social actors should play in debates and actions on core labour standards. Table 9 reports these views with regard to their own national union, unions in general, Education International and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). These data underline respondents extremely strong support for full involvement of all arms of the labour movement in debates, discussions and policy-making around the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements. Even joining the "uncertain" respondents with those who were opposed to union involvement produces a small minority who believe that unions should not

be involved in these debates. On three of the four dimensions there were no statistically significant differences between southern and northern respondents. On the fourth dimension, southern respondents supported the involvement of EI more strongly ($p = .008$) than did their northern counterparts.

Table 9
Respondents' perceptions on the role of unions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My union should not support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements (n = 212)	3.3	2.2	5.2	32.1	57.1
Trade unions should not be involved in the debate about core labour standards and international trade (n = 219)	3.2	2.3	3.7	30.6	60.3
Education International should be strongly involved in ensuring that core labour standards are incorporated into international trade agreements (n = 220)	69.1	26.8	2.7	0.9	0.5
The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions should be strongly involved in ensuring that core labour standards are incorporated into international trade agreements (n = 220)	69.1	24.5	4.5	1.8	0.0

Table 10
Respondents' perceptions on the role of government

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My national government should be strongly involved in ensuring that core labour standards are incorporated into international trade agreements (n = 219)	58.4	34.7	5.5	1.4	0.5
My union believes that there is an important role for governments to play in pursuing core labour standards through trade agreements (n = 216)	45.8	45.4	7.4	0.9	0.5
My national government would not support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements (n = 214)	7.9	17.8	26.2	33.2	15.0

Over 90 per cent of respondents clearly believed that there was a key, central role for government in the debate around labour standards; a significantly higher group of southern respondents ($p = .026$) held this view. A similar percentage were of the opinion that their national government should be involved in ensuring that such standards are incorporated into trade agreements; no statistically significant differences were evident in the views of our two sub-groups. Beliefs about the levels of government support were more evenly distributed (see Table 10). Clearly, while most respondents supported government involvement, many recognised that their national governments did not hold similar views. Interestingly, there

were not any significant differences in the views of southern and northern respondents on this issue.

Finally, we sought to determine respondents' views on the attitudes of employers. Their perceptions were relatively evenly distributed: 38 per cent agreed that most employers in their country would not support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements, 28 per cent disagreed while a very large 34 per cent were uncertain. Comparing the views of southern and northern respondents produced some interesting and statistically significant differences ($p = .049$): southern respondents held stronger views, both negative and positive, than did their northern counterparts, over 40 per cent of whom ticked the uncertain category.

Table 11
Respondents' perceptions on the role of employers

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Most employers in my country would not support the incorporation of core labour standards into international trade agreements (n = 217)	15.2	23.0	34.1	15.7	12.0
Southern respondents (n = 108)	18.5	21.3	25.9	18.5	15.7
Northern respondents (n = 109)	11.9	24.7	42.2	12.8	8.3

Standards as a form of protectionism

A major issue in the debate about core labour standards is the contention that, as outlined earlier, much of the support for writing such standards into trade agreements is based on a form of "western protectionism". Specifically, the charge has been levelled that unions in developed economies support labour standards because it is a more subtle form of job protection than other devices such as tariffs. We sought to determine how EI respondents view this argument. Close to 60 per cent did not support this contention (see Table 12) while approximately one-quarter were unsure. Statistically significant differences ($p = .036$) existed between the views of northern and southern respondents, with the latter more inclined to hold the view that labour standards were indeed a form of protectionism. Nevertheless, such views were held by only one-quarter of southern respondents while one-half of such respondents held contrary views.

Table 12
Respondents' perceptions on labour standards as protectionism

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Incorporating core labour standards into international trade agreements is really only a form of protectionism by "western" countries (n = 212)	5.2	11.3	24.5	38.7	20.33
Southern respondents (n = 103)	8.7	15.5	24.3	33.0	18.4
Northern respondents (n = 109)	1.8	7.3	24.8	44.0	22.0

Intra-South differences

So far, our analysis has concentrated on potential differences between northern and southern respondents. As the analysis progressed, what was becoming clear was that relatively few differences exist between these two groups. Further, where differences do exist, southerners in fact tend to hold views more supportive of core labour standards. Obviously the G-77 countries comprise a wide range of economies. To tease out any differences that might exist within such a large bloc we sub-divided this group into four categories: Africa (19 countries), Asia (12), Central and South America (14) and Other (5). We then re-ran our analysis among the sub-headings outlined above to assess the extent of intra-south differences. For reasons of space we do not report such data in full here. Briefly, however, no statistically significant differences were found between the views of intra-south respondents with regard to perceptions that:

- provisions are needed in international trade agreements to protect core labour standards
- trade agreements could be an effective mechanism to ensure that core labour standards are not undermined
- members and officials of their unions support the incorporation of standards into trade agreements
- labour standards should be applied at multilateral, regional, bilateral and institutional level
- a range of possible ILO enforcement mechanisms be utilised
- both positive and negative enforcement measures be used
- both EI and ICFTU should be centrally involved in labour standards debates
- in their view, labour standards should indeed be part of trade agreements.

Differences did exist with regard to:

- who should enforce labour standards (Africans very strongly supported the ILO)
- making development aid conditional upon respect for core labour standards (Americans strongly supported such a linkage)
- union support for incorporating labour standards into agreements (Americans were significantly more uncertain)
- the perceived level of government support for incorporating standards into trade agreements (Asians were more likely to perceive their governments as being less supportive)
- perceptions of labour standards as a form of protectionism (Americans were less likely to hold this view).

Conclusion

Over the past decade, and particularly following the establishment of the World Trade Organisation in 1995, there has been a significant and growing debate about the role of labour issues in international trade. A specific focus has been the demand by sections of civil society for the recognition and incorporation of core labour standards, among other things, into international trade agreements. In this debate various groups, such as governments, intellectuals and various Non-Government Organisations, have taken it upon themselves to speak on behalf of workers. To date, the debate has been curiously bereft of empirical input. This paper has drawn on the views of teacher union leaders and officials, all members of

affiliate organisations of EI, to inject an empirically-grounded labour view into the debate on this contentious issue of labour standards and trade. In particular, our research set out to test the contention that unions from the G-77 countries, the developing economies, are opposed to linking standards and trade. Our findings are unequivocal: all teacher union officials and delegates to the EI Congress, whether from the developing world of the South or the developed world of the North actively support linking standards and trade. Few differences exist between the two sub-groups; indeed, where differences do exist, it was mostly the delegates from the developing countries who were more likely to strongly want to link trade and labour standard issues. Some differences did exist within southern countries but most were not significant; frequently, all that differed was the intensity and level of support for this linkage.

We acknowledge that our findings are obviously restricted to the views of teacher unionists. However, at the very least, our findings show that those who claim to speak for workers and unionists, particularly for unionists in the south, and who oppose linking labour standards and trade, do not speak for teacher unionists. And the obvious question arises: if the views of one group of unionists are being misrepresented, as is so clearly shown by our research, is it not likely to also be true that the attitudes and opinions of other groups of unionist are similarly misrepresented? We will answer this question through our on-going research.

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