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# WORLD TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

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REVIEW OF THE W.F.T.U.



**INTERNATIONAL  
SOLIDARITY**  
HANOI : SOFIA

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**SOCIAL  
SECURITY**  
MOSCOW

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**DOCUMENTATION**  
IS COAL OUTDATED ?

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# THE W.F.T.U. AND THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF UNESCO

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*\*1972 = the Books Year*

*15 - 19.1* ABOUT fifteen inter-governmental institutions around the United Nations Organisation constitute the system of the United Nations. Each one of them devotes its activities to a particular economic, social or cultural sector. UNESCO, the United Nations body for education, science and culture, is one of these institutions. Its official establishment in Paris, following on a conference in which the representatives of 44 countries took part, goes back to November 4, 1946. Twenty-five years after, the number of member States is 125. Despite the efforts of the socialist countries and many developing countries, as well as democratic organisations, among which is the WFTU, it has not yet been possible to get the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam or the People's Democratic Republic of Korea admitted to it. Thus, the opposition of the United States and of the majority of the capitalist countries prevents the application of the universality of this institution. This is a situation which cannot last.

## UNESCO'S FIELD OF ACTION

*radishun* **F**UNCTIONAL literacy, that is literacy linked to vocational training, general adult education, continuing education, study and travel scholarships for workers, social travel, the training of engineers and technicians and of teachers, human rights (included in which are trade union rights and women's rights), the right of all to culture, questions of youth, information, the fight for peace, the struggle against racialism, colonialism and its after-effects, and help to Palestinian refugees are some of the problems for which UNESCO is responsible and which are of key interest to the trade union movement.

In order to defend the many interests of the workers at UNESCO it is not enough to be present there, but still more to have the right to intervene at all levels of discussion and decision. That is why the First Congress of the WFTU in October 1945 stated:

"That as the representative of the world of labour, it has the inalienable right to take part in the activity of the United Nations Organisation" (W.F.T.U. in 1945 Congress)

The imperialist States, which dominated the UN at that time, contested the right of the trade union movement and it was only after a bitter struggle that the WFTU in August 1947 obtained recognition of certain rights for non-governmental organisations. This result, although positive, did not meet the growing role of the unions in the lives of the workers and in society. That is why, twenty-five years after, the WFTU ceaselessly takes steps and makes proposals for united action, in the first place to the other trade union centres, aimed at increasing the opportunities for really representative non-governmental organisations to intervene.

In this way progress has been made although it is still insufficient.

Today, UNESCO maintains official relations with 294 non-governmental organisations which are classified in three categories — A, B and C. The WFTU, like the ICFTU and the WCL, is in category A, the one which offers the best opportunities for intervening at the highest level. But until the sixties, the imperialist States, who were in a majority, had succeeded in considerably limiting the role of non-governmental organisations, and in the first place that of the WFTU, and had prevented the admission of democratic organisations to category A and B (women, youth, students, lawyers, journalists, etc.).

In the face of the discriminatory positions of the majority of reactionary States, the WFTU has never ceased to struggle for its rights to be respected and to defend the workers. The step that it took in 1955 to establish a permanent representation in Paris for UNESCO permits it to follow more closely all the questions affecting manual and intellectual workers and to intervene in the discussion on the basis of the direction of policy laid down by the Congresses of the WFTU.

*UNESCO  
4/11/1946  
44-125  
Countries  
now*

*\* People's Republic of China was admitted  
last month (December 1971)*

*1947*

*NB*

*1955*

## NEW PERSPECTIVES FACING UNESCO

IT was from 1960, with the entry into UNESCO of many new independent African States, that the position greatly improved.

In many cases a new majority was formed within UNESCO, bringing together the socialist countries and countries which had only been independent a short time. In this way the direction of UNESCO was little by little changed. While at the same time contributing to the development of scientific work and to the necessary research (such as oceanic exploration, the international geophysical year, the study of barren lands, etc.) UNESCO began to concern itself more with helping in areas which were its responsibilities, those States which asked it, and with assisting in solving the serious problems with which they were faced — the after-effects of colonialism and the rapid progress of science and techniques.

Experience showed that governments alone could not put these "operational" programmes into application, such as functional literacy for adults, continuous education, youth problems, women's problems, etc. Help from non-governmental organisations was thus sought.

Like most non-governmental organisations, the WFTU supported these new UNESCO initiatives, but refused purely and simply to give the support of its 150 million or so members to programmes which did not correspond to its aims and with which it had not really been associated at the various levels of preparation and execution and to national, regional and international plans. This is the meaning of our present struggle to widen our rights in the face of the opposition demonstrated by the capitalist States to the responsible participation of non-governmental organisations in UNESCO.

In vain did the Director General of UNESCO state that thanks to the non-governmental organisations "there is gradually being superimposed on UNESCO's instrumental framework of governments and functionaries, the real UNESCO of peoples and persons". The game is not yet won. Progress can only be made by united action of non-governmental organisations, and in the first place by the three great trade union internationals representing manual and intellectual workers, who are the deciding force in the development of society.

### WFTU ACTIVITY IN UNESCO

THE WFTU, closely linked to the concerns of and the struggles carried on by the workers and their trade union organisations in the various countries, regions and continents, and on a world scale, reflects as faithfully as possible the aims and opinions of the workers and determines its programme and activities in an independent way. It does everything to influence the programme of UNESCO in the direction of the workers' interests, at the same time as it co-operates in the activities and plans of UNESCO which correspond to its own aims.

Although we have no desire to retrace all the activities of the WFTU within UNESCO over the

past twenty-five years, it is nevertheless worthwhile to recall the main points.

The WFTU has concentrated its action on the UNESCO programme of education, vocational training, the fight for literacy, advancement for women, the specific demands of youth, study courses, travelling scholarships, human rights, problems of peace and international co-operation and the anti-colonial struggle.

It puts forward its suggestions during the drawing up of the draft UNESCO programmes. In many cases its proposals have been accepted and the interests of the workers taken into consideration.

The WFTU takes part in the general conferences of UNESCO as well as in the specialised conferences on subjects which interest it. Nevertheless, it considers that the role of observer to which the non-governmental organisations are limited does not permit it to intervene with the necessary effectiveness to defend the interests of the workers. Despite that, by its documented and persevering action, the WFTU has been able to play a very important role at the last two General Conferences of UNESCO in having a resolution adopted on peace and the struggle against colonialism.

Through direct approaches to the Director General of UNESCO, the WFTU has seen to it that its proposals should be studied by the Executive Council, a fact which led the General Conference to demonstrate clearly that it supported the action of the Liberation Movements for the Portuguese Colonies in the field of education and culture. Concretely, the question was one of publishing school books prepared by these liberation movements, and this is to be taken in hand by UNESCO in co-operation with the Organisation of African Unity.

This important success in the anti-colonial struggle has led Portugal to withdraw from UNESCO, taking up the same position as South Africa.

The WFTU and its representatives are, furthermore, carrying on continual activity to see that UNESCO does not content itself with making statements of principle on apartheid, but that it adopts concrete measures so that governments apply the resolutions of the United Nations against apartheid, in particular by ending all assistance given to the regimes and governments practising apartheid.

The WFTU has taken part in two first International Conferences on Adult Education (1949, 1960), in the Conference on Youth Problems (Grenoble 1964) and more recently in the Conference of Ministers of Culture (Venice 1970), at which a new direction was taken in defining cultural policies and in considering culture from a world point of view, available to all, in accordance with the policy defended by the WFTU and UNESCO for several years now.

At the present moment the WFTU is taking an active part in preparing the 3rd Conference on Adult Education and the 2nd Conference on Youth Problems.

It should be recalled that since 1967, the year when September 8 was declared an International Day for the fight against illiteracy, the WFTU and its national centres have associated themselves

8/9/67: *Seidon's report on the WFTU's work on illiteracy*

with the celebration of this day. They have used these celebrations to make known as widely as possible, by statements, press articles and various demonstrations, the workers' demand that material means should be devoted more widely to the fight against illiteracy.

The WFTU has taken part in the meetings which led to a recommendation being drawn up concerning technical and vocational education. The World Federation of Teachers' Unions (FISE) has been directly associated with drawing up the recommendation on the conditions of teachers.

The WFTU is a member of several of the Director General's consultative committees. In particular can be quoted the International Consultative Committee on Literacy, in which the Honorary President of the WFTU, Louis Saillant, takes part, the Consultative Committee on Extra-Curricular Education and the Selection Committee for workers' study bursaries. It should be recalled that between 1955 and 1971 the national centres affiliated to the WFTU received bursaries for 125 workers' study trips, by groups of from three to fifteen persons. These bursaries have allowed those receiving them to make interesting contacts with independent trade union centres or those affiliated to other organisations.

It should also be noted that, with the technical and financial assistance of UNESCO, the WFTU has organised the following study courses and specialised conferences:

1958 Bucharest: Trade Union Leadership Training Course.

1961 Tashkent: Worker Access to Education and Culture.

1961/64: Enquiry into Technical and Occupational Education.

1962: Study on the Transition from School to Working Life.

1968 Turin: International Study Day on the struggle against illiteracy.

1969 Nicosia: International Conference on Problems of Working Youth.

1971 Paris: International Women's Trade Union Seminar for Western Europe.

1970/1971: International Study on the Most Under-Privileged Youth.

Thus, through the activity of the WFTU in UNESCO, this organisation has contributed by helping financially and assisting technically in the achievement of certain of the WFTU's aims.

New opportunities for co-operation are at present arising, particularly on the question of the advancement of women and on problems of women workers, on the publication of school books for liberation movements, issues raised by the relationships between man and his environment — towns, pollution, etc., and on the 2nd Development Decade and the conditions which must be created to see that this meets a better fate than the first one.

It has certainly not been easy for the WFTU to get these results. Almost isolated when it began its work in UNESCO, the WFTU has progressively won over a growing number of non-governmental organisations to its positions. At the present time, on a large number of questions of importance for the workers, it is the reactionary organisations which are seeing their isolation growing.

## PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE YEARS

A STAGE in our work is reaching its end; the new period which is opening up must be one of strengthening still further the role of the WFTU, and above all of developing united work with the unions of other affiliations, or those which are independent.

In order that the workers' interests should be defended in the most effective way, the WFTU proposes the following measures:

- 1) that more effective forms for the participation of the trade union movement at all levels should be sought with UNESCO.
- 2) that affiliated national centres should participate with full rights in the UNESCO National Commissions and in all their activities and be represented in the delegations of their respective countries at UNESCO Conferences every time the agenda deals with subjects affecting manual and intellectual workers.
- 3) that the TUIs — taking into account the important nature of questions such as continual education, functional literacy, and cultural activities, which take up a good part of the UNESCO programme — should make concrete proposals to it for activity relating to their own trade union aims.

FISE carries on direct relations with UNESCO and has undertaken several contracts on its behalf, but it is becoming more and more obvious that the TUIs must explore the new opportunities which can open up for them at UNESCO. The Agricultural, the Textile and Metal TUIs, among others, are working in this direction.

However representative and dynamic it may be, the WFTU is conscious that to attain its aims, and more particularly to extend the rights of trade union organisations within UNESCO, it cannot succeed on its own.

Once again it is by united action among the WFTU, the WCL and the ICFTU that the most effective ways will be found to ensure the defence of the interests of the world of labour. Recent contacts achieved in the various meetings of UNESCO, in particular between the WFTU and the WCL, and the joint positions which have followed, prove that real opportunities for co-operation exist. The WFTU will do all in its power so that in the future, to the extent that conditions permit, there should be consultations with the WCL and with the ICFTU on UNESCO programmes and on the various plans of this body, as well as during preparations for UNESCO meetings and at the meetings themselves, including those of non-governmental organisations.

The development of initiatives in UNESCO Commissions by national trade union centres, as well as by the TUIs, and their unity proposals, will allow the workers' interests to be better defended in the years to come. This will help UNESCO to recognise new rights for the international trade union centres.

To achieve these aims the WFTU knows that it can count on the unreserved support of the workers of the world and their trade union and democratic organisations.