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issue #4

may/june 2013

KPTU CENTRAL NEWS

Experiences and Lessons from the International Labor Conference

This year's International Labor Conference was of particular importance to public sector trade union in South Korea and around the world. For the first time since the establishment of ILO Convention 151 (public sector labor relations), fundamental labor rights in the public sector workers were made a main topic of debate in the ILC Committee on Application of Standards (CAS). Coinciding with this discussion, Public Services International (PSI) held various activities in and outside of the ILO in order to highlight the heightened attack on public sector workers since the onset of global economic crisis These including strategy workshops on global collective action for public sector trade unions rights, the Route of Shame - bicycle parade past the embassies of countries with the worst records of rights violations and an official ILO side event on 'Public Finance Control and Anti-corruption Strategies'.



June 10, Participants in PSI Workshop on Coordinating International Solidarity

These including strategy workshops on global collective action for public sector trade unions rights, the Route of Shame - bicycle parade past the embassies of countries with the worst records of rights violations and an official ILO side event on 'Public Finance Control and Anti-corruption Strategies'.

The KPTU and our affiliate the Korean Power Plant Industry Union (KPIU) joined the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the Korean Government Employees Union (KGEU) and the Korean Teachers and Education Workers (Union) in sending a delegation to Geneva from June 5 to June 14. Before the delegation departed, the KCTU Public Sector Unions Alliance held a National Rally for ratification of ILO conventions, guarantee of fundamental labor rights and an end to privatization on June 1 at which over 30,000 public sector workers attended.

Participation in the ILC provided us an opportunity to highlight the Korean government's continued repression of unions fighting against privatization and public sector precarity, call for ILO intervention and organize international solidarity. We did this through intervention in the CAS, participating in the Route of Shame, during KPIU Vice President Nogyun Park spoke in front of the South Korean embassy, a meeting with ILO Director-General Guy Rider and several meetings with unions from other countries. The Korean delegation even carried out a direct action during the Korean Minister of Employment and Labor's ILC plenary speech in order to call attention to the hypocrisy of his claims that the Korean government respects labor rights and is pursuing a policy that will create good public sector jobs.

Perhaps even more importantly that the work we did to raise awareness about the situation in Korea, our

experience at the ILC made clear the need of united global action to defend workers' rights. As PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli's CAS speech made clear, the issues of government interference in public sector labor relations, prosecution of union leaders and members for collective action, the creation of yellow unions to weaken democratic unions, the denial of collective bargaining rights and retaliatory dismissals are not problems unique to the KPTU or Korean public sector unions. They are issues the world over. The actions of the employers at the ILC, who united in their effort to deny workers' the right to strike and the very authority of the ILO's supervisory system, also demonstrated the absolute necessity of worker unity.

In a PSI workshop on coordinating international solidarity held on June 10, we began discuss strategies for global action. One suggestion made was to continue organizing actions similar to the Route of Shame on an international scale. KPTU looks forward to working with PSI and public sector unions from around the world to deepen discussion we started at the ILC and turning it into concrete action in the second half of this year.

KPTU AFFILIATES NEWS

In Gratitude for your Solidarity for KPTU Education Support Workers' Struggle

To Public Services International and PSI affiliates,

We wish to express our sincere gratitude for the solidarity you have shown to the KPTU Education Workers Solidarity Division's (KPTU-EdSol's) struggle. In particular, we want to thank the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) for the solidarity protest and protest letter delivery you organized at the South Korean Embassy in Washington D.C. on June 19.

At our national rally on July 22, we announced and showed pictures of the solidarity we received from around the world, on massive screen on our stage. We are also sharing the pictures you sent with our members through the internet.

Through your outpouring of solidarity, our members came to feel the global significance of their struggle and, through this, gained much confidence for the fight ahead.

On June 22, education support workers, who have been invisible for so long, stood up with pride, shouted for their rights to be respected and marched through the streets of downtown Seoul.

Here is a brief report of where our struggle is right now.

1. Collective bargaining is underway around the country: *Until very recently, the government had refused to bargain with us. Through our struggle and favorable court rulings, however, local offices of education (under the authority of the Ministry of Education) have been forced into collective bargaining.*



June 22, AFT Solidarity on KPTU-EdSol Stage

2. The government is still delaying the establishment of a policy on education support workers: Saying that the cost will be too great, the government as continued to delay announcement of a plan to provide education support workers with job security and improve their working conditions. Most recently, the administration promised to put forth a proposal by the end of July. There are doubts, however, about how concrete or realistic the proposal will be.

3. Discussion of the bill for the regularization of education support workers' employment status is currently on hold in the National Assembly: Despite wide support for the bill among all opposition parties, the ruling New Frontier Party (NFP) and the Park administration are continuing to oppose it. Given that the June extraordinary session of the National Assembly is now over, we will have to wait until the next session for debate to be reopened and the bill to be voted on. On July 26, we made a protest visit to the NFP headquarters and marched to the National Assembly, bowing to the ground once every three step. In South Korea the 3 steps/1 bow march is a symbolic form of protest used to show the sincerity of ones demands and determination to fight for them.

4. Throughout the month of June we maintained a protest encampment in front of the national assembly: Over 6,000 of our members participated in a relay hunger strike, fasting for a day each. Now that the current session of the National Assembly is over, we have moved our protest camp to in front of the Ministry of Education, where we will maintain it indefinitely.



June 22, KPTU-EdSol Protest

5. We are planning partial strikes for throughout July.

The solidarity actions taken by fellow workers around the world have given great strength to KPTU-EdSol members. With this strength we are confident that we will succeed in our struggle.

Let's work together to abolish discrimination and precarious work in schools, strengthen public education and create a world were all live together with equality and respect.

Workers are one!

~KPTU-EdSol

The CJ Korea Express Strike and the KPTU Cargo Truckers Solidarity Division

Last May, CJ Korea Express drivers engaged in the first nationwide strike in the 25-year-long history of parcel service in South Korea. The strike began on May 4 in Incheon, Bucheon, Sihwa and Gunpo and spread to other major cities in the next few days. Given that the strike began spontaneously and was carried out largely by unorganized workers, many believed it would stay contained and end within a few days. Contrary to these predictions, however, the strike grew until it reached a national scale and continued for a full 15 days.

The direct causes of the strike were a recent decrease in rates paid to drivers and the introduction of a system that unfairly penalizes workers for customer complaints. More broadly, CJ Korea Express drivers had grown too tired of long hours, continuously decreasing income, severely unequal contracts and CJ Korea Express's absolute refusal to listen to workers' demands or allow workers to form their own organization.



May 13, Korea Express Workers National Rally

Although the workers were non-members, the KPTU Cargo Truckers Solidarity Division the strike actively, coordinating outreach, actions, press work, meetings with National Assembly members and bargaining with the CJ Korea Express management.

This support helped the workers win substantial victories such as improve in the penalty system and promise to decrease security deposits drivers have to pay to the company upon beginning work. In addition, CJ Korea Express drivers have begun to join the KPTU Cargo Truckers Solidarity Division as a result of the strike.

The strike was not without its limitations. A lack of preparedness in major cities like Seoul, Busan, meant they did not have enough strength to win their main demand for an increase in rates.

Nonetheless, the CJ Korea Express strike marks an historic moment in which parcel service workers broke through the chains that had made them subservient to their employers. It is clear that from now on, the history of parcel service workers' organizing in Korea will be divided between before and after the May 2013 strike.

Now CK Korea Express workers must look to the future, build their organizational base and prepare for their next fight. Whether workers are members or not, the KPTU Cargo Truckers Solidarity Division will be by their side throughout this process.

KPTU Gas Corporation Branch Completes First Stage in Struggle against Gas Industry Privatization

On April 9, 2013, conservative New Frontier Party (NFP) legislator Han-pyo Kim introduced a bill for the partial amendment of the Urban Gas Business Act. This amendment will make it possible for corporations that directly import natural gas for their own use ('importers for own consumption') to sell it overseas or domestically for industrial use or power generation.

The amendment will give importers for own consumption the same status as natural gas export and import businesses, promoting their growth and sale of gas for profit.

If the legislation passes, energy chaebols (Korean conglomerates) will be able to control more than 50% of the Korean natural gas industry. This monopoly and the imbalance in the import of gas for industrial use versus daily use that will arise will mean a drastic increase in gas prices for common people. More generally, it will mean the development of an energy industry aimed at short-term profit at the expense of a safe and stable energy supply.



Gas Corporation Branch members making picket signs at protest encampment in front of National Assembly

The KPTU Korea Gas Corporation Branch has been at the forefront of the struggle from stopping the gas legislation from passing. As part of this struggle, Gas Corporation Branch members maintained a protest encampment in front of the National Assembly from June 10 until June 27, along with other public sector unions fighting against privatization and for the guarantee of fundamental labor rights. This struggle, along with opposition to the bill from opposition party legislators, succeeded in stalling the bill's passage through the Trade, Industry and Energy Committee's subcommittee on bill preparation.

The Park administration and NFP, however, are using every means possible to ensure the bill's eventual passage so as to hand a golden egg-laying goose over to the energy chaebols. As part of this effort, the government has delayed the appointment of a new Gas Corporation CEO, originally scheduled for June 25, until July 9 to ensure the appointment of someone who will faithfully carry out its plan for gas industry privatization and take a tough stance against the union.

The Gas Corporation Branch's fight this June was an important step forward in a multi-front campaign to defend quality public services against the Park Geun-hye administrations' public sector privatization policies. It is the administration's plan to drive privatization forward before the public has a chance to fully understand its consequences for them. Going into July, the Gas Corporation Branch is making plans to hold extensive forums and education events, meetings with civil society organizations, public outreach and a petition drive in order to build popular support for an all-out anti-privatization struggle.

AFFILIATE INTRODUCTION

The Korean Power Plant Industry Union (KPIU)

In April of 2001, the South Korean government took the first step towards privatization of the electricity industry by splitting off the power generation segment of the Korean Energy Corporation (KEPCO). Power generation was divided between one company producing hydro and nuclear power and five companies producing thermal power

Power plant workers opposed this move towards privatization. They we left the Korean National Electrical Workers Union (KNEWU), which had accepted the plan, and formed the Korean Power Plant Industry Union (KPIU), an industry-wide union representing 5,600 workers at the five thermal power plants in July 2001. The KPIU chose the democratic Korean Confederation of Trade Unions as our national center and thus became an affiliate of the KPTU.

In February 2002, the KPIU began a strike against the government's plan to sell the five power companies to

private capital. The KPIU was the only union in the industry to strike against the government's plans. 98% of our membership participated in the industrial action, which went on for 38 days. Through this strike, We forced the government to stop to the sale of the power companies. The price was immense, however. Employers made claims for damaged against the union equaling several billions of won (millions of dollars). 348 members were dismissed from their jobs and a total of 2,000 faced disciplinary actions.



June 13, KPIU President Nogyun Park speaking about the repression against his union during the Route of Shame

Our full membership again went on strike in 2006 against the government's privatization and neoliberal policies. In response, the government has taken every chance it can to break the KPIU. It has given power company CEOs who do not deal firmly enough with the union low performance evaluations and threatened them with firings, while at the same time promising to help CEOs charged with unfair labor practices against KPIU members to avoid penalties.

With this support from the government, employers established yellow unions at the five companies and openly pressured members to leave the KPIU.

Because of this repression, we have entered very difficult times. But we continue to struggle. Participation in the June 1 public sector workers rally and the ILC this year were important steps towards our rebuilding and moving forward in the struggle against privatization.

KPTU INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Building Solidarity with Unions in the Philippines and Thailand through KCTU Education Program

Every year, the KCTU and its affiliates hold the 'Leadership Education and Exchange in Asia, Program for Young Unionists (LEAP)'. LEAP is a week long program aimed at providing up-and-coming unionists from the Asia-Pacific region a space to learn organizing and campaign strategies and strengthen communication towards the the development of strong and democratic AP regional labor movement. This year the program took place April 29 to May 3 and involved participants from Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Korea.

The KPTU invited the Philippine Airlines Employees Association (PALEA) and the Thai State Enterprise Workers' Relations Confederation (SERC) to send participants to the program with this goal of strengthening our relationships with these unions. From PALEA, Vice President Alnem Pretencio (not so much an 'up-and-coming' unionist as a 'wise and experienced' one) attended, sharing invaluable lessons from his experience



May 3, Brother Alnem and Sister Rin with members of the KPTU Airlines Council

fighting Philippine Airlines' outsourcing for nearly two years. From SERC, International Affairs Specialist Ussarin Kaewpradub (Rin) came bringing information about struggles in Thailand so similar to our own - SERC's fights to build unity among public sector workers and win reinstatement for unfairly dismissed railway workers.

During the program the participants took part in education sessions, visited KCTU affiliates' offices and struggle sites and joined thousands of Korean workers in May Day protests. They also participated in a protest rally in support for PALEA's struggle in front of the Philippine Airlines' Seoul office organized by KCTU and KPTU. Brother Alnem and Sister Rin held meetings with the

KPTU Airlines Council and the KPTU-affiliates Korean Railway Workers' Union (KRWU) during which all parties committed to continued solidarity and exchange in the future.

KPTU Joins Unions around the World in Calling for an End to Repression in Turkey

On June 21 and 22, workers around the world participated in days of action, called for by the Global Unions, against the Turkish government's repression of the people's movement underway in Turkey now for nearly a month. The KPTU joined others in calling for an end to violent repression of protests, guarantee of freedom of assembly and expression, removal of restrictions on trade union rights and release of imprisoned citizens, journalists and members of the public sector confederation KESK by sending a protest letter to the Turkish Embassy in Seoul. KPTU officers and members also expressed our solidarity to the people of Turkey and, in particular, to our public sector brothers and sisters in KESK, through online picketing. We will continue to stand in solidarity with the workers and people of Turkey until they have won true respect for their human and labor rights.

The KPTU is....

The Korean Federation of Public Services and Transportation Workers' Unions (KPTU) is an industrial federation of unions organizing in the public, social service and transport sectors. It is operated jointly with the Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers' Union (same acronym), an industrial union established in 2011 by workers in the same sectors. In the long run, we seek to fully integrate the two organizations into one industrial union to build power and strengthen our ability to fight for labor and human rights. The KPTU is affiliated to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), a democratic national center in South Korea, and the global union federation Public Services International (PSI).

The nearly 150,000 members of the KPTU (union and federation combined) include utilities and public institution workers (public transportation, social insurance, energy and safety), airline and airport workers, cargo truck, bus, taxi and other transport workers, care workers working in public hospitals, patient care, childcare, homecare and long-term care institutions, cleaning and other property service workers and precarious and regularly-employed workers at arts & culture, professional/technical, research and other social institutions. We draw vitality from our diversity at the same time as we find unity in our common struggle as public service and transport workers. It is our goal to create an independent, democratic, class conscious and militant labor movement in the public and transport sectors and, in so doing, contribute to the unity of the entire working class.