

2006 congress • oslo, norway • 30 june - 2 july



social globalisation



international
league of
religious
socialists



20 June 2006

Dear Comrade,

Welcome to Norway, and the 2006 Congress of the ILRS!

The specific details of the programme are included in this file, along with all documents for the Congress. All documents are also available to you on the Internet, at

<http://socialglobalisation.org/members.html>

User name: ilrs2006mo

Password: sormarkano

The theme of our Congress shall be: *Social Globalisation*. We will be discussing how to make globalisation a more socially driven than market-driven process, and how we as religious socialists can help to shape that process.

In addition, the Congress will address the topic of interfaith dialogue in our societies and member organisations, and how we can be more politically effective in our work. We have participation from more faiths, countries and continents than we have had in any previous ILRS congress.

Our hope is that this Congress will inspire each of us to take the ideas we share here back to our organisations and nations, so that we can build our movement even wider than we have accomplished this weekend.

We also want to express our thanks to those who helped to make this event possible; Sørmarka and the LO, the Norwegian Labour Party, our comrades in Kristne Arbeidere, and the Olof Palme International Centre. Their commitment to the socialist vision makes them warm and welcome allies for social justice in the dangerous world in which we live.

In solidarity,

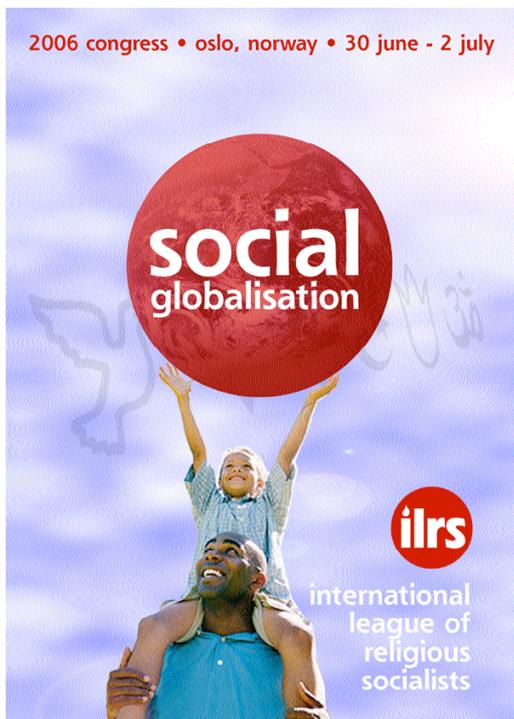
The Executive Committee of the ILRS,
and the Norwegian Planning Committee of Kristne Arbeidere.

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ASSOCIATE MEMBER
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL



PROGRAMME: 2006 ILRS CONGRESS 30 june — 2 july • oslo, norway

FRIDAY: Main Theme - Social Globalisation

09.30: Opening

Welcome by ILRS President Pär Axel Sahlberg
Welcome by Kristne Arbeidere President Jan Rudy Kristensen
Welcome by representatives from the local Labour Party and LO (Norwegian Trades Union Organisation).

10.00: Welcome address from the Norwegian Labour Party

10.30: Break

10.45: Social Globalisation - The Task Before Us

Introduction: Atle Sommerfeldt, Secretary General, Kirkens Nødhjelp/Norwegian Church Aid)

Contributions from our speakers on the theme, followed by questions and comments from delegates.

Asia: Ronaldo Llamas, President, Citizens Action Party, Philippines

Africa: Mohammed Dangor, Commission for Religious Affairs, African National Congress

Latin America: Sergio Moya Mena, Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean; former Vice-President, International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY)

Europe: Peter Weiderud, Director of International Affairs, World Council of Churches; President, Swedish Brotherhood Movement (Broderskap)

North America: (by video) Rev. Bill Blaikie, Member of Parliament, New Democratic Party of Canada

13.00: Lunch

14.30: Religious Perspectives on Social Globalisation

Christian: Dr. Rannfrid Thelle, theologian and author; Executive Committee, Kristne Arbeidere

Jewish: (invited) Louise Ellman, Member of Parliament, British Labour Party; President, Jewish Labour Movement

Hindu: (invited) Swami Agnivesh, Bonded Labour Movement, New Delhi

Muslim: Irshad Manji, author and activist; founder, Project Ijtihad; columnist for Ny Tid.

15.45: Workshops on ILRS Priorities in relation to Social Globalisation (to link to the delegate session on Saturday)

1. The Economics of Social Globalisation (English)
2. Diversity (interfaith) in Social Globalisation (English)
3. Practical aspects of making Social Globalisation a reality (English)
4. German language discussion of theme and its aspects
5. Spanish language discussion of theme and its aspects

17.15: Break

17.30: Reports back to Congress from workshops

19.30: DINNER/RECEPTION with guests from the Norwegian Labour Party and the LO

SATURDAY: ILRS DELEGATE SESSION

A Nordic meeting will be held during the morning for members of ILRS member organisations in Scandinavia.

10.00: Opening

- Opening, seating of delegations, Adoption of Congress chair and agenda
- Report of the Secretary General
- Report of the Executive Committee
- Report of the Treasurer
- Reports from the Delegations
- Adoption of Resolutions before the Congress (constitution, et al)

11.30: Break

11.45: Continue opening session

13.00: Lunch

14.30: The Political Work of the ILRS

- Introduction of the ILRS Workplan for 2006-2009
- Evaluation of: the Congress theme, workshop reports and their application to the ILRS Workplan 2006-2009

16.45: Break

17.00: Report of Elections Committee
Election of Executive Committee and Officers

18.00: Closing of Congress

19.00: Dinner & Cultural Programme

SUNDAY:

12.00: EXCURSION IN OSLO (more details coming soon)



information

LOCATION:

The location of the Congress is at the Sørmarka conference centre, the conference centre of the LO, Norway's trade union organisation. Sørmarka is a modern facility which contains both the meeting rooms and the accommodations for the Congress, and you can learn more about the centre by visiting their web site at www.sormarka.no.

Sørmarka Kurs- og Konferansesenter

Enebakkveien 625
1404 Siggerud
Norway
Tel: +47 64 85 81 00

COST:

The cost for the Congress is €100 per day (about \$120.00 USD), which includes *all meals, materials, and lodging*. Vegetarian food will be available at every meal.

TRANSPORT:

Once you have landed at either of Oslo's two airports, you will then have to make your way to Oslo's city centre before continuing your journey to Sørmarka.

From Gardermoen airport: the cheapest option is the local train (NSB lokaltog) for 82 NOK (Norwegian crowns). *This is not the Flytoget (Airport Express Train)*, which is a quicker option, but at twice the price of the local train (160 NOK). Both trains go to Oslo Central Station, which is directly across from the Oslo City Bus Terminal.

From Torp airport: the best option is to take the airport bus (130 NOK) to the Oslo City Bus Terminal.

To Sørmarka:

The best way to come to Sørmarka is by bus, from the Oslo City Bus Terminal (Platform 26). Buses leave for Sørmarka every hour with more frequent departures between 15.00 - 19.00. The journey from Oslo is about 45-60 minutes depending upon traffic. The cost is 39 NOK.

LANGUAGE:

The language of the congress will be English, with informal translation in Spanish, German, and Norwegian available.

ILRS CONSTITUTION

DRAFT FOR 2006 ILRS CONGRESS

1 July 2006, Oslo

Since the last ILRS Congress in 2003, the Executive Committee of the ILRS has been working on revisions to the ILRS Constitution. This is the final result of that work, which the Executive Committee now proposes to the Congress for adoption. The new version is placed next to the old one, so that the changes may be easily seen.

NEW VERSION

§1. Name

The name of the organisation shall be the International League of Religious Socialists.

§ 2. Principal Aims

The League and its member organisations stand for democracy and socialism inspired by religious belief and experience.

Its principal aims shall be

- to promote the development of democratic socialism;
- to facilitate co-operation among organisations of religious socialists and to circulate and provide information about their work.
- to contribute to an official recognition of organisations of religious socialists as co-workers in their respective socialist parties and in the wider socialist movement;
- to work closely with our comrades and sister organisations in the Socialist International;
- to reduce the historical prejudices and to overcome the traditional tensions between religious believers, religious communities and the socialist movement.

PRESENT VERSION

§1 Name

The name of the organisation shall be the International League of Religious Socialists.

§ 2 Principal Aims

The League and its national branches stand for democracy and socialism inspired by religious belief and experience.

Its principal aims shall be

- to promote the development of democratic socialism;
- to facilitate co-operation among organisations of religious socialists and to circulate and provide information about their work.
- to contribute to an official recognition at organisations of religious socialists as co-workers in the respective socialist parties and in the wider socialist movement;
- to establish closer relations with the Socialist International;
- to reduce the historical prejudices and to overcome the traditional tensions between religious believers, religious communities and the socialist movement.

§ 3. Membership

The ILRS is an organisation of religious socialist organisations. Individuals are not eligible for membership in the ILRS.

Member organisations of religious socialists are eligible for membership in the ILRS, the basic principle being one organisation, one vote. In this as in other matters of membership in the League, ultimate decisions on the rules and qualifications of membership are to be taken by the Congress.

Organisations wishing to become members must agree to endorse the aims and regulations of the League.

Organisations wishing to affiliate with the League should submit an application to the Secretary General of the ILRS, stating the name of the organisation, the number of members, the names of the president and some other members of the board. A copy of the aims and regulations of the organisation should be included with the application. The Executive Committee shall make a recommendation on all applications for membership to each Congress.

Each member organisation shall pay an annual fee to the League. For an organisation to be granted membership, and to continue to be recognised as a member, it shall have a minimum of 50 members. The Congress has the right, on recommendation from the Executive Committee, to prohibit from voting those member organisations who have not paid their fees to the ILRS.

An organisation which is acting in conflict with the aims of the League or does not meet its obligations under

§ 3. Membership

National organisations are eligible for membership in the League, the basic principle being one nation, one organisation and one vote. In case two or more organisations from any one country apply for membership, they shall have to agree on forms of cooperation and how to exert the one vote together. In this as in other matters of membership in the League, ultimate decisions are to be taken by the Representative Assembly.

Members have to endorse the aims and regulations of the League.

All national organisations wishing to affiliate with the League should submit an application, stating the name of the organisation, the number of members, the names of the president and some other members of the board. A copy of the aims and regulations of the organisation should be included with the application.

Other organisations so wishing may be recognized as observers to the League by decision of the Representative Assembly. They are entitled to participate in meetings of the Assembly with the right to speak and make motions, but not to vote.

Each national branch shall pay an annual fee to the League. For an organisation to be recognized as a national branch, it shall have a minimum of 50 members.

A branch which is acting in conflict with the aims of the League or does not meet its obligations under these statutes, may be excluded from membership in the League by decision of the Representative Assembly on the proposal of the Executive Committee. For such a decision of the Assembly to be valid, it must have the support of two-thirds of the delegates

these statutes, may be excluded from membership in the League by decision of the Congress on the recommendation of the Executive Committee. For such a decision of the Congress to be valid, it must have the support of two-thirds of the delegates participating in the representative session of the Congress.

Organisations may be granted observer status in the League by decision of the Congress. Observer status may be granted to organisations that are still in the process of formation, or whose political development is not sufficiently clear to the Executive Committee, but which declare themselves to be religious socialist organisations in a manner consistent with the politics of the League or the Socialist International. Observer organisations shall be entitled to participate in meetings of the Congress with the right to speak, but not to vote. At such time as the Executive Committee is able to make a determination on the status and development of an organisation holding observer status, the Executive Committee may recommend a change in the status of the organisation to the next Congress. Observer status may be removed from an organisation by a majority vote of the Congress.

Persons interested in forming a religious socialist organisation with the intention of that organisation becoming a member of the League, may be invited by the President to attend the meetings of the Congress.

§ 4. Governance

The decision-making or governing bodies of the League are: the Congress, the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee.

participating in the Assembly session.

§ 4. Representative Assembly

The decision making bodies of the League are: the Representative Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee.

ILRS Congress

The Congress is the highest decision-making event of the organisation. The Congress develops general outlines of work, makes recommendations with regard to particular issues and makes public statements on behalf of the League. It meets in regular session every third year. Member organisations must be notified no later than six months before the date of the Congress. An extraordinary session is convened on the decision of the Executive or when 30% of the member organisations call for it. To be authorised to make decisions for the ILRS, the member organisations must be called to an extraordinary session no later than six months before the date of the extraordinary session. Proposals for the agenda of an extraordinary session must be submitted 120 days in advance.

The Congress is composed of delegations from member organisations, the members of the Executive Committee, delegations from observer organisations and invited guests. In decision-making sessions of the Congress, votes are held by the member organisations only, on the rule of one organisation, one vote.

In addition to its decision-making sessions, the Congress may also offer a conference on particular issues. The outcome of conferences are not binding on the League, unless agreed by the Congress.

Two-thirds of the member organisations represented in the Congress shall constitute a quorum.

The Agenda for working sessions of the Congress shall include:

- 1) Election of

The Representative Assembly develops general outlines of work, makes recommendations with regard to particular issues and makes public statements on behalf of the League. It meets in regular session every third year. An extraordinary session is convened on the decision of the Executive or when 30% of the Assembly members call for it.

The Assembly is composed of the members of the Executive Committee and of one representative of each national branch. Two-thirds of the members constitute a quorum. Each Organisation recognized as an observer by the assembly may also send a representative to its meetings.

- president of the session
 - secretary and two delegates to check the minutes
 - a nominations committee of three, including a convenor
- 2) Membership matters and approval of delegates
 - 3) Report of the Executive Committee
 - 4) Report of the Secretary General
 - 5) Report of the Treasurer
 - 6) Report of the auditors and approval of financial statement
 - 7) Adoption of the reports and granting of discharge
 - 8) Election of
 - president
 - two vice-presidents
 - secretary general
 - treasurer
 - up to four other members of the Executive Committee, and up to four substitute members
 - 9) Appointment of auditors
 - 10) Decision on membership fees
 - 11) Working plan
 - 12) Other questions

The theme of the Congress, including that of any conference offered by the Congress, shall be determined by the Executive Committee. The Secretary General shall act as liaison between the Executive Committee and the host organisation in matters concerning the Congress.

Delegations to the Congress are to be processed through the Secretariat before they are allowed to be registered for the Congress, in order to confirm their standing in the ILRS. Guests wishing to attend the Congress must be processed through the Secretariat before they are allowed to be registered for the Congress, in order to confirm their credentials. The host organisation may not invite delegations or guests from outside their nation to the Congress without

Agenda for regular sessions of the Representative Assembly:

- a) Election of
 - president of the session
 - secretary and two delegates to check the minutes
 - a nominations committee of three, including a convenor
- b) Membership matters and approval of delegates
- c) Report of the Executive
- d) Report of the auditors and approval of financial statement
- e) Adoption of the reports and granting of discharge
- f) Election of
 - president
 - two vice-presidents
 - secretary general
 - treasurer
 - up to four other members of the Executive Committee
- g) Appointment of auditor
- h) Decision on membership fees
- i) Working plan
- j) Other questions

Secretariat.

The Executive Committee shall have the right to determine a maximum number of participants per delegation to the Congress.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee develops and executes the policy of the League and acts on behalf of the Congress between the sessions of that body. It meets at least once per year, or else at the request of the President, or when three of its members call for it. The Secretary General shall submit a report on the Executive Committee's activities to the Congress.

Members of the Executive Committee are elected by the Congress for the period between congresses. It is composed of:

- officers with the position of president, two vice-presidents, secretary general and treasurer
- up to four other members and an equal number of substitute members.

One of the vice-presidents must be a woman. The members and substitute members shall consist of an equal number of men and women. If gender parity is not achieved after the election by the Congress, the Executive Committee shall in its first meeting nominate the necessary number of members and/or substitute members to achieve gender parity. Five members constitute a quorum, if there are two members of the Steering Committee among them.

If a member of the Executive Committee resigns or otherwise is

§ 5. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee develops and executes the policy of the League and acts on behalf of the Assembly between the sessions of that body. It meets at least once a year, or else at the request of the President, or when three of its members call for it. The President submits a report on the Executive's activities to the Assembly.

Members of the Executive are elected by the Representative Assembly for the next period. The Executive is elected on the basis of gender parity. It is composed of members with the position of president, vice-presidents, secretary general, treasurer and up to four other members and an equal number of substitute members. The vice-presidents will consist of one man and one woman. The members not elected to a specific position and the substitute members shall consist of an equal number of men and women. If gender parity is not achieved after the election by the Assembly, the Executive shall in the first Executive meeting nominate the necessary number of members and/or substitute members to achieve gender parity. Five members constitute a quorum, if there are two members of the Steering Committee among them.

The Executive is entitled to appoint working groups on matters of great concern to the League.

unable to fulfil their position, the Executive Committee may nominate a replacement to fill that position.

The Executive Committee is entitled to appoint working groups on matters of great concern to the League.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee acts on behalf of the Executive Committee and decides on urgent matters between the meetings of the Executive Committee. Interim decisions and statements shall be submitted to the following session of the Executive Committee for approval.

The Steering Committee is composed of the president, a vice-president and the secretary general.

§ 5. Amendments to these statutes

These statutes may be amended by decision of the Congress, provided that the amendment is supported by two-thirds of the delegates eligible to vote in the Congress.

§ 6. Dissolution of the League

The League may be dissolved by decision of the Representative Assembly, provided that the decision is supported by three-fourths of the member organisations of the ILRS, represented by vote or written statement.

In the case of decision to dissolve the League, remaining assets shall be handed over to the Socialist International.

§ 6. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee represents the League before other international bodies, provides an information service to the members of the Representative Assembly, acts on behalf of the Executive and decides on urgent matters between the meetings of the Executive. Interim decisions and statements shall be submitted to the following session of the Executive for approval.

The Steering Committee is composed of the president, a vice-president and the secretary general.

§ 7. Amendments to these statutes

These statutes may be amended by decision of the Representative Assembly, provided that the amendment is supported by two-thirds of the delegates participating in the Assembly session.

§ 8. Dissolution of the League

The League may be dissolved by decision of the Representative Assembly, provided that the decision is supported by three-fourths of the delegates participating in the Assembly session.

In the case of decision to dissolve the League, remaining assets shall be handed over to the Socialist International.



workplan 2006-2009

Since 2003, the Executive Committee of the ILRS has been working with a Workplan that allows us to define and focus on specific aspects of our work.

The following document describes the proposed Workplan for the next period between congresses, divided into seven areas of concern.

1. Social Globalisation: The Task Before Us
2. Hand in Hand
3. Faith in Politics: The Interfaith Challenge
4. 21st Century ILRS: Bringing In New Members
5. Political Handicraft
6. Congress 2009
7. Internal Items



ILRS Workplan 2006-2009

The Workplan for the 2006-2009 period takes up seven areas of concern, all of which are interrelated in terms of building our organisation, its diversity, and our religious socialist agenda.

*Pär-Axel Sahlberg, President
Andrew Hammer, Secretary General
December 2005*

1. Social Globalisation: The Task Before Us

Timetable: Ongoing, with strategy prepared during the second half of 2006

Responsibility of: President and Secretary General, with support from a working group to be appointed by the Congress.

This is an ongoing project to continue the work of the 2006 ILRS Congress on the theme of Social Globalisation.

There are three aspects of work related to this project:

- to examine to what degree our parties are addressing globalisation with a conscious effort to make the process social, i.e., shaped by the ideals and values of the democratic socialist model of the welfare state.
- to examine the extent to which religious institutions can or cannot be partners in helping to make globalisation a more social than market-driven process, and at the same time to examine by what means they might be made partners of the religious left.
- to increase the presence of religious socialists at international forums where globalisation is the main focus of work and discussion (World Social Forum, World Economic Forum, etc.), in order to share and find allies of our perspective.

2. Hand to Hand: The Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism

Timetable: Ongoing, with evaluation of progress every year in January 2006, with general progress reports given to Executive Committee meetings. In

January 2008 the Executive Committee will make an analysis of the campaign.

Responsibility of: Secretary General

The campaign/project is to be carried out through our member organisations, but with a clear and visible link back to the ILRS as the inspiration for the campaign.

This project has as a goal to focus on a common political issue and see if our organizations can work together on a common political agenda. It is our hope that the results will lead to the next phase of the project, related to building the diversity of the ILRS, described in the next project below.

3. Faith and Politics: The Interfaith Challenge

Timetable: *Ongoing, with report back to the Executive Committee no later than December 2008. In January 2009 the Executive Committee will make an analysis of the work done with a follow up every year.*

Responsibility of: *Secretary General, and possibly a working group*

Prepare a report:

- Collect experiences on interfaith work from our member organisations.
- Develop a strategy for how to promote involvement from people from all different faiths in our national organisations.
- Integration of minority and developing political ideas on a value system that enables people with faith to contribute to the political ministry.
- Relate that strategy and its findings to the mission and the language of ILRS.
- Report back to the Executive Committee regularly and propose an action plan to the Executive Committee in January 2009 for decisions.

This project has as a goal to create a 'viewpoint' on the subject of interfaith outreach, based on the experiences learned in our member organizations. In this way we test our own capacity for following up on political work, as well as our cooperation with our members.

4. 21th CENTURY ILRS: Bringing in New Members

Timetable: *Ongoing, with strategy prepared during 2006*

Responsibility of: *Secretary General, with support from President*

This project is an ongoing project to develop our organization and must be a primary concern for the Secretary General. The Secretary General can be assisted in certain aspects of the project by our new members in Latin America and in Africa. A similar process in Eastern Europe and in Asia is also a challenge for our organization.

There are three tasks essential to the future development of the ILRS:

- to work with our existing members in regions of the world other than Europe, in order that they may help us to build new member organisations in their own regions. (We shall begin with our member organisations in Africa and in Central America. Possible target nations over the next three years: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Botswana and Mozambique.)
- a strategy for how to we can work actively to start new organizations in new countries, through our contacts in the SI family. (One of the best contributions we can make is one of knowledge through our experience. Those interested in starting a group want to know some simple things, such as ideas for their constitution, how to organise within their party, etcetera.)
- related to the previous point , a strategy to revitalise our relationship with existing contacts, in the hope that they will strengthen their organisations and become members. This also applies to member organisations which have become dormant, and must reactivate in order to remain members. (e.g., Australia, Denmark, Lithuania, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.)

This project has as a goal to receive five or more new member organizations per Congress period and is an ongoing project.

5. ILRS Political Manual/Handicraft: How to Become Politically Relevant

Timetable: Ongoing, with strategy prepared during 2005, reporting back to the Executive Committee no later than December 2006

Responsibility of: President

The object of this project is to create a strategy for how our national member organisations can better work in relation to their own parties and better focus on relevant ideological themes in their respective national political debates.

The focus should be on both how to promote input into the actual political agendas of our parties, as well as input into the preparation of the foundations for their interior political thinking. We hope to make clear how our organisations can become more effective participants inside their own parties, in faith institutions, and in civil society at large.

The manual should be an ongoing project and can be used as an aid for “political handicraft”.

6. Congress 2009: place to be determined by January 2008

Timetable: Outlined below.

Responsibility of: *Congress preparation committee, comprised of the Secretary General and no more than three representatives of the host nation’s member organisation/s.*

- The Executive Committee will no later than January 2008 decide a theme, time and place for the Congress 2009.
- The Secretary General is the representative of the ILRS to the host nation and will co-ordinate the organisation of the Congress with the designated representatives of the host nation.
- Related to the Congress, the adoption of a work plan for the period 2009-2012 should be part of the agenda of the next Congress. The President and Secretary General shall draft the new work plan, based upon evaluation of the current work plan, by October 2008 for presentation to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall propose a final draft of the work plan to the next Congress no later than January 2009.

7. Other Items

Timetable: Outlined below.

Responsibility of: *President and Secretary General, with budget matters handled by the Treasurer.*

Over the coming period, the following tasks are proposed:

- The Secretary General shall propose an agenda for the 2009 Congress to the Executive Committee in January 2009, including other business.
- The Treasurer shall propose a draft for the budget for the period 2009-2012, to the Executive Committee in January 2009.
- All relevant papers for consideration by the 2009 Congress must be put to the table of the Executive Committee by January 2009.



congress theme document



**2006 CONGRESS
OSLO**

Globalisation means different things to different people; in many ways that meaning depends on one's perspective. This paper is written to invite and engage a debate on *Social* Globalisation, the idea that globalisation must be guided by social rather than market needs.

This document is the working document for the 2006 ILRS Congress in Oslo, Norway. We encourage our member organisations to review it, discuss it, and understand that they have a part to play in how the document (and the project) takes its final form. It is an open document, which we hope to discuss not only at Congress, but over the coming years as we do our work after Oslo.

Twelve areas of concern are presented in the document, each having the same structure:

- Introduction of the question
- A brief analysis
- Theological reflections (interfaith based)
- Questions/challenges/proposals

This will allow us to create and contribute to a more universal discussion, and will also allow us to invite people to work with us who come from different faith backgrounds and experience. That will give space for all of us to reflect and to become involved in the thinking and the process.

Two appendixes have been added at the end of the document; the first comes from our comrades in the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, and the second from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

introduction

Globalisation is a fact. One result of globalisation is that we now are much more related to each other throughout the globe. It has an effect on us, but it also contributes to human life. It gives us access to the world, but it also gives the world access to us, not only our markets, but also our goods. Investors with large amounts of capital can determine the rules of our markets, and therefore we can be forced into structures we are not prepared for. Seen in this way, it mainly shows us that national solutions to economic problems are no longer enough; we need much more international cooperation for the good of everyone involved. We also need an intense and inclusive dialogue, so that all relevant knowledge and experience, from south and north, east and west will be on the table when decisions are taken.

The social democratic movements throughout the world are related to each other and connected to one international body – the Socialist International. That requires more and more real cooperation, and possibly also new structures for decision-making. We can no longer only learn from each other; together we must create stable systems which can provide the world with methods of decision-making that can truly ‘change life’, not only for humanity but for all of creation. For this reason it is necessary to bridge the many complex gaps between the various groupings of humanity; between south and north, east and west; between Jews, Christians, and Muslims; between monotheists, polytheists, and atheists.

The whole of humanity, now and in future, is challenged mostly by threats we have made for ourselves. And the main problem is that those of us who created the problems are not the ones which will have to pay.

The discussion which took place in the Congress of the Socialist International(SI) in November 2003 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, revealed among other things three complications:

- As Social Democrats, we too are challenged by a south/north perspective on the issue of globalisation. This is obvious in the SI and also in the ILRS gatherings. The SI has worked out a draft for a programme, which addresses the diversities and tensions (which are also present within the SI), and has created a platform for a common, radical and politically activist perspective in the framework of world politics. The conflict between high-minded principles on one side and practical solutions or pragmatic views on the other tends to give us either a principle-based worldview or a pragmatic one which can allow us to break with our own more vague principles when required.

-The topic of globalisation is strongly defined from two different perspectives; one is the ‘western’ interpretation which sees the world as being more and more dependent and related to all other human beings, and the ‘southern’ perspective which is more concerned with judging the effects on young economies that seem to be violated by globalisation. These two views must be reconciled with each other. The goal of widening markets and the problem of threatening markets through that widening process must both be analysed.

- It is possible that the very foundation of the word socialism (or if one prefers, 'social democracy'), is in its essence challenged. We must together, from south to north, start a much deeper analysis, not only in terms of economics and governance, but also in ethical, theological and overall theoretical terms.

It must be fully understood that a society with broadening gaps between individuals or groups requires more and more police, guards, and guarded houses, but a united society can spend more on equal distribution and less on law enforcement, thereby decreasing tensions.

Aside from the discussions that have taken place in the Socialist International Congress 2003 in Sao Paulo, we observe that similar discussions are taking place through the Global Progressive Forum (created by European members of the SI), and through the ongoing work of the World Social Forum.

INVITE OTHERS AND DO THE WORK TOGETHER

In doing this kind of reflection it also allows us to cooperate with other groups and movements (e.g., faith communities, environmental movements, social movements) and through this work increase our credibility, contacts, and relevance in our societies.

We want our member organisations to get involved in this "think through" process. We want our groups to get involved in the political struggle for a just world order, and in the process invite with us all good forces which can contribute to this process.



globalisation: an overview

QUEST

How can globalisation become a process which not only focuses on the limited question of global markets, but at the same time takes the necessary step towards sustainable development, social responsibility, welfare, gender equality and good governance?

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

If it can be said that the imperialistic west (or north) got an answer from the east and south, which focused on nationalism in helping new post-colonial states to become independent, can it be said that the new imperialistic views (mainly in markets) will get their answer in protectionism? The need today is to find answers which involve peoples of both the north and south in a wave of protest saying *enough is enough*. We will refuse the concept of imperialism as well as the answer of nationalism and protectionism. Even if it was true that the rapidly developing countries, especially the Asian tiger economies, made their evolution through copying the production methods and products of western economies behind the veil of protecting their own markets, that is not to say that the western economies want to see this kind of development repeated again elsewhere. In the same sense, it may be true that the WTO-rounds, the MAI, and GATTs tried too hard to push western views on the immaterial-right on the global level. The truth today is that there is a need to create an agreed process which takes into consideration both the need of the north to protect their interests, while at the same time giving space for the new emerging markets to take the necessary steps towards a well functioning and regulated global market.

That can be handled by developing a long-term strategy for a win-win situation, which can be agreed and planned by all involved. It requires both patience from the north/west and dedicated reforms from the south/east.

It also requires a genuine consideration of the debt situation for developing and transitional nations so that a new concept of economic partnership can be formed.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Neither the socialist movement nor religious communities fit well into the narrow-sighted perspective of nationalism. The global outlook and the very core of these movements would be compromised by a division of their holistic and global perspective.

Many religions contain a global perspective, which has often been understood in an imperialistic way; e.g., the whole world should be given the Gospel. But it is likewise possible to understand that view as one which includes the whole world. That is to say, there is nothing outside the range of religion, spirituality, or faith, *whichever faith one has*.

So, when Jesus spoke about the mission to the entire world - *Go to the whole world and preach the Gospel* – he focused on the global perspective. When the Book of Psalms says that *if you made your home on a mountain, out in the ocean, everywhere God will be*, it is telling the same story. There is no IN and no OUT. *All are included*.

From this view we have a responsibility to try to cope with this inclusive perspective. Black and white, female and male, young and old, north, east, west and south ... all are included. The common ship is our message, and from that viewpoint we have to approach the challenges within the vague concept of globalisation.

Judaism sees this in two ways: (1) unless you are continuously sinning against God and others, everyone has a place in the world to come. One need not be a Jew to be seen as righteous before God and share in the afterlife as well as the post-Messianic world. (2) Jews are literally obligated to attempt to change the world by transforming evil into good; no distinction is made between faiths or peoples; indeed *God is everywhere*, and all people are a part of God's creation. But in this effort, Jews do not seek for others to believe as they believe. The righteous paths of other faiths can be just as helpful in this transformation as the path of Judaism.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this together with religious communities, and anti-globalisation movements.)

- What today is the hindrance to the world becoming one?
- Can the desire of the north to make rapid progress be compatible with the need in east and south to gradually comply with the need for a new world order?
- Can the historically 'new' countries gradually become enrolled as participants in the fast-paced global market?
- How can the debt crisis, the developing of democratic systems, market requirements, global investments and the social welfare system be connected and interrelated?
- Can international institutions, like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and others be used as responsible tools for this process? How?



democracy

QUEST

The challenges to democracy are seen at many levels; local, as well as sub-regional and nationally, on the issue of participation and legitimacy. Social movements as well as the anti-globalisation movement contribute to the new understanding of democracy, but at the same time have difficulties adjusting to a representative political model. The ILRS must contribute to a deepening of understanding of democracy, and together with the Socialist International take part in the long process to rebuild and revitalise good governance in our global institutions.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

The struggle for democracy will never be over. In all times, at all places and for all generations we need to recover the ideals and functions of a living democracy. The old democratic countries are experiencing a drop in the percentage of participation in elections, and in more and more elections a minority of the citizens are electing their leaders and governing parties. The new democratic countries struggle to build confidence in their democratic system due to the lack of success in delivering what its citizens expect to get from the state. Other countries are still searching for their concept of democracy, and still there is a significant lack of African, Asian and Arabic models for democratic constitutions and electoral systems.

In a strict understanding of the idea of democracy — where all are equal before the law, with the right to vote for all citizens, with equal rights for all — that idea has not been valid for more than half a century, maybe even less. But the feeling today among some citizens is that the democratic system already is out of date, and in searching for alternatives they have chosen street demonstrations, local initiatives and sabotage instead of participating in elections. People don't look on the democratic system as something owned and controlled by themselves, but a tool in the hands of politicians.

A revival of democratic values and trust in the chosen system lies in the hands of the political parties *and* in the hands of the new social movements, together. There has always been a conflict between the ideologically 'pure' activists and the pragmatic doers which have found it necessary, even while opposed sometimes by the activists, to create compromises with others. It is possible to say that they are ready — to a certain, or maybe not so certain point — to compromise their innermost and deepest ideas. The question can be and is often raised: Is there not even a core of an idea?

There can be conflicts within democracy: democracy as *input*, where it matters most to contribute and get involved, which requires some kind of geographical closeness, and democracy as *output*, where effectiveness matters, which often requires democracy or some structure on a larger scale. Participation can be contrasted with governance, in questioning if it actually can create a difference in the life of the people.

Or to put it another way; one can not first say that there should be something done and then deny the necessity of creating decisive bodies for decision-making on a relevant level. These

tensions — between participation and governance — must be delegated in a proper way within all democratic systems. Globalisation is a question which really affects both perspectives. Clear examples are the issue of global warming, poverty reduction, and peace processes that require democratic structures on large scales.

Democracy is about both participation *and* delivery. We always have to be aware of the need to improve our democratic skills, systems and their efficiency. But it seems obvious that the *mega-challenge* for democracy is now the question of proper international structures. We need to create good governance at home, in our cities, our nations, our regions and globally.

- Adjusting it into a system of subsidiary
- An interaction and cooperation between the different levels of decision-making
- Developing of the global and multilateral levels which today are too weak to meet its challenges.

Transparency and openness in political processes and decisions are the precondition for democracy. At the high political level that has become more and more relevant. Participation in social movements goes hand in hand with the representative political system. The goal for us is therefore to democratise the global political system. Better control and responsibilities are necessary to meet the deficit of democracy in the global political system. In the same way, newer social movements must relate more to existing political structures.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

In the Christian interpretation you can find two, partly opposite views on democracy. One is the theocratic understanding of the power structure which in many ways limits the space for democracy. A state is given out of the hands of God and the only role for the human being is to find the will of God, which opens up *de facto* the possibility for a dictatorship in which one person or a group of people are the owners of the 'One-interpretation'. The other is represented in the picture of the body of Christ. In that model the value of all parts of the body of Christ are valued and included. This gives the individual a certain position: an individual is not replacable, should not be passive and has a unique role.

Judaism has a very strong notion of democracy, which even holds in deciding matters of the Law and our relationship to God. (e.g., God can be persuaded to change God's mind through reasoned argument.) Also, the reason that Jews followed the Law as given at Sinai is not simply because God gave it, but because a majority agreed to accept it there. Therefore, while there are different opinions on the matter among Jews, a new majority can also come to different conclusions today in regard to how one interprets the Law in our modern world. Jews believe in the free will of each individual to decide their path in life; each new life is like Adam, born good, with the ability (and *responsibility*) to choose good over evil.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this together with environmental, religious and social movements.)

- In what ways does our present political system work as a tool for developing and/or improving participation?
- Are the present systems effective when measured in terms of efficiency and delivery?

- Is it the constitutional/legal system which is a problem or is it our behaviour?
- Regionally: How can a regional democratic system fit into a national democratic system under the national level and beyond it, also globally?
- In what way (if at all) can a more activist approach, through demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes for example, be compatible with a representative democratic system?
- Participation; how can we get more and more people involved in politics?
- How can the global institutions be transformed to fit into more basic democratic structures?



sustainable development

QUEST

How can we develop progress in our world without ruining life's possibilities for the coming generations? In short, that is the quest for the world of today. Included in that quest is also finding a method to pay back the deficit we already have.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

We live in a fast-changing world. We cannot oppose it, but we must gain control of modernisation, and not allow modernisation to gain control of us. The total costs of modernisation must be calculated. A 'new economy' must consider the costs of human suffering and future disaster just as much as it considers capital and labour costs, as well as the social costs of proposed changes. Also must be considered the social costs incurred by the lack of development, and how all of these factors affect the possibility to provide for current and future generations.

Consciousness of environmental issues has grown during the last part of the 20th century. The Socialist International defines development as *material welfare, human dignity, personal security, justice and equality*. Gro Harlem Brundtland developed that definition; *development which faces actual problems without destroying the possibilities for the future generations to meet their needs*.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

From a spiritual perspective we have a unique situation. We have somebody to be responsible to and report back to. This stewardship, shared by all humans, especially those in (and with) power, gives us a perspective which challenges all human decisions. The idea is not simply to say that nothing can change, but that all changes must take into consideration the cost for the entire creation in the long run.

For Jews and Christians the Creation story told in the Bible gives us the responsibility for this stewardship. Human beings have to take care of all creation but not ruin it; to use, not abuse.

Our theological reflection has to focus on the limits and the roles for change, development, and evolution.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this together with environmental movements.)

- We now have to examine the global as well as local systems of danger to our foundation of life. We also have to find ways to balance the need for change — for example, the transition from old structured urban and agricultural economic systems to a more modern society — with the present system within countries.
- What do you see as a danger to the environment in your society?
- Which are the driving forces for change?
- What are the best arguments against change?
- Can we, with theological and ideological arguments contribute to these judgments?
- What is the connection between global investments and short-term perspectives on the environment?
- Can it be regulated nationally or do we need international rules, made by whom?
- How could they be formulated?



human rights

QUEST

Human rights issues are now central to the agenda of globalisation. They challenge the former sovereign independence of a state. The world today can not generally accept a cruel leader oppressing his people. Intervention from the world community can be necessary if genocide or even minor risks are at stake. The universal right to human rights also challenges access to basic human needs around the world. The UN's Millennium Goals, which should reduce poverty by half by the year 2015, are the goals set by the world community. Achieving those goals requires many good efforts from around the world, from both the rich countries to the transitional and developing ones, but also within those countries. Humans have fundamental rights – that's a quest for the world.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Human rights create a foundation for international law. The UN's Declaration of Human Rights (1948) created enormous pressure on the international legal system to support those efforts. The world community must more strongly implement human rights and secure the ratification of these central principles by all nations. Nations have the duty to support each other and protect human rights, which includes special help that might be needed in developing countries.

The independence of a state is not questioned, but even personal rights must be protected, and such rights can be threatened by state terrorism. Involvement from others on humanitarian causes can occur through a multilateral framework. Supporting human rights involves support for local communities. Protecting their rights can be seen as a means of preventing conflicts caused by poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

Poverty takes away the basic rights for millions.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

All human beings are created in the image of the Creator. The equality of human beings is basically related to that well-grounded viewpoint. No more valued, no less equal. Race, gender, age ... nothing takes that foundation away.

Neither religious communities nor states have a good record on this. But together are we now challenged to live this understanding, and that calls us all to consider a new view of humanity.

QUESTIONS

(This work could be done together with religious movements and movements like Amnesty International.)

- What can we see in our own society in measuring inequalities which differ from this high standard of community in society?

- What do we see internationally?
- What tools are used to renew attitudes of division and the lack of fairness in our world?
- In what way are Human Rights questioned in our own society? Globally?
- What tools do we have (and use) in challenging unfair treatment and discriminations?
- What are the main obstacles for a world based on the principle of human rights for all?



poverty reduction

QUEST

Challenged by reality and by the UN Millennium Goals, the national and international efforts aimed at poverty reduction are right at the centre of politics and the agenda of the world. Poverty reduction is not only a question of money but of attitudes and the tools for a sustainable future. It involves our entire society, nations, regions and internationally.

Together with all good forces, with all the research in the UN, the World Bank, national development plans, and NGOs it could be very interesting to set up a clear agenda, an idea bank or something similar to share experiences and reflections on practical work.

Poverty is not only a question of low status, it is a sign of a social model with deep differences and divisions – nationally and internationally. Poverty affects us all.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Poverty and deep divisions in a society, be they local, regional or global, affect the whole society. Tensions in a community are not only a problem for the poor, but for all. That problem will multiply itself; create fences, guarded forces, and criminality.

Poverty can be a personal thing, but mainly it is a corrupt system. In order to change it, it is crucial to see *in-depth* through the accepted circumstances, traditions, and divisions, based on deep roots of the division, unequal delivery of resources, and access to the means of change.

The issue of poverty can not only be judged on an individual, local or national basis but must be challenged at all levels; local, regional, national and global. The distribution of goods and the system of capitalism has not shown the ability to create enough quick changes, nor has the communist system. Through global interdependence people now have greater access to alternative views, and that will in itself challenge the present divisions and injustices.

The need for a change of systems involves decisions at high levels as well as consciousness processes among the poor. Often it is said that the poor are *the Others* and will not in any way be positively affected by the decision of the powerful. We will maintain the view that good forces within poor communities, together with progressive forces in power structures, can bring a change to the world. But basically it is important to not perform change *for* others, to interpret their views. The poor have the right to shape their own agenda. However, that should not exclude the possibility that others may also contribute to that process.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The poor were very much the focus of liberation theology in the 70s and 80s. They brought the view to the church that those without power or means had a certain perspective and prioritized access to God, and in interpreting the surrounding world.

In the *Ecclesia de Base*, small groups constituted within the community of the poor were

formed and their analysis was based on the perspective of Paulo Freire: See – Analyse – Act.

See – involves the necessity to observe and be aware of the circumstances in local society and unequal distribution nationally and globally.

Analyse – involves a socialist and/or biblical analysis of unequal distribution, the lack of influence and power, power structures, greed, oppression and other elements that both create poverty and keep individuals and groups in despair.

Act – involves the political and economic actions that can be taken both locally and globally. That can include everything from demonstrations, conflicts, developing of co-operatives, political involvement and so on.

Liberation theology taught the ability to read the Bible with new eyes and value the key role for the poor. There is a lot of literature and experience to use and there is a need that the concept of Base groups be re-visited.

In the Jewish tradition a great deal of attention is given to the problem of poverty. The concept of *tzedakah*, which in Hebrew has a dual meaning of charity and *justice* (the root of the word being the same word for *righteous*), explains why some form of regular individual and collective action to address and relieve poverty is considered mandatory for Jews. Looking after the welfare of others of us who are less fortunate is not merely kind, but an act of justice, fairness, a *necessary act* of social and economic balance.

The Torah as well as the Prophets repeatedly instruct both Jews and Christians on the ethical treatment of the worker, the proper payment of wages, the obligation to provide for the poor and even debt relief (the Jubilee year, et al).

QUESTIONS

(Develop this together with religious and social movements.)

- Develop your analysis in your community. Encourage people to get involved and listen to those with experiences of exclusion.
- What can be done?
- How to look at the consciousness process?
- What can we as conscious people contribute to? Can we be an obstacle to the poor?
- Can or should we use our linkage to political parties? How?

Is it a contradiction to talk about the perspective of the poor when we are — in comparison — rich?

6

multilateralism

QUEST

Maybe we thought that the world had become a better world since the cold war ended in the 80s. That was the dualistic world in which there was a 'digital analysis', black or white — no greys. We know now that it wasn't that easy. One superpower seems to be just as incapable of creating a better atmosphere in the world.

National views came after imperialism and colonialism. What will come after the cultural and unilateral efforts we now observe? Will the divide of the world actually be strengthened by unilateralism? Will it increase nationalism? Is the clash of civilizations what we now see? Is that process driven by those who oppose the only superpower or is it driven by the superpower itself?

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

The power of the strongest is an old concept of terror balance. But there is no balance.

The creation of United Nations after World War II was the first real universal attempt to form a multilateral structure in the world. The victor nations gave themselves a central role in the new body which has been kept in the UN Security Council. In many ways this has not given us a correct perspective of today's world. The veto system is one obstacle, but also the lack of representatives from other parts of the world who sit on the same level. The reconstruction of the UN will be the real sign of the awareness of the need to change. The unilateralism of today is not the best soil for the seed of real multilateral change. A multilateral effort like the Kyoto-protocol, international courts and other instruments are not today supported by the superpower, nor is the UN as a whole. Unilateralism may well be the final obstacle to multilateralism.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The religious perspectives must be those of one world. Churches are not national in their essence but rather are the visible signs of the Universal Church, the people of God. Similar perspectives are present in other faith communities. A nationalistic view is in a way opposite to the very meaning of a world wide community. Some theologians from the Christian fields point out the globalizing-process as obvious within the Gospels. In the Gospel of St Matthew is it shown how Jesus himself is gradually widening his perspective of the world; from being sent to his own people, the Gospel ends with worldwide views.

Judaism teaches that the Law was given to a people wandering in the desert, in front of the smallest mountain, without a nation, so that no one could say that the Law was only for this one people of this one nation. The law was given for everyone, and as it is God's Law, it is not only for Jews but for the entire world — the first instance of international law? Jews see their existence as a *symbol* of the covenant between God and humanity, but do not believe they 'own' the Law or God for themselves only. Also, Jews are taught that they should not seek to be like other nations, but only accept God as their King. They are told not to put their trust in earthly Kings, but in the one God who rules over the one world.

QUESTIONS

(Develop these perspectives together with faith communities, solidarity organisations and local UN movements and similar structures.)

- What can be done to prevent the tensions in the world? (Today it is easy to blame the US in many communities for everything.) What can we do?
- Today there is a fundamental understanding of the need of a Win-Win-situation. Are there losers in the present system?
- A dialogue between US and Europe seems necessary as well as US-Africa and other continents AND Europe-Africa and so on. How could that be done on an equal level where people and nations meet as partners?



peace

QUEST

There can be no peace without justice, and without peace there can be no justice. It is also true that there can be no peace without development and a search for equality. Today the world is understood from a 'War against Terror' perspective. Preventive war and 'countries of evil' are pointed out and the unilateral force — the US and their allies — seems to have the privilege of formulating the problems. This must be discussed. But still there are other conflicts, those of the old kind. Morocco's occupation of the Western Sahara, the conflicts between Israel and Palestine, Africa's internal conflicts, regional struggle in Indonesia, China's occupation of neighbour countries, the Russian conflict in Chechnya, civil war and chaos in Colombia, Haiti and so on.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Peace is not only the absence of war. The circumstances for peaceful developments involve many complex dimensions of human relations. Unequal distribution must be seen as the main obstacle to peace. Unequal economic standards, education levels, gender oppression, and other things are driving forces for tensions and clashes, within societies as well as globally.

The focus in our time on terror-war threatens to diminish those factors in simplifying the views of those conflict elements. A framework for peace requires both multilateral institutions and inclusive perspectives which not only focus on power structures and nations but fairness in the markets, the ability to receive good education, gender equality and many other factors for justice.

These views are about the same for a civil war as for conflicts between countries. Injustices are the driving force for conflicts.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Justice and love are connected. The basis for human community is respect for individuals and respect for different values. Unity in diversity is the concept for human fellowship.

Faith conflicts have been *de facto* forces in driving many of the conflicts in and between countries. Religious institutions which see themselves only in terms of national interpretation are really a danger to globalism itself. Love, understanding, human values and reconciliation are tools in the true religion. These can (and must) be developed further within religious communities, and will by their essence challenge a more narrow minded and/or nationalistic faith. In the teaching of Jesus one finds very peaceful messages; *go another mile, turn the other cheek, those who use the sword will be killed by sword* and so on. But there is also another tune; *I have come to cause division, brother stand against brother* and more militant messages. Seen from a whole understanding of the entire Gospel there seems to be very limited space for the militant message and the teaching of a just war. But, surely, from a historic viewpoint there are different traditions in Christianity as well as in most religions.

QUESTIONS

(Outline this work together with peace movements and religious communities.)

The philosophy of your religion; what is the main focus — today and historically in your faith?
How are the messages interpreted vis-à-vis

- Peace
- War
- Reconciliation
- Hatreds
- Nationalism
- Militant interpretations

What is your own interpretation? Are these questions debated in your community today?



world markets (wto)

QUEST

The international market is a reality. Now we are facing the need for regulations not only in nations but also globally. The attempt to find a common understanding on what kind of rules should limit the global market has failed so far, both within the World Trade Organisation and in bilateral negotiations. Subsidies, and protected markets in rich regions are now the main obstacle for a just and open world market. How can a market be organised which will allow both equal access for all to that market, and at the same time give enough space for an immature economy to be included step-by-step in the competitive worldwide market?

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

We are now facing a defeat of common rules in the world within the WTO negotiations. The US has entered into bilateral arrangements with some countries, which will exclude most of the poorest countries. President Lula of Brazil has taken the lead in the protest against the rich countries' demands. The protests, in connection with the WTO gatherings have been massive. Different views have joined each other; people from the poorest countries, the anti-globalisation movement, protectionists in the rich countries among many others. Can the work for justice and fairness be worked out together with the radical forces in fellowship, or is it true what has been said that the radical movement always has to see it self as 'the other force', which never can join their forces with governments?

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

An equalisation will occur. How can that be interpreted in our time? The quest from a social perspective includes a tireless struggle towards equality. The market in a capitalistic society is the very foundation for the relation between human beings. The market is effective in organising how the needs meet the goods. But the market is deaf to the dimension of poverty and inequality that it can create.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this work together with environmental and social movements.)

- What are the main obstacles to a fair world market?
- What are the positions from your own countries/region?



privatisation of basic resources

QUEST

We are now facing decisive privatisations of what have until now been understood more or less as ‘free lunches’. The outsourcing of water and water pipe infrastructure to international companies especially has raised this issue to a critical point. These changes have been seen in both developed countries and in transitioning and developing countries. On the one hand there is a need for investments, on the other hand there is a definite risk of having your most necessary resources in the hand of foreign companies. In poorer countries there is also the tragic problem of people’s inability to pay for those now privatised basic needs.

With the regulation of free markets this kind of market is said to be open for global bids, but that is questioned from many perspectives.

The same kinds of questions are raised according to land ownership, the patent of crops and other issues.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

The costs of building infrastructure is high and connected with a need for strong investors. Often they are also dependent on large-scale plans which affect many people and can change older structures and rural areas. Trans-national companies/TNCs which run these infrastructure systems can provide high efficiency and good investment capacity, but the profit can deepen the divisions within a society. Not-for-profit systems can provide a broader sense of community but have a much weaker ability to make investments.

A common international standard for basic human needs should be established, and a broad agreement, especially among the rich countries, to spread common goods in the entire world, should be a priority. Maybe it will be necessary to exclude these areas from the market and regulate them in a more socially responsible way.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Moses hit the rock and water sprang up in the desert. The view of water as a gift from earth itself is now questioned by those who advocate unregulated markets. The very foundation is the question of if — and how — Creation can be divided and owned. Here is where cultures meet. One extreme is the perspective in which no one can own what belongs to all, from generation to generation. On the other, the foundation for a capitalistic society in which ownership itself is the precondition for a good world order.

Stewardship gives human beings a responsibility to take care of and use responsibly (not misuse) the earthly gifts. How this is organized can be discussed. This is one perspective. The other is more related to — regardless of which fundamental view we take — what this means for the quest to reduce poverty. Which ways are the best for an equal and effective delivery of these earthly goods and goods?

Amos – the Biblical prophet – had a strong teaching on justice. But that will not answer the fundamental question here.

QUESTIONS

(Outline this work together with environmental and social movements.)

- What are the fundamental problems in your own society related to the question of privatization of common goods?
- What is your view on the worldwide problem which comes with this?
- Are our perspectives well grounded?
- Do we try to simplify those questions?



interfaith and culture

QUEST

There is a tendency to interpret the tensions in our time as signs of a clash between civilisations. West versus east, or more specifically Christian versus Muslim, or even more specifically Americanism versus Islamic fundamentalism serves as the image of that clash, if you looked at it on the surface of the culture of humanity. In our understanding it is much more a question of the limits for religion and state, and a fair discussion and dialogue on how to organize a modern and open society.

We are convinced that there are now good options to create the modern and intercultural society, which enriches us all. At the same time we will not be blind to the problems in confronting diverse ideas. Some examples:

- Those who tend to believe there is such a thing as an original society built on oneness; one faith, one language, and one ethnic race and so on.
- Those who see superior races
- Those who want to see an inherent connection between a certain form of extremism and one or another religious faith
- Those who see their religion as superior
- Those who understand their own religion as a foundation for such an extremism which threatens others

A multicultural society with a variety of faiths is not something which will rise automatically, but rather, needs conscious work on melting all the different roots together in a new tolerant society.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Concern over the intolerant trends in our own societies come from many different groups. We will not accept any negative etiquette of groups of people; nor from secular people versus religious people, nor from the believer towards the secular. Freedom of religion is at the foundation of modern society. Space for religious freedom is not, however, unlimited, but the limits must take into consideration both common values within the (secular) society and holy ingredients of different faiths.

The French decision on the prohibition of Muslim women to wear headscarves is one example and at the same time shows how difficult these decisions are.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The 'golden rule' — found in its own distinct way in the teachings of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism and Islam — challenges us; that what you want others do to you; you have to do for them. Or put in another way; what you want to do you must allow others do what they want, or in a third way; what is the reason for me to subordinate myself under a legislation which limits my tradition?

There is also a Buddhist legend talking about a group of blind people who never had seen an elephant. They were led to it and each of them touched the animal. Afterwards they each had a totally different understanding of what an elephant is, but together they could create a complete picture of that strange animal.

Human fellowship requires broadness, as beautiful paintings require a multitude of colours and tones. This rainbow concept has its roots in religion, but religion has also felt the temptation to make uniform the faithful.

We want to express our search for a *unity in diversity* as a common understanding of humanity from a spiritual perspective.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this work together with religious communities, refugee movements and others.)

Use the program for ILRS: *Hand to Hand* in this process.

- What are the sources for 'imperialistic' views within our own faith-traditions?
- What are our presumptions towards other religious communities?
- What are the general views within your society?
- Which relations and what knowledge do you have on other faiths in your community? Can that be developed? How?

Are there things in traditions and legislation which must be changed? In the debate? Can you contribute?



work (formal, informal, black market)

QUEST

In our analysis of the world economy the working sector must be watched from different views. In the short run; from basic needs — from hand to stomach — one must accept the informal sector for people attempting to survive. In the long run however, the quest must be to include those sectors in an open area. That is necessary for regulation, protection, personal safety, and — for the sake of the sense of community within a society — for taxation and openness in the economy. What are the necessary steps in nations with different levels of development in order to formalise the working sector?

In this perspective we also must include the views from developing countries in which there can be cheap labour, but a low level of advanced technology industries. What does their path look like towards a world market? Education, competition and common rules on the world market effect this situation in different ways.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

There are different sectors in the economy and in areas of work. In both rich nations and in developing/transitional nations the areas of the informal economy create special problems, but are often the only chance for many poor people. Views on workers rights have always in one way or another been accompanied by development. A permanent discussion in the developed countries is if trade unions are too strong (or too weak). But they have contributed to creating a sound understanding of human value.

A problem in poorer countries which is now being debated is competition coming to one's markets from more developed countries. If you open your nation up to an international market for constructing new roads, your own companies can be out of the competition by those who have bigger machines. Your comparative advantage is cheap labour, but the disadvantages are less efficiency. If your company is going to be able to compete you must invest in new equipment — that equipment you buy from abroad so you lose human power and create unemployment and, at the same time, have to 'export' your money.

So, can you, in the long run, compete on an international market with cheap labour - low investments, or do you have to invest in (foreign) technology and cause unemployment?

Countries in transition are now challenging the international markets with cheap but well educated labour. India, with its well-functioning networks in big cities competes today heavily with the European markets in the field of call- and support-centres and computer business. Lots of jobs are just now moving from Europe and USA to India.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

A worker is worth his/her salary. Working as the necessary tool for living is the basic understanding in the Bible. But the newer understanding that you are what you are doing is not the biblical view. That inner value is dependent mainly on a human definition in itself. Your value comes from within and should not be related to your status or what you produce. This

is maybe a 'north' perspective or one borne of relative luxury, but it is basic to the evaluation of human life. Life is not worth protecting only on a superficial productivity-based evaluation, but rather based upon the value of a human herself.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this work together with trade unions and others.)

- Can markets be created with different strategies in developed, transitional and developing countries?
- Can a market be protected from foreign competition? Will that in the long run make a loser out of you?
- How can trade unions be improved without becoming a conservative factor in times of transitions?
- How are we responsible for the social factor? Can that be handled in a world wide perspective?



education - and networking for learning

QUEST

Decisive for the future is the ability for nations to distribute education and for individuals to reach their goals for personal development. Future competitiveness is totally dependent on how well a country can prepare its citizens, especially the young, for harder competition in an international market. Individual abilities are important, but equally important are the preparations made within nations to provide good options for deepening one's knowledge.

Preparations for future needs are common challenges for nations, organisations and individuals. Those include basic education, higher education, professional training and networking for training and sharing of knowledge. The internet and computers are today important tools, and accessibility is critical for a healthy learning environment. In this perspective the divisions of the world, mainly depending on the economy and structure within societies, judge the individual's access to learning. Democracy and the consciousness of present national leaders of the necessity for boys and girls to have access to knowledge will be decisive in regard to future competitiveness.

Another central key for development is the internet and worldwide knowledge. A lack of networks can be significant obstacles in this area. Even more basic studies are at stake in this field.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

The question of education and providing equipment for developing a 'learning environment' is crucial in regard to the ability of all countries to compete in international markets.

Equal access to a quality education dwells in the hands of national leaders and can be provided by different means. A high level of awareness in this field will determine what kind of future a country has. Even globally we have to be aware of these abilities, and freedom of movement provides us with common possibilities but also shared responsibilities toward individuals to ensure the standard of education in each country.

Education, as well as some other basic service, like health care, is part of the core mission for a functional state. Equal access to the basic foundations for a lifelong learning process must be provided. From that basic point each country, as well as individuals themselves, have to build their ever deepening and broadening knowledge.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

A good start for a young girl and boy is the best gift for a future life, both for individuals *and* for a family and country. Jesus did repeatedly point to children as good examples for the adult. Maybe it was the hunger of life and the eagerness for learning, which was the key point he wanted to give as an example. Become like a child, Jesus said. A nation with hope for its future has to concentrate on the young citizens.

The daily prayer of Jews, which is recited three times a day by the most observant, commands us to teach our faith and our values and our love of God to our children.

QUESTIONS

(Develop this work together with schools, young persons, trade unions and others.)

- Is our education system preparing youngsters for competitiveness on the world markets? Are the abilities equal for girls and boys?

- What can we do to help other countries to provide for the future of their young people? What can the electronic revolution mean in our countries? What can we do to provide such possibilities to developing and transitional countries?

- How can the information gap be bridged? 'Internet for all' is a slogan, but how can that be done in areas with a lack of education, electricity and telephone networks? How can that be developed?

appendix A: ANC on globalisation

The text below is essentially from *Non-Racialism in Action Acknowledging the past, Changing the present, Building the future*. Submission of the ANC/African National Congress to the World Conference against Racism NGO Forum, August 2001.

THE ERA OF GLOBALISED CAPITALISM

We entered the third millennium in the era of globalised capitalism. The collapse of the communist bloc and the end of the Cold War, the crisis of state-led protectionist industrialisation, the information technology revolution and the strengthening of institutions of global governance as well as economic regulation have facilitated the emergence of a single world economic system. The integration of the global economy has reached a level and intensity not witnessed since the start of World War I. This is partly a result of the development of productive forces, and partly the upshot of policy choices made, and in some cases imposed, across the globe. This economic integration is but one aspect of the development of a global society. In culture, sport, policy formulation and implementation, in academic discourse; indeed in all aspects of human activity, global as opposed to local influences are becoming more and more important.

Globalisation has brought a significant change in the operation of the world economy. Corresponding to a transition from an 'international' to a 'trans-national' mode of operation, the period since the late 1980's has seen strong pressure for the free movement of commodities and capital across national borders, with corporations seeking the ability to locate in any part of the world. Driven and facilitated by a revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), production processes in many parts of the world are increasingly coordinated into what Manuel Castells has called 'global networks'. At the same time the application of ICT coupled with the liberalisation of capital and currency movements, has created a world in which capital flows into and out of countries are literally instantaneous.

These developments have simultaneously led to an increase in global wealth and a widening of global inequalities. For those with wealth and appropriate skills it has meant greatly enhanced access to new opportunities. For those lacking resources or appropriate skills, or excluded from global networks, globalisation has meant growing marginalisation and poverty. Understanding this dialectic is the key to the required policy responses. It means that measures to adapt to take advantage of new opportunities thrown up by globalisation need to include conscious efforts to counter the tendency towards inequality and marginalisation that the process has thus far exhibited. Therefore we will talk about Social Globalisation.

THE THREAT POSED BY THE PROCESS OF GLOBALISATION

The process of accelerated globalisation that we have witnessed over the past decades is a thoroughly contradictory one. As already noted, in addition to an overall increase in global wealth, inequality in the distribution of wealth has widened, both between many developing and developed societies, and within societies, including within the developed world. Globalisation threatens to inaugurate a new apartheid, on a global scale, where the victims of past abuses are consigned to an economic and developmental abyss, while the beneficiaries

accumulate greater wealth and power. The practices and beliefs associated with racism, xenophobia, gender and related intolerance buttress the tendency so far manifest in the globalisation process to further marginalize the developing world.

In particular, globalisation could result in the further marginalisation of developing countries. The opening of the world to trade does not necessarily lead to the convergence of growth rates between the developed and developing world, and the continued exclusion from global productive networks presents the danger of the divergent growth.

As well as threatening to reinforce the material basis of racism on a global scale, the process of globalisation is also associated with the emergence of new forms of racism, xenophobia, gender and related intolerance. While the free movement of capital and goods across national borders is encouraged, and is growing (although increasing protectionism amongst the developed nations in the context of a global recession cannot be ruled out), the movement of people across borders, especially the movement of unskilled labour from less developed to the more developed countries is becoming increasingly circumscribed. This, combined with policies that conspire to actively 'poach' the cream of skilled labour produced in the South, means that nations which stand outside the centres of capital accumulation are most disadvantaged by these restrictive migration regimes. These developments, which intensify the tendencies towards marginalisation in the process of globalisation, are spurred by xenophobia, the hatred of foreigners. In turn such restrictions give credence to these animosities.

THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THE PROCESS OF GLOBALISATION

The advent of a global economy also provides us with important opportunities to address global inequities.

1. The strengthening of organs of global governance and the emergence of developing economies as independent nation states on the global stage have created the political and institutional framework within which global developmental action can potentially succeed. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the extension of the world economy was often driven through the agency of colonial domination. However, the second half of the twentieth century saw the demise of the old colonial systems and millions of formerly colonised people now enjoy (in varying degrees) formal national sovereignty and basic citizenship rights. The existence of many more independent states within the world system is an important new reality. The sovereign capacity of many new states is often severely impaired by debt, and structural adjustment programmes that have hollowed out the public sphere in these societies. Nonetheless, the existence of many relatively new independent states is an important reality in the world inter-state system, and places on the agenda the need for, and the possibility of greater equity in world trade regulations, the reform of multi-national institutions and more genuine global partnerships between peoples.

2. The information and communications technology revolution, while powerful transnational corporations in the North dominate it, nonetheless creates an infrastructure and a potential flow of information that can underpin a greater sense of our common humanity.

3. Growing globalisation, including media globalisation, have been accompanied by the

development of a wide range of generally progressive and genuinely popular social movements, focused on balanced development, peace, disarmament, gender questions, the environment, health-care and human rights questions - including the worldwide movement against apartheid and racism.

While these increasingly well-mobilised social movements are often hostile to the present character of globalisation, they are also often the products of the new realities and they have used the global information and communications infrastructure to publicise their perspectives, and to network amongst themselves.

Combined, these factors open the possibility of unity in action for a non-racial world on a global scale. Partnerships between peoples and governments can be built to ensure that globalisation, far from entrenching the calamities of history and the animosities they have generated, enables us to enter a new era of common dignity. To do so requires that we take remedial action that addresses the structural consequences of historic injustices.

REMEDIAL ACTION FOR HISTORIC INJUSTICES

The nature of the damage caused by slavery and colonialism is complex and manifold: it involves the wholesale destruction of peoples and groups, the erosion and in some cases theft, of social, economic and human capital and the destruction of the social fabric of entire peoples.

Until recent times, any state could, either on its own behalf or on behalf of its citizens, bring claims for reparations. This term, which is borrowed from international law, is broad and generic. It provides for various remedies, including:

- Reviving the status quo ante, a remedy that would wipe out all the consequences of a wrong or a crime. The nature of the crimes against humanity associated under discussion mean that such an approach is hardly applicable.
- Financial or other forms of compensation is another form of reparation. This has been the preferred route, but it is based on wrongs committed to individuals who are identifiable, when the parties against which the action are brought are also identifiable and where the nature of the wrong can be compensated by monetary means.
- Satisfaction, when the aggrieved party receives, in one form or other, a recognition of the wrong committed. This could take the form of an acknowledgement that the activities such as slavery, racial discrimination and colonialism were forms of crimes against humanity. Acknowledgement could be accompanied by an apology for the grave crimes committed or simply a statement of contrition.

However, the problem about these remedies is that they remove the element of the structural consequences of these wrongs. As already noted, the core of modern racism lies in the historical injustice that continues to shape the relations of economic and political power. Structural changes in the world economy that would contribute towards eradicating the material basis for global racism include:

- Debt reduction or cancellation, beyond the limits envisaged in the Highly Indebted

Poor Countries Initiative;

- Reversing the growing trend amongst countries of the North towards a reduction in Overseas Development Assistance to the countries of the South;
- Ensuring equitable market access for the South by ending protectionism and unfair state subsidy, which have the purpose or effect limiting fair competition from developing countries.
- Taking positive and direct action towards bridging the digital divide in order to ensure that Africa in particular is not further marginalized in the formation of global networks.
- Democratising the multi-lateral institutions of global economic governance.
- Promoting an environment conducive to increased long term capital flows to developing world,

Above all a world free of racism requires us to acknowledge the past and change the present. This overriding aim animates our being. It is a deep spiritual commitment which arises from the roots of our human race. Its achievement requires partnerships between South Africans: non-racial partnerships across the colour bar, partnerships between men and women, partnerships between civil society and the state.

appendix B: ETUC on globalisation

The European Trade Union Confederation's commitments regarding social globalization were announced in January 2005:

ETUC'S COMMITMENTS

14. The Executive Committee of the ETUC, along with all its member organisations and in conjunction with the respective international organisations, pledges to make full use of the existing instruments:

at global level:

The core ILO standards constitute a minimum set of rules which must be applied in the world economy. Countries must be prompted to ratify and apply international labour standards (eight fundamental ILO Conventions, other operational conventions and recommendations, and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy).

ETUC intends, both at European level and worldwide (on the basis of mandates from the respective countries), to promote closer cooperation and complementary action between all the relevant international institutions with a view to ensuring that integrated policies help to reduce poverty, foster universal respect for trade union and human rights and create decent jobs. It will support the action taken by the European Union to establish a Forum on Globalisation and the setting up of Policy Coherence Initiatives, in accordance with the recommendations of the report by the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation.

ETUC will maintain its support for international campaigns against dictators, for instance in Burma and Belarus, and will continue lobbying the World Bank and IMF.

If globalisation is to be extended, we need new rules governing foreign direct investment which the European Union ought to support. Accordingly, ETUC backs the idea of negotiating a multilateral framework guaranteeing that a fair balance is struck between private interests, workers' interests and public interests, as well as between the rights and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

at European level:

ETUC reiterates its call for formal procedures to be put in place to enable consultation with the social partners on all aspects of European policy pertaining to globalisation (trade, development assistance, compliance with social standards, bilateral and regional relations, investment, etc.).

ETUC reaffirms the need to ratify and apply the standards adopted by the Council of Europe (human rights, the Revised European Social Charter, European Convention on Social Security).

ETUC intends to continue promoting the use of bilateral agreements by the EU to underpin trade union rights and, first and foremost, the Mercosur agreements as well as the partnership agreements and national programmes in ACP countries that are currently under negotiation.

ETUC will step up its efforts to make the globalisation process more democratic by contributing to the debate on global food safety, in a bid to boost the coherence between the objectives pursued by various key European policies (social and sustainable development policies, trade policy and the Common Agricultural Policy).

The EU must undertake to more forcefully promote the application of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. Working in conjunction with the European industry federations, ETUC intends to develop the use of European Works Councils to ensure the effective application of core labour standards in the context of corporate social responsibility, and see to it that they become driving forces in the processes of negotiating voluntary agreements.

The European Union and its Member States must assert themselves in practice as determined, dynamic players for world peace and advocates of the globalisation of social justice, these being core elements of democracy. Action in this connection should include the

drafting of joint positions by the member countries of the IMF and World Bank.

at national level:

Countries remain the appropriate entities in which to negotiate progress on social issues. Moreover, countries are representatives of international institutions, producing standards. They have established a hierarchy of such standards covering the economy, finance and trade (IMF, World Bank, WTO, OECD), these being deemed important and binding, whereas standards covering social affairs (ILO), health (WHO), education, culture (UNESCO) and the environment are considered of secondary importance and voluntary. This situation is unacceptable and must be changed so that the United Nations' environmental and social standards take priority over financial and trade-related standards.

As the report by the ILO World Commission concludes, it is essential that public and parliamentary control be exercised over the positions adopted by countries in the various international institutions so that we can impose the operational and political coherence required to substantially reform the UN system and gradually imbue it with the authority to regulate and strike a balance between international standards. This authority could be exercised within a 'World Council of Social and Economic Security'.

"Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised" (Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948).



**ten ways to make
a better world**



**2006 CONGRESS
OSLO**

The Social Globalisation document for the Congress is a more detailed idea of the challenges we face in addressing the issue of globalisation. This document condenses the essence of the larger document into ten areas, ten ways to make a better world by making the process of globalisation a social one.

1. We affirm a global society.

There is only one humanity and we need each other.

2. Globalisation must not mean only a global marketplace.

Social Globalisation means taking the necessary steps towards sustainable development, social responsibility, the economic welfare of all, gender equality and good governance.

3. We must deepen the understanding and exercise of democracy.

Democracy is being tested locally, regionally and nationally, in terms of both the level of participation from the public and the faith of the people in the legitimacy of our current forms of democracy. Social movements as well as the anti-globalisation movement contribute to a new understanding of democracy, but at the same time have difficulties adjusting to a representative political model. The ILRS must contribute to deepening the understanding and exercise of democracy, and together with the Socialist International take part in the long process to rebuild and revitalise good governance in our global institutions.

4. Sustainable development is the real quest in building a better world.

It must be possible to develop progress in our world without ruining the ability for the coming generations to enjoy it, as well as to make their own progress. We must also find a method to pay back the deficit we already have. In this present capitalistic era, we must begin to calculate the consequences of our choices for nature and human life as part of our overall measurement of success or failure.

5. Human rights issues are now central to the agenda of globalisation.

The conditions of modern life confront the former sovereign independence of a state. The world today can not simply accept a cruel leader oppressing his people. Intervention from the international community can be necessary if genocide or even minor risks are at stake. Humans have fundamental rights — affirming those rights is the responsibility of the entire world. That involves the ability of nations to distribute education, and to create the possibility for individuals to reach their goals for personal development. The future welfare of working people is totally dependent on how well a country can prepare its citizens, especially the young, to claim their rights as producers and consumers when dealing with the economic challenges of a global society.

6. Reducing poverty is inseparable from all other political goals.

Challenged by reality and the UN Millennium goals, the national and international efforts aimed at poverty reduction are right at the centre of our politics and the global agenda. Poverty reduction is not only a question of money, but one of attitudes, and providing the tools for a sustainable future. It involves our entire society; nationally, regionally and internationally.

7. Multilateralism and peace must take priority over previous conflicts.

The clash of civilizations will not benefit anyone. As global citizens we say that there is only

one humanity. There can be no peace without justice, and without peace there can be no justice. It is also true that there can be no peace without development and a search for equality. We oppose Morocco's occupation of the Western Sahara, China's occupation of neighbour countries, we ask for peace in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, in Africa's internal conflicts, and in the regional struggle in Indonesia. We ask for an end to the Russian conflict in Chechnya, the allied occupation of Iraq, and an end to civil war and chaos in Colombia.

8. Markets must be regulated to serve human needs as well as wants.

The international market is a reality. With that reality comes the need for regulations not only within nations but also globally. We must organise markets so that they allow equal access for all to that market, while at the same time giving enough space for an immature economy to be gradually included in the global marketplace. In our analysis of the world economy, the working sector must be seen from different viewpoints. In the short run; from basic needs — from hand to stomach — one must accept the informal (or black market) sector when it is used by people for their very survival. In the long run however, the goal must be to include those informal activities in an open and formally recognised area of the economy. That is necessary for regulation, protection, personal safety, and — for the sake of the sense of community within a society — for taxation and openness in the economy.

9. People need to have democratic control over their own resources.

We are now facing very decisive privatisations of things that have been more or less understood as 'free lunches'. Of special concern is the outsourcing of water and water pipe infrastructure to international companies, which has taken this issue to a critical point. These changes have been seen in both developed countries and in transition as well as developing countries. On the one hand there is a need for nations to attract investment; on the other hand there is a definite risk at having one's most necessary resources in the hand of foreign companies and out of one's own democratic control. It will be necessary to exclude these fields from the market and regulate them in a more socially and sustainable responsible way.

10. A true global society is a tolerant society.

A multicultural society with a variety of faiths is not something which will occur automatically, but rather needs conscious work on melting all the different roots together in a new tolerant society. We will not accept any negative etiquette of groups of people; not from secular people towards religious people, nor from the believer towards the secular or other believers. Freedom of religion is at the foundation of modern society. However, religious freedom is not unlimited; the limits must take into consideration both the common values and human rights within the (secular) society, and the sacred elements of different faiths. We want to express our search for a unity in diversity as a common understanding that human is spiritual.



faith and politics: the interfaith challenge

Report to the ILRS Congress on Interfaith Work in Our Member Organisations

The ability for the ILRS to create a space for socialists of many different faiths to take part in our organisation is one of the most important goals we have in front of us. In pursuing this project, we are not asking others to lessen the degree of commitment they have to their own faith; we are asking only that each of our member organisations recognise that if we are serious about building any kind of international movement, we must realise that it will not look only like ourselves. Many of us understand this in theory; it's important to try to understand it through practice. Part of that practice involves learning how to work in an interfaith environment.

From the beginning of time, religious difference has been the cause of war between peoples. Humanity has found ways to build societies that offer the basic needs of life to its citizens; we have found political ideas such as democracy that allow for people to live together peacefully even though we may have very different ideas about the world. Yet we still find ourselves living in a world where the worst elements of the major religious ideas continue to create intolerance, hatred, and war. Until we can manage to find a way where the best elements of those same religious ideas can be nurtured and brought forward in a common respect for human spiritual needs, we will be doomed to repeat the pattern of religious conflict that threatens our existence.

In March of 2004, we asked a few people from countries with very different religious and political situations to answer some questions about their organisations' experience with interfaith matters. This was the first step in a project which will expand to include input from all of our member organisations, and hopefully help the ILRS to be more informed about the challenge of inviting people of different faiths to participate in our work both nationally and internationally.

The responses that follow speak for themselves. Together they show that there is not one model for building a religious socialist organisation, and that there are different but equally valid ways of reaching out to others who share our politics but not necessarily our particular faith.

Our hope with this project is that we might give those organisations that already have experience with interfaith work an opportunity to share that experience with us; that those organisations that want to and are trying to do interfaith work can find some ideas on how to do it from each other; and that organisations that may not yet be comfortable with doing interfaith work can observe others of us doing it and find a way to address the matter in their own way. The final goal is to succeed in increasing the amount of participation in the ILRS by people of different faiths, by (1) bringing in new member organisations into our family which have a good amount of religious diversity among their membership, and (2) helping our existing member organisations address the question of religious socialist diversity in their own societies.

A brief synopsis follows the individual reports.

*Andrew Hammer
Secretary General
15 January 2006*

What specific experiences has your group had with socialists from different faith groups?

We at CSM have been very supportive of both the Muslim & Jewish Socialists within the Labour Party.

Our previous Director met several times with Muslim Socialists before their launch. One of our MP's spoke at that event.

Are there other groups in your country (Jewish, Muslim, etc.) who are organised either in the party or in the support of progressive/social democratic politics? If so, what links do you have with them?

Yes, these groups are very active within the Party. We meet around the table frequently at Socialists Society Meetings. Also we have sought contributions from other groups in our magazine on a regular basis.

We have worked hard to make links with other faith groups (See report - Faith in Politics) and to voice their concerns.

If you already have some experience in working with socialists of different faiths, what have you discovered through the experience?

We all are working and seeking a society that is just, equal, safe for all its citizens.

Where diversity is not seen as a threat but something to celebrate.

Do you have members in your organisation of different faiths, even though your group may have been founded in one religion?

Yes we do. Not actually sure how many.

How would you handle the growth of the ILRS to include the interests of different faiths? Should transnational groups of extreme minorities (less than 3% of world religious believers, e.g., Jews, Sikhs, Shintos) be eligible to receive ILRS membership?

The growth would be a learning curve for many, but a positive step to understanding our diverse world.

We would be happy to sit around the table and learn from any religious group that wanted to be a member of ILRS.

Is it preferable to have religious socialists organised in groups according to their faiths, or as socialists of religious and spiritual belief? If the latter, how should our organisations change to reflect that composition?

We have always been Religious Socialists although many of our members have been Christian Socialists.

Our current growth is exciting although not sure what we can reflect until we access the growth.

What specific experiences has your group had with socialists from different faith groups?

In Finland we have both Jews and Muslims, but the traditional Muslim community (Tatars) was very closed. The Jewish community has been more open to the rest of society. But now there are new Muslim immigrants. When we have had municipal elections, we have had both Muslim and Jewish candidates. We have had links with people of other faiths, however they have not been of a social democratic nature, but of a more general nature. We have now planned a seminar on the question of "Socialism and Different Faiths". Mostly our organisation is Christian organisation; speaking quite honestly, we can say that we have many kinds of members and some feel that if we encounter members of other faiths, they should try to convert them.

If we think about this question among Christian denominations, that provides more information in the Finnish experience. We have quite a few minority groups of different Christian denominations in Finland whose members have been active in KSL. The reason that we have had so many active members from these groups, is because they have the opportunity to become active within a larger organisation which can affect society more easily than they can inside their own small group. Lutherans have more opportunities and more methods of access, and therefore don't need to rely on the KSL to be socially active. The feeling of the KSL is that their own group should be and remain Christian, but are not averse to other groups of social democrats with different faiths forming and working together with them on the same goals.

Do you have members in your organisation of different faiths, even though your group may have been founded in one religion? How comfortable do they find themselves in an organisation which might call itself by one religion? Could these people find themselves in leadership positions in your organisation if your organisation remains identified by one faith alone?

If person is a socialist, it might be possible for a member of another faith to be comfortable, if they understand that we have a Christian organisation. We have a principle where we do not ask people what is their religion.

Are members of your organisation, or those in its leadership, comfortable with reaching out to those of other faiths, in the way that is outlined by the ILRS Hand to Hand project? If not, what would help to make them more comfortable?

We have no problem in feeling comfortable with others of other faiths.

If your organisation is founded in one specific faith, would your organisation then be comfortable with sharing ILRS membership and possibly a common vote with a religious socialist group organised in another faith inside your party?

Yes. We are very keen for peace work in our organisation, we think that interfaith work is very important for world peace.

Should transnational groups of extreme minorities (less than 3% of world religious believers, e.g., Jews, Sikhs, Shintos) be eligible to receive ILRS membership?

Yes.

Is it preferable to have religious socialists organised in groups according to their faiths, or as socialists of religious and spiritual belief?

All options are possible, and there can be many good variations. Historical or local conditions can affect which choice should be made. A diverse method of different groups can be better in one situation, where a universalist method bringing together different faiths under one umbrella is better in another situation. People within one religion have a specific ethical motivation, which can often bring them in to the party. However, the idea is also there that a socialist might seek out a particular religious group to address their spirituality. The situation and approach favoured in South Africa is better for them, but in Finland it is more difficult because of our homogeneity.

It is possible that the SDP might find it useful to have an umbrella group which represented religious socialists which is itself comprised of different faith groups, each of which have their own identity. This way everyone gets what they want, and in the example of an athiestic party, they are not seen as having a special relationship with one faith, and need not worry about giving in to the power structure of one particular faith group.

netherlands

reporter: johan van workum

What specific experiences has your group had with socialists from different faith groups? Are there other groups in your country (Jewish, Muslim, etc.) who are organised either in the party or in the support of progressive/social democratic politics? If so, what links do you have with them? If you already have some experience in working with socialists of different faiths, what have you discovered through the experience?

Our own group, Trefpunt, is religiously broadly based - see above.

There is a big Christian Democrat party (who's members and MP's are not all church going Christians - there are even some Muslims in the active membership). The CD party is at the moment the main coalition party and the biggest party in Parliament, but for some years not any more in the polls. There the PvdA is far the biggest now. The other political parties don't have an active network of religious members, like the PvdA has in Trefpunt.

Zingeving.net and Trefpunt tried several times during the last years to get more Muslim party members active in Trefpunt, and to bring Muslims in contact with each other to discuss the relationship between their beliefs (Islam) and political and social matters. There was one successful meeting, but attempts to transfer the initiative for follow ups to members out of the attendants of this successful meeting did not work out. It takes a lot of time. Social Democrats who immigrated from Morocco for instance, can be very strict to keep their beliefs (Islam) separated from their political activities and views, because they have learned in their culture that this gives only great problems.

And maybe there is also a silent mistrust in 'whites' of main political parties who want something of Muslims who are mainly immigrants (from Turkey, Morocco and Surinam). Under the actual coalition there is a lot of pressure on immigrants - also from the second and third generation - to integrate in the Dutch society (whatever you would define that society). (The last sabre-rattling is the proposal of the Minister for Integration to forbid foreigners to speak in public in the streets any other language than Dutch. So when you have plans to visit the Netherlands, please, inform with me on forehand if this proposal has worked out meanwhile, otherwise you may - chatting in the streets of Amsterdam - risk a fine or even maybe be arrested.)

Do you have members in your organisation of different faiths, even though your group may have been founded in one religion? How comfortable do they find themselves in an organisation which might call itself by one religion? Could these people find themselves in leadership positions in your organisation if your organisation remains identified by one faith alone?

See above under 'Trefpunt'. Within the Trefpunt network and in the membership of Zingeving.net, members of different beliefs are really equal and Protestants are not more equal any more. But within the PvdA, maybe Muslim members and Representatives feel themselves backward on the point of religion. The dominant 'religion' in the party and also in the media is to be a non believer.

Are members of your organisation, or those in its leadership, comfortable with reaching out to those of other faiths, in the way that is outlined by the ILRS Hand to Hand project? If not, what would help to make them more comfortable?

There is an in strength growing movement in the Netherlands to remove every sign of any religion from the public sphere and to make the society fundamentalistic secular. The movement is fed too by the feelings after the murder of the film maker Theo van Gogh two years ago by a second

generation Moroccan young man who had become a fundamentalist Muslim. Churches, Muslims, Catholic and Protestant and Jewish and Muslim schools and so on feel unease by this development. The fundamentalist secular idea's also live under MP's of the PvdA, but are for sure not leading there. Trefpunt and Zingeving.net did not use up to now the 'Hand to Hand' paper. It seems that they find their way without it.

If your organisation is founded in one specific faith, would your organisation then be comfortable with sharing ILRS membership and possibly a common vote with a religious socialist group organised in another faith inside your party? (Consider what if any problems could arise if each group were required to have separate membership, and groups of religious faiths always voted together.) How would you handle the growth of the ILRS to include the interests of different faiths? Should transnational groups of extreme minorities (less than 3% of world religious believers, e.g., Jews, Sikhs, Shintos) be eligible to receive ILRS membership?

First question: no, that is not what can be expected. On the other hand, some alienation could develop when ILRS would not develop in that direction and when ILRS would declare it is a Christian league. That could cause problems especially with the Trefpunt members from the Humanist Association (and Trefpunt has many active ones) and probably not only with them. It is to be expected that the Dutch ILRS branch proposes her own solution - inter-religious membership - as the best solution and co-operating groups of different beliefs at most as a second best way of doing.

Is it preferable to have religious socialists organised in groups according to their faiths, or as socialists of religious and spiritual belief? If the latter, how should our organisations change to reflect that composition?

See above: It is to be expected that the Dutch ILRS branch proposes her own solution - inter-religious membership within one branch - as the best solution and co-operating branch groups of different beliefs at most as a second best way of doing. We did not discuss this solution, nor the question of every such group should have a vote in the ILRS congress or stay to 'one country one vote'. A solution could be in this case, to give branches a weighed vote (for instance 1 vote per 50 members).

south africa

reporter: cedric mayson

What specific experiences has your group had with socialists from different faith groups? Are there other groups in your country (Jewish, Muslim, etc.) who are organised either in the party or in the support of progressive/social democratic politics? If so, what links do you have with them? If you already have some experience in working with socialists of different faiths, what have you discovered through the experience?

The focus for ANC was to get rid of apartheid. The Commission for Religious Affairs was first formed to rally religious ANC members together, and to form an activist approach to religious bodies. This happened first in exile, and was developed after the ANC was able to operate inside as from 1991. ANC and CRA have always been inter-faith. Socialism was a strong factor in the ANC in earlier days, and continues to be, in essence. It was muted during the period of readjustment after the Cold War. When the ANC became a government and had to relate to the fact of the capitalist dictatorship in the World, and in South Africa, peace and prosperity demanded practical changes in socialist rhetoric and priorities. Much re-thinking about practical politics and economics has been necessary. This has been partly accommodated by the maintenance of the Tripartite Alliance between ANC, SA Communist Party, and the Congress of Trade Unions. CRA operates within this. There are socialist individuals within all religious groups, but no inter-faith socialist body as such. We move towards it.

Many of us were also engaged in a South African Chapter of the Inter-faith World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) which played a strong role in the late 80s and early 90s, but once apartheid was defeated and the new Constitution accepted, this faded. The activist groups formed to oppose apartheid in Muslim and Jewish communities still exist, but are more anti-US than pro-socialist. Much work needed.

Do you have members in your organisation of different faiths, even though your group may have been founded in one religion? How comfortable do they find themselves in an organisation which might call itself by one religion? Could these people find themselves in leadership positions in your organisation if your organisation remains identified by one faith alone?

Because the focus of CRA is to pursue ANC policies and national transformation we have no problems about working with different religious groups.

CRA initiatives have all had an inter-faith flavour: eg. the Booklet 'Ethical Transformation'; the 'Moral Regeneration Movement', and the development of a new policy on 'Religion Education' by the Dept of Education. The social and economic aspects runs through these, but none can be called 'socialist' in the old sense.

Are members of your organisation, or those in its leadership, comfortable with reaching out to those of other faiths, in the way that is outlined by the ILRS Hand to Hand project? If not, what would help to make them more comfortable?

If your organisation is founded in one specific faith, would your organisation then be comfortable with sharing ILRS membership and possibly a common vote with a religious socialist group organised in another faith inside your party? (Consider what if any problems could arise if each group were required to have separate membership, and groups of religious faiths always voted together.) How would you handle the growth of the ILRS to include the interests of different faiths? Should transnational groups of extreme minorities (less than 3%

of world religious believers, e.g., Jews, Sikhs, Shintos) be eligible to receive ILRS membership?

Is it preferable to have religious socialists organised in groups according to their faiths, or as socialists of religious and spiritual belief? If the latter, how should our organisations change to reflect that composition?

I believe that faith, religion, socialism, secularity, spirituality are all part of a single holistic understanding of the human society which has evolved on Earth, and any attempt to organise ILRS on apartheid lines is a write off. We probably began by trying to give a religious expression of our socialism, or a socialist expression to our faith. This was legitimate in the religious and political situation of the past: but not today. The world of today needs a new holistic vision, and ILRS has to develop and embrace the vision before it can spread it to other organisations.

Before I go into the specific questions I will very briefly outline the historic and political background to relations between faith and politics in Sweden.

Since the reformation in the 16th century Sweden was a very monolithic Protestant-Lutheran society. Other believes were forbidden - in the 18th century local exceptions were allowed for Jewish groups. In the 19th century a number of popular Christians religious pietistic movements (Methodism, Baptism, Congregationalists etc) came to Sweden. Their followers had for a long period to meet at secret places. Religious meeting outside the Lutheran church of Sweden was not allowed. Not until second half of the 19th century people was allowed to organise their own religious services.

In spite of that the new religious movements in Sweden who opposed Church of Sweden on the local level became forerunners and pioneers for democratic demands and for forming of the Labour movement and the Social Democratic Party. That was on local level. On national level the founders of the Social Democratic Party were more inspired by Marx and the German example of party-building and stood for a hostile attitude towards religion. The League of Christian Social Democrats (the Christian socialists in Sweden) was a way formed to support Christians in the party and to make them and their ideas and values visible.

Until mid of the last century there was in Sweden with exception for small Jewish communities almost no people of other faith than Christianity in the country. Changes came with the Nazi-regime and World War 2. The Jewish communities grew when Jews came as refugees from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe.

Later in the 50s and 60s large groups of immigrant labourers came from Italy, the Balkans, Greece and Turkey and with the first congregations of Greek-orthodox, Serb-orthodox etc and Muslim / mainly Turkish / congregations.

The last 30 years people from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe have come to Sweden as refugees from different conflicts and wars. And they have represented many different religious groups. Sweden is now a multi-religious society with substantial groups of Muslims, orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists. Among the groups of faiths other than Christianity, Muslims are the dominant group. Almost 400 000 persons in a population of about 9 million have a background Muslim culture. More than 100 000 are more practising Muslims who regularly visit the mosques.

Answers to the questions:

1. Experience with socialists of other faiths

Since 1994 the Christian Socialists have had an organised cooperation with the Council of Muslims in Sweden. It started when the Muslims before the 1994 Parliament election raised their questions to all political parties. The Social Democrats asked the Christian Socialists to act on their behalf in the contacts with the Muslims. After that our involvement in this dialogue developed:

- A number of dialogues were organised
- An education course for Muslim leaders was organised
- A one term weekend-education course was organised for Muslim women
- For almost two years a Muslim worked at our office, responsible for contact with Muslim groups.
- Muslim representatives took part at our national congresses (and at ILRS congresses in Helsinki)

and in Switzerland)

- On the international level Christian Socialists and Muslims in Sweden have worked on projects for peace-building in Algeria, Kosovo and in the Middle East.
- A number of local initiatives and dialogues have followed.
- The Christian Socialists cooperate with other organisations in a study project on Islam and Democracy
- A National Swedish Action Group against Islamophobia has been formed with practical support from the Christian Socialists

Muslims in Sweden look upon the Christian Socialists as their leading partner in their search for political participation.

The Christian Socialists' contacts with other religious groups have been more on a ad hoc-basis.

We have at present a good communication with the Jewish leadership in specific political issues such as kosher dietary laws, religious schools, etc. These contacts have in a way balanced disagreements regarding Middle East policy issues that have earlier distorted our relations.

Buddhist groups have been supported in questions regarding religious freedom and practical matters such as the proper right to elderly care accustomed to their belief.

We have also had specific contacts with the Serb-orthodox Church in relation to the conflict in Kosovo.

We have until now had no contacts with smaller religious groups such as Sikhs and Hindus.

What we have learnt is that

- a) the minority groups of other faith are, as most immigrant groups, politically oriented towards the Social Democrats and
- b) they are very willing to cooperate with the Christian section of the party. They notice the faith-based similarities in values and political stand-points.

Over the last years the other political parties, especially the Green party and the Christian Democratic Party, have more eagerly searched to reach the new religious groups. They actively recruit people to represent different groups on their voting bills.

A process that we now notice is that the tendency for new groups to act collectively in political questions now has started to make room for more individual political decisions. This is a very logical and positive development for their political integration, but of course a problem for our party that earlier was a form collective "first-hand choice".

2. Inclusion of socialists of other faiths in your organisation

Some local groups have people of other faith than Christianity among its members. In Stockholm a small group of Muslims have established a local unit for Muslim Social Democrats. (In the party structure there are many ethnic- or language-based local Social Democratic Groups) Muslims have among themselves formed a national network for their political integration. The network is not formally organised to any party but most people in the network are Social democrats.

3. Outreach to people of other faiths

The question has been controversial among our members and local groups, and there are different opinions in our leadership.

One controversy has been regarding the dialogue and the contacts itself. The resistance has been strongest among groups with less or no contacts with people of other faith.

Another and wider discussion has been whether the membership in our organisation should be open to people of other faiths or not. Some elderly members, but some younger members also, have been arguing that the organisation should not give away its Christian identity.

Others have, when religion so often is drawn into political conflicts, said that this is a strong reason for people of different religious faiths to work close together.

Both options have been kept open for the local groups to make their decision. Muslims or Jews who have joined as members are well aware that they join the Christian Socialists. In its own tradition, reflected also in the formal writings in our foundations, the Christian Socialists have avoided to take firm stands in any internal Christian theological conflicts. Our statutes reflect an interfaith common ground when they refer only to God as Creator and to our responsibility towards our fellow beings and the Creation.

4. The question of plurality of religious socialist groups of other faiths inside your party as well as the ILRS

We should accept it — if the model develops with different groups of Christian Socialists, Muslim Socialists, Jewish Socialists within the Social Democrats a possible plan could be to form a national umbrella organisation 'Religious Socialists in Sweden' to represent the different groups within ILRS but also in the national party structure.

Probably the disadvantages of such an arrangement would prove themselves if they should develop. You can learn from the ethnic-language-based organisations, where the doubts have grown as to whether they are contributing to political integration or not.

5. One group for all or different groups for each faith?

My view is that people should find their religious homestead at their respective congregations and then cooperate on an interfaith base when it comes to politics.

What specific experiences has your group had with socialists from different faith groups? Are there other groups in your country (Jewish, Muslim, etc.) who are organised either in the party or in the support of progressive/social democratic politics? If so, what links do you have with them? If you already have some experience in working with socialists of different faiths, what have you discovered through the experience?

The first question is answered in detail in the next section below.

There are groups in the United States that have a left or 'progressive' political view, as it is now fashionable to say in the States. The problem is that these groups often engage in very general forms of social action without having a proper or well-informed political analysis of situations beyond their own experience. This is not a problem inside the US, but more of a problem when such groups go outside of the US. Our links with these groups are limited, mainly because they do not understand socialist politics and have no interest in doing so. One could argue that these groups even have a negative effect internationally because they interfere in the conflicts of other nations with good intentions, but with no understanding of the political ideas that are quite common in the rest of the world. Without an appreciation of socialist politics, these organisations (whether they intend to or not) work on an American political model that is uninformed and ill-suited to provide sustainable solutions beyond simple charity to those in need outside the US.

Having said all that as context, we still try to make links with these groups, in the hope that we can bring something to them that will improve their political outlook, both at home and abroad.

Do you have members in your organisation of different faiths, even though your group may have been founded in one religion? How comfortable do they find themselves in an organisation which might call itself by one religion? Could these people find themselves in leadership positions in your organisation if your organisation remains identified by one faith alone?

In the Religion and Socialism Commission, we can answer many of these questions at once by briefly describing the history of our organisation. In 1977 the two founding members of the commission were a Christian and a Jew, and from the beginning the group was defined as a religious socialist organisation, open to people of all faiths, as opposed to an exclusively Christian or Jewish socialist formation. While the majority of our members are Christians, both Jews and Unitarian Universalists have been significantly involved in determining the direction of the organisation, having served in leadership roles since the beginning. Because we make it clear that our Commission is open not only to people who have an organised religious belief system, but also to those who feel that some sort of spirituality is important to their political identity, we have had agnostics, followers of native European and American religions, and even atheists involved in our work. This degree of inclusiveness has not affected our religious identity in a negative way, but perhaps has even strengthened it.

Are members of your organisation, or those in its leadership, comfortable with reaching out to those of other faiths, in the way that is outlined by the ILRS Hand to Hand project? If not, what would help to make them more comfortable?

We are very comfortable in reaching out to people who have different faiths.

If your organisation is founded in one specific faith, would your organisation then be

comfortable with sharing ILRS membership and possibly a common vote with a religious socialist group organised in another faith inside your party? (Consider what if any problems could arise if each group were required to have separate membership, and groups of religious faiths always voted together.) How would you handle the growth of the ILRS to include the interests of different faiths? Should transnational groups of extreme minorities (less than 3% of world religious believers, e.g., Jews, Sikhs, Shintos) be eligible to receive ILRS membership?

Given that our group is already a multi-faith group, this is not likely to be an issue for us. If there were a situation where a group wanted to organise separately according to their own faith, our response to that effort would depend very much on their reasons for wanting to do so.

We definitely support the involvement of different faiths in the ILRS. If the ILRS constitution is changed to allow organisations to become members not based on national origin but as different organisations, then it would be possible to consider membership for groups that are based on faith rather than nationality, so long as the political links are clear and the form of organisation is well-developed. But an important point that cannot be lost is that the goal of our work is to bring people together, not to create separation between faith groups. We already have our own special traditions inside our different religious institutions.

Is it preferable to have religious socialists organised in groups according to their faiths, or as socialists of religious and spiritual belief? If the latter, how should our organisations change to reflect that composition?

For us, we have found that bringing everyone together in one group allows for an excellent opportunity to learn and share information about other faiths and traditions, which in turn inform us a bit about our own respective faiths. This kind of diversity really helps to build tolerance and a knowledge of how to build community between people who are different. As we have never had an organisation for one faith alone, we don't have a way to say which way is better. What we do know is that our way of doing things helps to provide a meeting place for people of different faiths where they can talk about issues that affect all of us, and not only in one religion. This is an important goal for us in a society where there are many religions which must find a way to live together with each other.

synopsis

This is an informal preliminary synopsis of the six reports.

Experience with socialists of other faiths

It seems that some of our organisations have consistent experience with different faiths or are working hard to build that experience. On the whole, however, it might be fair to say that most of our organisations do not yet have a lot of strong experience in this area. Here is where the Hand to Hand concept comes in as one idea for building that experience. There are others, but Hand to Hand is there if anyone wants to use it or parts of it.

Inclusion of socialists of other faiths in our organisations

It seems that there is an openness to the idea, but that most of our organisations have not had enough members of other faiths to test the question of how they might be integrated. Moreover, it may be the case that a more realistic way to approach the question in some countries may be by encouraging organisation of different religious socialist groups by faith. Then again, for some of us, the inclusive method is already happening or has happened for some time.

Outreach to people of other faiths

This is perhaps the most sensitive issue, because it involves the actual contact with people of other faiths, which can sometimes be misunderstood as an attempt to convert others. In some countries, political outreach with religious overtones is not well-received by the general public. We could say that there is a willingness to reach out to others, but that in practice it is easier to say than to do.

The question of plurality of religious socialist groups of other faiths inside our parties as well as the ILRS

An interesting point comes up here, in that the groups who have more experience with other faiths seem to be less willing to allow for different religious socialist groups to be organised by their own faith. Perhaps we can say that if one has had experience working together across the lines of faith, that experience has been positive enough to prefer to continue bringing all socialists of faith together. On the other hand, there is room for the organisation of religious socialists by their faith group and even across national borders if this question is taken up with a great deal of thought and clarity in the decision-making process.

One group for all or different groups for each faith?

Again, the answer seems to be that there are different answers for each societal situation. The point, perhaps, is to build diversity in whatever way makes sense, whether it be in a larger umbrella group in the party that contains different groups organised by their own faith, as one religious socialist group that allows for people to experience each other's life in faith, or as a loose coalition of groups with different ways of expressing their socialist politics.



a report from

international league of religious socialists



www.ilrs.org

On Political Relevance:

The political handicraft in Member Organisations of the ILRS/International League of Religious Socialists

Our member organisations act in different political surroundings and with different methods. Some act mostly like a think-tank, inside or outside a political party, other are more or less independent political organisations in either close or more loose relation to certain political parties with broader political actions. This program on political handicraft focuses on political relevance regardless of structure but is very much focused on political action; How are we to influence political ideas and make a difference in political and social life, nationally and internationally? How shall we try to challenge ourselves to develop in what way we can make a difference in political life?

In an attachment to this draft program you can find a list of our member organisations in ILRS just now. ILRS is working hard to broaden its links to other organisations so that the organisation will cover the whole social democratic world as well as involving people and groups from all different faiths, religions and continents.

We now encourage each other to develop new skills and good ideas to make a difference in our nations, our parties' policies and insights and their actions globally. Therefore this paper is only a starting point for further progress in and between our organisations.

This report is presented to the Executive Committee of the ILRS and shall be presented to the Congress in June 2006. Neither body will adopt this report, but can in their decisions make comments and add material for the ongoing processes within and even between our organisations.

P A Sahlberg

Stockholm/Klövsjö December 2005

A democratic approach

Democracy is the only way to a healthy structure of human co-operation and handling of power. You can't say it solves all problems. In some way it's perhaps more proper to say that it creates problems, not at least the short-sighted perspectives to get the "vote maximum" versus the long term views on development and social justice. The longing to win votes and power can take over from the ideas and devotions. The use of the power structure for a personal winning is another risk, but as someone has said; *Democracy is the worst power structure – if you exclude all others*. In no time before there has been so much democracy in our world. It has also been said that democratic countries don't go to war against each other. All who know history know that that isn't entirely true either.

But, after all these question marks it is time to adore and pay tribute and reverence to democracy. The basis is of course the respect for ALL humanity, an individualistic approach the theory of which contains human rights and the dignity of all who has the right to vote also can be elected – an egalitarian perspective.

But democratic institutions lose their credibility if and when they aren't able to meet the urgent needs and expectations of citizens. And – this is especially frightening – also democracy as such will be questioned. Surely those expectations could be wrong, but an empty stomach always tells a truth.

Therefore we need a restoration of democracy at all levels – at the same time. The local institutions must be strong enough to meet the immediate needs, resources are required, and a political structure which can handle this multi-level democracy. We need of course a good functioning state but – in our time – we also need good local, regional and even global structures.

It must become a truth that democratic leaders can not see their own people starve and he (or she) will not go to war against other democratic leaders.

It is also important to see that strong institutions work as a safeguard for democracy. The democratic system needs a solid institutional framework, and within that rule of law the political parties should fight, based on their ideas in representing their voters.

The prime aim for a political organisation is to stand up for the basic principle on which democracy is built. We behave as what we are. Through your deeds you will be judged.

In the following chapters we will discuss different strategies and hopefully be able to give some examples and/or ideas how to develop our organisations' thoughts and actions.

Political handicraft

Politics is based on ideas, but it is also a play on power. For me the ideas must be in focus for the political handicraft which also takes part in power games, negotiations and makes up compromises. Too much of spinning and spin-doctors erodes the very basis for the sound idea-based conflicts on what kind of society we and our citizens and voters choose. The political forces must be ready to listen to people but also take the lead and propose those changes which – in their minds – seem to be necessary for a better future. This is a vital balancing act – to lead and at the same time to listen.

As political groups within or close to political parties we have different contemporary missions:

- To develop and work out messages and strategies from our organisations, members and associates for ourselves and/or together with partners, create theological analysis to ongoing political ideas and social challenges,
- attack (or milder; contribute to) our parties' political agendas and ongoing processes for developing and deepening ideas and policies,
- broaden the worldviews of our parties,
- support our parties in the public arena, and
- urge our members to act as the very best members of our party.

Our basis for this work mission can look different in each case. For some of us the party's policies and constitutions are the basis also for our organisation, for others with freer links to a certain party it can be constituted according to their own statutes. On the actual basis we (and our party) have formed ideas and fundamental statements on which we built the current missions and policies.

It seems important that our organisations add values to the political arenas and create a meeting and melting point between politics and faiths/religions. That will give us added value to politics. We have focused on three distinct unique missions for our organisations political work and handicraft;

- Develop concepts for how religions and faiths can contribute to a broadened political agenda. See more under Chapter 6 below.
- Create space for people with a religious devotion to get involved in politics.
- Challenge the prevalent views that religious people and issues are intrinsically linked with the political Right.
- Challenge the concept that religion is what fundamentalists define it as.

Faiths and politics

We will return to the first bullet point in chapter 6 but already here add some remarks. Our concept of faith and politics are not meant to mix or merge faith and politics. Rather it is a question on how faith and politics sometimes challenge each other and sometimes add values to each other. If we try to merge the two we risk not only making the state part of religion but also, and maybe more so, making religion secular. Basically there is not such a thing as a religious state. This is of course controversial in some Muslim countries and has been (and still is in some places) controversial also in the Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu context, although in all such possible examples it is basically not possible to mix the religious field with the public arena, and that mainly for two reasons; 1. A state must be the principle contiguity for its entire people and normally it would be impossible to impose religion on all and everyone. Therefore the states have to recognize all citizens to the state and allow minorities their right of freedom of expression and to choose or not to choose a faith, and 2 Religious denominations have basically, even if they want to cover also other issues and act on different arenas, a religious agenda which not easily will fit into the more complex nature of a nation state.

Recruiting of religious people

Our societies and political parties have members who also carry a faith and cultural belonging. It is important that they not be caught in the trap where they are forced to choose between the two, but be able to exercise their full citizenship in politics and in denominational work. We also think that people of faith can add values to the political arena and vice versa. If religious people choose to become involved in politics, let it be possible also to join a political ideology on the left. Politics in democracies require and is enriched by a broadness of people, thoughts and devotions in order to make it possible to represent the people and communicate policies.

Faith is Left

For many of us it is the natural consequence of our faith to find in it a leftist analysis and devote ourselves to solidarity, righteousness and social welfare structures in our societies. In our times there is a threat to leftist movements of building on the old ambiguity between Marxist/Social Democratic analyses and faiths. From both sides it must be revealed that their ultimate goals are much more compatible than a right-wing link between conservative ideas and religion.

Fundamentalists/extremism diminish true religion

In the same way we also need to distance ourselves from both those who see religious people as fundamentalists *and* some extremists within religion who claims that their perspective is the only valid one.

So – when we enter into political handcrafting we do that with a distinct mission and with tools which show our uniqueness.

Build bridges

We have many partners. They can be found in denominations around us and also in other NGOs, action groups, peace groups and other. To develop stronger links to them will give your group a more significant role in their understanding of politics, it can also create good possibilities for their members to get involved in politics and for us to deepen our understanding of actual issues.

One flaw of the current political system is described by many as isolation and distance from ordinary people's questions and ideas. We can – with our feet in both faith and politics - be a bridging factor in this sense. With openness to both sides we can play an important role by making contributions together with partners.

The tools we can use are

- Create joint working groups on certain issues, see examples below in Chapter 4
- Invite political and civil society actors to seminars
- Launch joint campaigns, on intercultural, poverty, globalisation and other themes.

In the ILRS paper on Globalisation – get “glocal” you can find a series of ideas and concepts for this kind of actions.

Make reports and create working groups

In the political handcrafting there are many ways to get the interest from others and the Media. A report makes things easier for a lazy journalist and can focus good ideological positions and raise important questions.

In the report you also get a chance to develop your ideas and ability to make theological reflections which can catch new people to listen to our way of discussing politics. The report is also a tool for a deepening process in certain issues and will develop our own thinking. For a well-defined theme there are also good opportunities to invite people with certain know-how in a process they choose only for their interest in the subject.

- Actual political questions and prevalent debates, see example below from Sweden
- Value issues
- Theological reflections, see example below from South Africa
- Integration and intercultural challenges
- Global issues such as; globalisation, partnership, WTO, Free trade ...

Example:

SWEDEN: One thing which we have used is to make a report on certain issues at a critical time window. When our party started a group who should work on new principles for taxation we issued a report on some parts of that complex area which gave us some space in media and hopefully some further response in the working group.

SOUTH AFRICA: When ANC in the election 2004 issued a manifesto for the election CRA/Commission on Religious Affairs created a theological reflection of that manifesto and gave in that theological and value based insights for the political processes. This example is attachment B. to this report.

Ideas and power structures

Ideas are the core of politics. Sometimes, however, the power play dominates the scene. I think it is important for our movements to be a voice for a perspective which more focus on politicians as *servants of the people* and not the *masters of the people*. There can be a need for remembrance of this in times when vote-maximum is the main focus.

Triangulating others perspective is an interesting viewpoint on the political arenas in our times. That means that you claim positions and ideas which are very close to your political rival or enemy in order to try to take over their voters. Too much of today's politics has been accumulating those strategies and therefore the landscape over political ideas and contradictions unfortunately erodes and leave the voters questioning right and left, right and wrong.

In politics it is not enough to be right (have the right ideas), but also to get it right (so that the ideas can be implemented). Therefore in politics there is a need to go to the negotiation table and find solutions. A compromise is beautiful regarding human beings living together. But negotiations which compromise basic ideas are of course much more problematic. All kind of ideas have a bottom line over which you can not go any further. If you forget that you are more in the power game than in politics. Another problematic side with negotiations is when you are not only discussing a certain issue but make up a package in which very separate things are linked to each other. "You get this if I get that..." That is not the most beautiful part of bridge building.

We, as faith-people in politics, must remind ourselves of the Shepherd-theme of servants. We can do that through focusing:

- Challenge power structure and put the ideas on the table again
- Add human values to a technical and economical agenda
- Convey Human Rights issues
- Develop the serving attitude; to minister is to be a servant

In politics we also have to develop and relate to the media. Media focuses all too often on short-sighted affairs and media sources are quoting each other; journalists are running along the same track. We must sometime follow the logic of the media but can also search ways to stand firm against simplifications and superficial perspectives.

Inter-religious theological thinking

All humans are spiritual but all are not religious. An attitude which opens for spirituality in the deepest sense can also be a gateway for understanding others and finding a joint way to develop our own faith, at the same time finding people who want the path of life together with us.

Cedric Mayson writes: "Africa has a vital insight on Secular Spirituality. African Traditional Religion/ATR, like all primal human spirituality, is based on people values. It is holistic, not separating the spiritual from the rest of life. It has no religious structures, no priests, no estates, no churches, no competitive denominations, but it points to ethical values and a power greater than ourselves.

Like all religions, ATR needs liberating: from the inadequacies of its past; from the contemptuous caricatures of some imported religions; and from the snare of those who seek to manipulate it for their own benefit. Primal religion needs prophetic insight, but it has much to offer.

We need to liberate religion into a new secular spirituality which drives away superstition and fear, and empowers millions of agnostics and believers who are seeking a spirituality not wrapped in colonial religions. It means a new evangelism, a unity in diversity of people seeking values which change society, a new prophetic context which sees politics and economics as godly spheres.

Whatever our religious inheritance the winds of change are blowing over us. We need a rethink of religion to move liberation forward."

Our Member Organisations can make a real change in these attitudes and we can contribute to new understandings.

We will find and share good experiences we find in our own society.

- The Children of Abraham is a joint mission in some schools in Stockholm area. There they try to create tools for understanding and co-operations between children from different faiths.
- The South African experiences are extremely valuable for our developing of ideas in the new context. That will be some of the parts which will be filled out till the Congress in Norway.

ATTACHMENT A.

Some member organisations of ILRS/The International League of Religious Socialists and their work:

United Kingdom

Christian Socialist Movement/CSM

Sweden

Broderskapsrörelsen (SKSF/The Christian Social Democrats) is an integrated but independent (sub-)part of the Swedish Social Democratic Party with formal representation in the relevant party decision making bodies at all level. All members in Broderskap are also members in the Social Democratic Party. About 30 of the parties 140 parliamentarians are affiliated with Broderskap. Broderskap have a Conference every other year, president is Peter Weiderud (elected 2005). Broderskap have about 3000 members and a central office in Stockholm with 3-4 employees. A weekly newspaper Tidningen Broderskap, www.tidningenbroderskap.se

More info: www.broderskap.se (unfortunately most in Swedish)

Norway

Kristne Arbeidere (Christian Workers)

Spain

Cristianos en el PSOE

The Netherlands

Trefpunt van Socialisme en Levenovertuiging

United States

Religion and Socialism Commission: the Religion and Socialism Commission of DSA (Religious Socialists) is a sector group of the Democratic Socialists of America, the main US member of the Socialist International. The activity of the group is minimal, but the members/participants are some of the most highly respected people in the American left, including theologians Harvey Cox and Cornel West. The group has an outreach of about 800 people through its publication, Religious Socialism, and about 100 members of the commission itself. It has members of different faiths, one paid employee (responsible for the publication), and a publication that has been in existence since 1977. The base of activity is in the eastern part of the United States.

Website: www.dsausa.org/rs

Austria

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christentum und Sozialdemokratie (ACUS)

Dominican Republic

Frente Nacional de Cultos

The Republic of South Africa

Commission on Religious Affairs/CRA within African National Congress/ANC.

Att B

A theological comment on the ANC Election Manifesto 2004.

Celebration and Thanksgiving.

1. There are many people of faith in the ANC. Christians from the 'main line' Churches, African Indigenous Churches, many Pentecostal groups, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Bahá'ís and many people who do not have religious institutions, but who have the energy of faith inspired by other traditions, visions and philosophies, have together stamped a high tone on the Manifesto.

Those who say the ANC is atheist are simply wrong. Practicing their different rituals, clad in different clothes, citing separate songs and scriptures, ANC supporters may seem divided, but in our struggle for liberation and transformation they share a belief in God and support a common political platform.

2. Through their calls upon Jehovah, Jesus, Thixo, Allah, Umvelinqangi, Krishna, Modimo, or the teaching of the Buddha, Bahula, or Marx, similar themes emerge. We are all spiritual people, even though we are not all religious. We recognize a supreme driving force of goodness, success, and hope in the heart of the human community which does liberate and does transform. We have seen it happen.

So the ANC Manifesto begins on the note of celebration and thanksgiving. Despite the horrific situation we faced a decade ago, and however big the problems of today, or fears of the future, we celebrate a South Africa that has experienced a major transformation. "Ten years ago I was filled with fear and foreboding at what might happen under an ANC government" said a leader of the NGK recently. "I am so glad to admit how wrong I was. My proudest boast today is to say with our President: 'I am an African'!"

We celebrate Ten Years of Freedom and Democracy, Ten years of Peace and Progress in a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it. Much, much remains to be done, but we can tackle it in confidence because the Faith and Hope we had in the past has worked.

Spiritual Politics.

3. A Manifesto is a political pronouncement, but this one is full of words which figure in spiritual tracts: together, commitment, compassion, caring, confidence, hope, justice, peace, cooperation, working with, partnerships, volunteerism, healing, the poor and marginalized. Such concepts indicate the deep spiritual awareness that drives ANC policies in promoting a People's Contract to create work and fight poverty in the immediate future.

We recognize that the present dominant economic international system makes most people poor. Why? How can we build a system which creates work, and pushes back the frontiers of poverty? The Manifesto makes a commitment to unite with all our people behind this quest.

It is quite different from manifestos of parties that promote the interest of a small group, of the justification of violent oppressors, or parade the claims of 'entitlement'. There is nothing in the ANC Manifesto about politics to seek privileges for race, creed, or wealth.

ANC members have certainly criticized those who have misused religion, and who try to separate faith from politics and economics. Some colonial religions tried to make religion a tool of oppression, or used it as a hiding place from the demands and joys of real life.

The ANC believes that Faith and Politics go hand in hand, two sides of the same coin. We believe that the African world view of religion as an inclusive factor of life is accurate: ubuntu is an holistic view of life in the whole community. It is spiritual politics.

4. The ANC Manifesto accepts the hard fact that selfishness, hatred, greed and lust exercise a major influence within the human community. Whole societies can become corrupt. The over emphasis on individualism by religions, economics and politics in the past has largely destroyed the sense of community which is basic to successful human life. In this spiritual wasteland all the evils of corruption, exploitation, crime, economic systems which make people poor, and the social roots of criminality, flourish. The Manifesto recognizes this and commits itself to support not simply individual goodness, but a social contract to transform our communities.

5. **A People's Contract.**

The political thrust of the Manifesto recognizes the necessity of a broad social response. The achievement of a better life for ALL is the only way to a better life for ME. The Good Life does not happen by retreating to a remote private world, but in a social contract for a morally regenerated community. The transformation of South Africa cannot be achieved by saying it must be done by the Government, or Religions, or Business, or the Unions, or Women, or the Youth, or the Men: it needs a contract between all of us to make the Good Life happen

6. The Manifesto picks up the common political threads and social objectives which mark the path of all religious teaching, with practical policies built on the priorities of the prophets. The 'Better Life for All' means food, housing, water, services and concern for the poor which all the holy teachings commend. "Removing discrimination", "social grants", "combining resources", and the quest of "a society that truly cares" are political statements which turn spiritual calls into practice.

It means we shall:-

- Put work for all in front of profit for some.
 - Practice people power by encouraging everyone to take part in local wards and government.
 - Rediscover Volunteerism: the spirit of personal commitment which brought us Liberation from apartheid and will also bring us the Transformation of our society.
 - Government will help in every department, expand Public Works Programmes, and Land reform, and review the Public Services.
 - We shall promote Moral Regeneration in all sectors of society.
 - And are committed to work towards these progressive developments throughout Africa.
7. The Manifesto thus strikes deep chords in the theological community. It raises major questions about human life systems, ownership, and ubuntu which do not limit faith to saving souls or life after death.

It means taking practical steps towards:

- A growing economy
- A Sustainable livelihood
- Access to services
- Comprehensive Social Security
- Tackling crime and corruption
- Constitutional rights and governance.

8. The Manifesto also recognizes that we can only achieve our objectives by working in harmony with Africa and the world.

9. So the struggle continues

- All of these objectives have deep spiritual roots. They are positive tasks which religions and politics can work together to achieve.
- The ANC is a Parliament of the People, a 'broad church', and all groups are represented within it, including all religious groups. Freedom makes room for widespread differences of opinion, and enables a commitment to mediate, to agree the broad thrust of our quest for a better life for all.
- Within the ANC membership, and in the relationship between the ANC and religious bodies we respect and celebrate our diversity, and commit ourselves to live in peace and harmony. Our points of agreement are far greater than anything else.
- The quest for a community that believes in goodness and the triumph of goodness; in putting need before greed.
- The quest for a community that enjoys and experiences the freedom of the Constitution.

Let us achieve these aims together!

We conclude by remembering the words of former President Nelson Mandela to the Religious Leaders:

The ANC says: 'YES!'

The transformation of our country requires the greatest possible cooperation between religious and political bodies, critically and wisely serving our country together. Neither political nor religious objectives can be achieved in isolation. They are held in a creative tension with common commitments. We are partners in the building of our society.

The ANC says: 'YES!'

Our people belong to different political parties and religions, and some with strong ethical and moral values have no formal political or religious ties. Yet all of us have strong beliefs...on points on which we do agree.

The ANC says: 'YES!'

Is there a form of cooperation between religion and politics which does not compromise independence, but combines our forces to the maximum to improve the quality of life of all our people?

The ANC says: 'YES!'

**African National Congress
Commission for Religious Affairs
Chairperson: Fr. S. Mkhathshwa
National Coordinator: Rev Cedric Mayson
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT ILRS CONGRESS 1 July 2006 • Oslo, Norway

The Executive Committee/EC was elected in Lucerne, Switzerland in June 2003. Pär Axel Sahlberg (Sweden) became the President, and Harry Watson (Britain) and Iréne Häberle (Switzerland) were elected as Vice Presidents. Andrew Hammer (US) was elected as Secretary General, and Johan van Workum (Netherlands) was elected as Treasurer. The members elected to the Committee were Bev Thomas (Britain), Marianne Uri Overland (Norway), Tapio Lampinen (Finland), and Alois Reisenbichler (Austria). Substitute members elected were Ricardo Aguado (Spain), Gyula Hegyi (Hungary), Judy Deutsch (US) and Ona Kupriene (Lithuania).

EC meetings

The Committee meets once a year. In between the EC meetings the Steering Committee is responsible for any business related to the ILRS. The Steering Committee is constituted by the President, at least one of the two vice Presidents, and the Secretary General. The Steering Committee has not met during this period between congresses.

2004

The first EC meeting was held in London in January 2004, hosted by our comrades from the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM). The President proposed a Work Plan for the period from 2003-2006, and after discussion and adjustments it was approved and was communicated to the Member Organisations (MOs). In future the working method of the ILRS will be that EC proposes a Work Plan for the period between congresses and the Congress will discuss and approve it as a steering document for the EC. In the London meeting we also had to elect a new Vice President. Harry Watson had resigned due to illness, and passed away in March of that year. The EC selected Bev Thomas to continue in Harry's place. We greatly admired the work of Harry in the ILRS, in the Christian Socialist Movement, and as a mayor and councillor in Norwich. With great respect for our former Vice President we committed ourselves to continue his work. The President had just arrived from a trip together with Thomas Brundin to our MOs in South Africa and the Dominican Republic and gave a report from their journey.

2005

The second EC meeting was held in Bilbao, Euskadi, Spain in January 2005. Cristianos en el PSOE were our local hosts, represented by Ricardo Aguado, Carlos Garcia de Andoín, and Angel Martinez. We had the opportunity to meet with some of the regional members of our Spanish member organisation, as well as party leaders in the Socialist Party of the Basque Country. We recalled the challenges from our Work Plan and started the planning for a revision of our Constitution and other issues for the Oslo Congress in 2006. The Secretary General and the President also reported from their visit to Bilbao in November of 2004 for the tenth anniversary celebration of the Basque organisation, where the Cristianos en el PSOE received official recognition from the PSOE, as well as the creation of a position within the party to allow for organisation of the group through the party at the national level.

2006

The third meeting was held in Oslo, Norway and Kristne Arbeidere was our local host. We met with Jan Rudy Kristensen, the president of the organisation, María Hevzy, and Helge Kolstad. The main thing on the agenda was the planning for the Congress in June. We evaluated the Work Plan and found out that some of the proposed issues were being worked on, and some were still in the process of development. A new Work Plan was proposed to the Congress and a revision of the Constitution presented according to the preliminary debate in Lucerne. A report on Political Handicraft and on Interfaith work was approved and will go the Congress as a basis for discussions and ongoing work. These projects are not meant to result in specific decisions from the Congress, but used as a tool for the MOs own national work. Former ILRS President Evert Svensson was present on the second day of the meeting, and he handed over a lot of material which will be sent to an archive in the Netherlands and stored there with some older material concerning the history of the ILRS.

Planning for the Congress was done and the Secretary General and the Norwegian MO got our mandate to see to the final and detailed planning. At this meeting we also received the sad news that Iréne Häberle, our Vice President from our Swiss MO, had passed away in December. In respect for her work in her MO and in ILRS we are thankful for her work in preparing for our 2003 Congress in Lucerne and her good efforts in our common mission. During this Congress period we have lost two Vice Presidents.

Representations

During this period the President and the Secretary General have attended the Councils and Congresses of the Socialist International in São Paulo - Brazil, Madrid – Spain, Johannesburg – South Africa, Tel Aviv/Ramallah – Israel/Palestine, and in Athens – Greece. In Greece the Secretary General went alone; in Madrid our Spanish comrades joined our delegation (Carlos Garcia de Andoín and Ricardo Aguado); in South Africa Cedric Mayson from our MO CRA joined our delegation.

At every meeting we have taken the opportunity to make contacts for the ILRS, and in Johannesburg we gave a speech on faith and politics which was well received. The links between the SI and the ILRS were especially useful in Brazil with the PT, which has a religious department within the party. Later that year, the President was in São Paulo again for another occasion and from that an interesting contact was made with Geter Borges of the Progressive Evangelical Movement. In Madrid we were involved in an attempt to get the approval for the work of our Basque MO but that was not successful until later when we had the meeting in Bilbao 2004, November. In Israel/Palestine we improved our relation to both sides and got from that some promising relations which we hope can develop to a strong link to Middle East. More details are available in the report from the Secretary General to the Congress.

*June 2006
Stockholm*

*Pär Axel Sahlberg
President, ILRS*

for the Executive Committee of the International League of Religious Socialists

Proposals on the financial rules of the ILRS

FROM:

Executive Committee (Treasurer)

TO: Representatives Assembly Oslo 2006

Up to today the ILRS does not have official financial rules, other than what is said in the Constitution (new version) in §3 about fees and §4 about the agenda for the Congress. But during the years, a number of fixed habits and practical rules have been developed within the practice of the Executive Committee. You find them below in the document "Financial Rules ILRS".

Two points are new in these rules.

The Executive Committee asks the explicit approval of the Executive Committee for these points. You find them in the document in yellow or grey (on a black-and-white printer).

Proposal 1: to fix the membership fee in Euro in stead of US Dollars

The ILRS has always had a fee in US Dollars. Since the Helsinki Congress in 1997 the fee is \$200. But almost half of the members now have Euro. Also the ILRS account itself is in Euro. The Executive Committee proposes to change the currency for the fee from US Dollars in Euro. It looks as if it is a fee rise. But that is only appearance. Members who use Euro themselves, saw a many years long decreasing of the fee, because it got less and less while the Dollar weakened against the Euro. Also against other European currencies, the Dollar weakened. (For some years after the introduction of the Euro, the US Dollar was much stronger tghan the Euro.)

For the ILRS it meant that the value of the fee incomes became less, because many of the expenditures of the ILRS are made in Europe.

In fixing now the fee on 200 Euro, we go more or less back to the situation of 1997. And we enjoy the practical advantage of a fee in the currency of many of our members.

Proposal 2: rules on 'poor' branches with fee problems

One of the old practical rules was that financially week small branches could pay a 'symbolic' fee of \$20 only. This unwritten rule gave discussions with some members during the last years. The Executive Committee is in need of more specific en more clear rules for those situations, with more choice than either 200 of 20 Dollar.

You find these rules in the yellow (or grey) lines in the document "Financial Rules ILRS".

One line is that in principle a reduced fee should not be possible for members in 'rich' countries like West Europe or North America. Another line is that a lower fee is not forever. Every three years it has to be reconsidered and to be decided upon by the Congress (Representatives Assembly). A third line is that the Executive Committee (Treasurer) can make a deal with members which get in financial weakness and in arrears in paying the fee, to clear up the arrears.

Regarding the other points in the document "Financial Rules ILRS", which are standing practice at the moment, the Executive Committee asks you to reconfirm them.

*Johan van Workum,
Treasurer
(May 2006)*

Financial Rules ILRS

(When the proposals in yellow c.q. grey are accepted by the 2006 Representatives Assembly in Oslo.)

A. General

ILRS is financially a low budget organisation. Expenditures for meetings and activities are as much as possible paid by the member organisations (MOs or ‘branches’).

Exceptions:

1. Expenditures of the Secretary General (SG) for travelling, accommodation or otherwise are paid by ILRS on condition that the treasurer agreed with the expenditure beforehand. In case of disagreement, the President or the whole Steering Committee will be consulted.
2. EC members should get their costs of travelling and accommodation for EC meetings refunded from their own MO. When a MO has financial problems with this, the Treasurer can give some support. No MO should hesitate for bringing forward own candidates for the EC, only because of the financial consequences of EC meetings.
3. Occasionally the treasurer can make an exception for special activities or travelling for a EC member. The procedure in these cases is the same as for the SG.

B. Fee

ILRS has members organisations (MOs), observer organisations and other contacts. Only MOs pay a fee and only MOs have voting right in the Representatives Assembly.

1. The standard fee is 200 Euro per year.
2. Only the triennial Congress (Representatives Assembly) can decide on the height of the fee.
3. A MO which fails to pay the fee in time, will not have voting right in the Congress and will not get the Congress invitation for MOs and other Congress documents for the MOs.
- 4.a When a MO has problems and gets in arrears, the Treasurer in consultation with the Secretary General can negotiate on a deal. The Treasurer informs the EC members about the result of the deal. If after three weeks no EC member has made objections, the Treasurer can make the deal definitive. If any EC member has objections, the matter has to be discussed in the EC, which will make the decision.
- 4.b Part of the deal can be that the MO also pays for the current year a lower fee.
- 4.c The Treasurer can only deal on reduced fees over the past and/or the current year. When a MO asks for a reduced fee for a longer period, the EC has to decide in her annual meeting. The EC can decide only for one year at a time and only until the next Congress. When a MO still asks for a reduced fee, the Congress has to decide on a recommendation of the EC.
- 4.d The Congress can give the ‘reduced fee status’ for a maximum of three years (one triennial period) at a time to MOs in poor countries which have for a longer period problems with paying the normal fee. The 'reduced fee status' is not available for MOs from West Europe or USA.
- 4.e MOs which have cleared off the fee arrears, are restored as MO in its full membership without delay.
5. For specific activities or projects ILRS can ask some or all MOs for a ‘support fee’.

C. Expenditures EC meetings

1. Costs of accommodation and travelling:
 - a. In general, the ILRS does not pay the travel costs of members of the Executive Committee. The branch organisation that has a member in the EC, is supposed to pay these costs. Therefore, EC members pay for their travel and their hotel. Their branch should refund them.
 - b. EC members pay themselves for their meals (and get it back from their branch), unless the host branch offers a meal, a reception or whatever.

2. Exceptions for travelling and accommodation:
 - a. the SG;
 - b. EC-members from branches who are too poor to pay for their travelling.
3. Costs of meeting facilities:
 - a. The 'host branch' offers meeting facilities and does some organising work (hotel reservations if necessary, tourist trips, restaurant reservations).
 - b. If this is not possible, the treasurer pays, on condition of prior consultation by the organiser who does the bookings for meeting facilities.

D. Expenditures Congresses

1. The triennial congresses are organised by a host branch for the practical arrangements. The low budget principle means that the host branch does the organising work itself as much as possible, in order to keep the out of pocket expenditures low. The host branch uses as much as possible its own meeting rooms, facilities. It also uses as much as possible their own people for services (administration, booking, photocopies, e-mailing, registration, organisation, translations etc.).
2. The EC determines beforehand a maximum amount the ILRS can spend. This is a guarantee amount for the organiser (the organising host branch) if they need it partly or completely.
3. The guarantee amount of ILRS is in general only for out of pocket expenditures of the organiser, and not for salary of hired employees.
4. The organiser and the Treasurer are in regular contact about the financial developments concerning the Congress.
The Treasurer has to approve the draft budget of the organiser.
The organiser informs the Treasurer about the main financial commitments beforehand.
The organiser in general pays the bills, unless the relevant commitment was made by the Treasurer.
5. The organiser, with approval of the EC, can ask a participant's fee.
6. Every branch pays in principle for its own delegates (travelling, accommodation, meals, fee).
Only for branches who ask for it with good financial reasons, the ILRS can pay accommodation, meals and congress fee for one delegate. This is up to the Treasurer to decide after consulting the SG.
If travelling costs prevent a branch to send even one delegate, the ILRS can also (partly) pay travelling costs. This is up to the Treasurer to decide after consulting the SG.
The money for these expenditures for 'poor' branches comes out of the ILRS maximum guarantee budget for the Congress.
7. The ILRS and/or the organiser can try to raise subsidies or external funding.