

# Trade Unions, Employers' Associations and Protection of the Environment

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AT THE REQUEST of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and with its financial support, the International Labour Office recently carried out an inquiry into the position adopted by the social partners on a subject of topical concern in the modern world: the preservation of the human environment.<sup>2</sup> A questionnaire was sent out with a view to gaining some insight into the attitudes and activities of trade unions and employers' associations in this field and to ascertaining their views on various social and economic problems related to it. In the course of 1974 replies were received from some 50 such organisations in both industrialised and developing countries in Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa, the Near East and Asia. The data collected should enable an objective evaluation to be made of the role these organisations can play in the drawing up and application of any future environmental protection programme and the extent to which they can contribute to its success.

The preoccupation of workers' and employers' organisations with improving the quality of life is by no means a recent phenomenon, as can be seen from the concern they have always shown for such problems as housing, urbanisation, education and leisure. In many ways, therefore, protection of the environment is for them no more than an extension of long-standing activities. What is different is that they can now take an over-all view of the condition of working people, a view which recognises that the workplace is only one part of the larger environment.

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Office.

<sup>2</sup> At its most recent session in June 1975 the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution calling on the ILO to undertake a coherent programme of action concerning the environment, with the collaboration and support of UNEP. Mr. Maurice Strong, Executive Director of UNEP, addressed the session and underlined the important role of the ILO in the environmental field. See "The 60th Session of the International Labour Conference, June 1975", in *International Labour Review*, Oct. 1975, pp. 247 and 249. The views expressed in the present article are not necessarily shared by UNEP.

## **Attitudes**

### **The employers: "social responsibility"**

Public discussion on the environment has accentuated the recent tendency of industry to acknowledge a responsibility towards society as a whole over and above that arising from its functions of production and exchange, and to abandon its former attitude of regarding social values as peripheral. This is partly a defensive reaction to the insistent attacks made on industrial civilisation and partly an indication of deep-seated confidence in its ability to innovate and adapt. The change has been accompanied by a desire to see laws and regulations for the protection of the environment implemented in a gradual and coherent manner, and by a growing awareness of the development potential of a new market. These attitudes bear witness to the essentially technical, even pragmatic approach of the employers' organisations, which nevertheless are ready to assume a new social responsibility finding expression in such declarations as the following: "... in accordance with sound economic principles, private enterprise recognises its responsibility to produce goods and to use production processes which have the least harmful impact on [the] environment".<sup>1</sup>

The "ecological conscience" of business firms should not be exaggerated, however. Their way of looking at economic constraints, together with habits imposed on them by the market or the national development plan, traditionally leads them to "externalise" costs. Thus many employers' associations emphasise the role of the public authorities, arguing that they alone can create a market with equal conditions of competition, and while this certainly implies recognition of the importance of political decisions it can also be construed as an attempt to shuffle off responsibility on to others.

### **The trade unions: quality of life**

Trade union interest in the working environment was bound to lead eventually to a more far-reaching demand for improvement of the quality of life in general, or rather to a more concrete formulation of this demand taking account of the long-standing efforts made by the unions in fields of broader concern to the workers. The close relationship between the working and the general environments makes it possible to reconcile trade union demands within the enterprise with those for a better quality of life, which in theory is external to it. One national trade union centre<sup>2</sup>, after emphasising the unity of the working and general

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<sup>1</sup> International Chamber of Commerce, 23rd Congress, Vienna, 17-24 April 1971: *Technology and society: a challenge to private enterprise*. Statements and conclusions on the Congress theme (Paris, 1971), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> The (federal) German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB).

environments, declares that by using their extended co-determination rights workers can exert some influence over the threats posed by their factories to the general environment. Hence it is thanks to this unitary and integrated concept of the environment that the two current goals of workers' participation in management and improving their quality of life are now associated.

In one form or another this subject has figured on the agenda of trade union congresses for some years, and unions have had an opportunity to reflect on what their commitment to environmental protection really means. It involves a major extension of their functions and may thus call for a reorientation of policies that have been followed up to now inasmuch as the demand for a better quality of life seems to imply various changes in trade union methods and, in particular, more interest in long-term issues.<sup>1</sup> Apart from highlighting the question of the evolution of the trade union movement, the emphasis that has been laid on this goal indicates that the environment is everywhere becoming an issue of concern to the trade unions, and one to which a policy response has not been lacking.

### **Activities**

The activities of trade unions and employers' associations in this field may be said to fall under three main headings, namely technical problems and research, the information and education of their members and the public, and contacts with the public authorities in order to inform and influence their standard-setting activities. Many of these organisations have established special machinery which is responsible for keeping track of developments in the environmental field and formulating appropriate policies, as well as providing facilities for meetings, discussions and the taking of decisions.

### **Technical problems and research**

More and more enterprises are increasing their outlay on environmental research. The same trend is to be found among the employers' associations, which help to evaluate the experience gained in this sphere. They have done important work on a variety of subjects in several different sectors, frequently in co-operation with the public authorities. As for the trade unions, their knowledge of industrial techniques makes their assistance indispensable in selecting suitable fields of research. They insist that the results should be made available to society at large and that the focus should not be purely technical but take account of socio-economic and political considerations as well; in other words they are

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<sup>1</sup> See B. C. Roberts: *Trade unions in the affluent society*, 4. Internationale Arbeitstagung der Industriegewerkschaft Metall, "Aufgabe Zukunft: Verbesserung der Lebensqualität", Oberhausen, 11-14 April 1972.

concerned on the one hand to compel industry to develop its research and on the other to ensure that the findings are made public property.

### **Information and education**

Both unions and employers' associations promote their chosen environmental objectives among their members and the general public through information campaigns, publications, symposia and training courses.<sup>1</sup> Whereas on the union side these activities are chiefly concerned with bread-and-butter issues and with conveying essential information to active trade unionists and the rank and file, on the employers' side they tend to have a more technical bias.

### **Relations with public authorities**

Co-operation between the public authorities and the social partners is of great importance in the planning and implementation of protective measures. Sometimes this is organised on an informal basis by means of agreements with the administration; in particular, the employers' associations often mediate between the authorities and their members, as in the Netherlands. Elsewhere it takes place within the framework of officially recognised bodies. In Mexico, for example, it was a national tripartite commission that drew up the standards for water and atmospheric pollution. Industry is frequently consulted by the authorities in the drafting of legislation and associated with its application—as are the trade unions on occasion, though their major influence on legislation is exerted through the demands they formulate. In the German Democratic Republic the national trade union centre is represented on the Advisory Council for the Environment, while in Poland and the USSR, for example, the unions help to supervise the application of protective measures.

### **Ecology and direct action**

Among the weapons that have been used by workers against environmentally destructive industrial practices are boycotts, strikes and various forms of protest action. In Australia the building workers' union has resorted to what are known as "greenbans" (strikes accompanied in some cases by sit-ins) to emphasise its refusal to carry out work considered harmful to the community. The Japanese seamen's union affiliated to Domei has decided to boycott the ships of companies which fail to observe pollution control measures. However, the structure of the trade union movement in Japan militates against any major extension of

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<sup>1</sup> The Soviet trade unions, for example, report numerous activities in this field: exhibitions, lectures, publications, films, competitions, discussion groups, etc.

this type of action and compromises the policy of the various confederations. The existence of enterprise unions obviously encourages each one to defend the interests of "its" factory and it is not unknown, for example at Minamata, for the house union and the parent organisation to take up opposite positions.

In general, however, it can be said that in spite of the obstacles militant action of the sort described above has spread, with the result that its instigators have sometimes been accused of blackmail. Nevertheless, it has spurred on the search for negotiated solutions.<sup>1</sup>

### **The outlook for consultation and negotiation**

The interdependence of the working and general environments is an initial argument in favour of regulating the matter in collective agreements. Thus the German trade union centre DGB is of the opinion that collective bargaining provides workers and their unions with an opportunity "to exert a decisive influence on the working environment, and through this to further the interests" of the community outside the workplace. This appears to envisage something akin to the agreements between the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) and the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), which originally dealt solely with workplace issues but have now been extended in many cases to cover general environmental problems.

As we shall see, another possibility for collective bargaining to play a part in this field relates to the effect of environmental protection measures on employment. Recourse to collective bargaining is in any case becoming more frequent in this connection, a trend that has been greeted with satisfaction at least as far as the workers are concerned.<sup>2</sup> Unions are asking that "the struggle against pollution should be placed on the bargaining agenda... [since] collective agreements should also reflect this growing preoccupation with the quality of the human environment".<sup>3</sup> Nor are they seeking this inclusion solely in terms of working conditions or the impact on employment: their intention is to compel industry to accept its responsibility for eliminating the pollution and wastes engendered by production.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Direct action in the field of working conditions should also be taken into account in this connection in view of the improvements it can lead to in the general environment.

<sup>2</sup> See United Nations: *Symposium on the impact of urbanization on man's environment*, sponsored by the United Nations in co-operation with the International Trade Union of the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), 13-20 June 1970 (New York, United Nations, 1971; doc. ST/TAO/SER.C/130), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Trade Unions International of Chemical, Oil and Allied Workers: *Etude des problèmes concernant l'hygiène du travail à l'entreprise et la pollution de l'environnement humain par les entreprises chimiques*, Working document, 22nd Session of the Administrative Committee, Prague, 23-25 May 1972, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution adopted by the UAW at its Congress, 20-25 April 1970.

Bargaining has already been successfully used for this purpose; provisions have been included in agreements whereby the parties recognise that the fight against pollution is the responsibility of the enterprise. One such agreement signed in Canada at enterprise level set up a joint management-union Environmental Protection Committee with the ecological education of employees among its objectives.<sup>1</sup> In a field where the possible economic consequences are so manifold such experiments are still far from common, but it would seem that things are now moving. The materialisation of these possibilities would signify a new extension and enrichment of the social function of collective bargaining.

Thus it seems that proper use of a country's industrial relations system should lead to good results. Full advantage should also be taken of institutionalised forms of workers' participation such as works councils. But although it is desirable to let the social partners come to terms about these matters, the primordial role of legislation must not be forgotten. In this respect consultation procedures can render excellent service, as the organisations concerned are the first to agree. Their essential role in the legislative process should therefore be recognised, and contacts with the authorities and the legislature should be encouraged and systematised.

### **The consequences of protective measures**

Decisions concerning the environment raise a number of fundamental problems directly affecting the interests of employers and trade unions. The debate this provokes centres on two main themes, namely the allocation of the cost of protective measures and their effect on employment, thus bringing to light a possible incompatibility between economic growth and preservation of the environment.

#### **Costs**

It has become a commonplace to observe that allocating the cost of environmental protection measures presents a difficult economic and social problem. Political decisions are needed too, since this is a question involving the distribution of the national income, and hence considerations of social justice. Each of the parties concerned—the public authorities, the taxpayer, industry, the workers and the consumer—is expected to carry a share of the burden, the size of which however is in dispute. The government assumes the political and standard-setting role, and may also help with implementation. The trade unions, in their capacity as

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<sup>1</sup> For the contents of this agreement see "Environmental protection program by agreement at Canadian pulp mill", in *Collective bargaining negotiations and contracts—current bargaining issues* (Washington, Bureau of National Affairs), No. 16:945, 1971.

spokesmen of the workers, also represent the taxpayer and the consumer. Industry, for its part, is symbolic of the economic system as a whole.

Clearly, a charge on one economic agent will often have repercussions on others but, for our purposes, determining who is to foot the bill amounts to finding the "first payer" without necessarily examining every link in the chain. It is up to the authorities to judge the extent to which these charges should be passed on and to foresee all the repercussions of the method of financing chosen. In particular, the "polluter pays" principle<sup>1</sup> cannot be reduced to a simple taxation formula in view of the political and social consequences involved; in some cases it may prove a happier solution to use public funds to assist enterprises in combating pollution. As a rule it seems that trade unions and employers' associations prefer a combination of the two approaches: they accept or call for the application of the "polluter pays" principle as the general norm, while envisaging subsidies for enterprises which are unable to bear the total cost themselves. However, everything depends on their respective interpretations of the principle. While the employers emphasise the need for solidarity in the fight against pollution, which in their view is a "collective" phenomenon, the unions insist on the intrinsic responsibility of industry, which they do not wish to see passed on to the workers. Industry in turn rejects the role of scapegoat.

#### THE EMPLOYERS' POINT OF VIEW

The employers' organisations agree in general that the "polluter pays" principle constitutes an acceptable basis for the allocation of costs. However, three considerations must be taken into account. First, certain industries or enterprises, generally small or medium-sized ones, may be unable to bear the entire cost of the measures required. In this case public assistance is needed, so that the principle of responsibility is in a sense weakened. "The introduction of environmental protection measures should not endanger the social or economic goals of a country or a region", as the Federation of Belgian Enterprises has put it. Second, there is the question of *how* costs are to be shared, in other words what practical form the responsibility principle is to be given. The Confederation of British Industry, for example, is opposed to a system of taxation for this purpose and prefers what it considers a more efficient, pragmatic approach whereby each company should implement the regulations by whatever means it considers most appropriate to the circumstances. Third, industry's own view of the real nature of the final cost burden must be kept in mind. The National Council of French Employers (CNPF) would appear to express an opinion representative of most employers' associations in stating that "this is a collective charge

<sup>1</sup> See OECD: *The polluter pays principle*. Definition, analysis, implementation (Paris, 1975).

related to consumption as well as to production; [it] should therefore be borne as such, and not imposed on industry alone".<sup>1</sup>

#### THE TRADE UNION POINT OF VIEW

Not all trade unions see eye to eye with this type of reasoning, however; some dismiss it as the sort of ideological camouflage that is "indispensable [in order] to disguise true responsibilities and attempt to turn a social problem into an individual one"<sup>2</sup>, and as a philosophy admirably suited to the economic exploitation of the new anti-pollution markets. Others, without making any explicit accusations, also affirm "the primary responsibility of industry".<sup>3</sup>

Many unions regard application of the "polluter pays" principle as desirable, but some nevertheless express reservations. Among the latter is the AFL-CIO, for whom "the solution is not a special tax on polluters" which would merely amount to "a licence to pollute, paid by the consumer". However, the unions are well placed to ensure that the cost of environmental protection is not used as a pretext for undue price rises designed to recover the entire outlay from the consumer. The German DGB, for example, is demanding that workers' representatives should be entitled to inspect company books relating to pollution control; this should be practicable with the extension of co-determination rights. Many unions are favourable to the provision of technical or financial assistance by the public authorities to enterprises that might be embarrassed by these extra costs.

Thus, although there appears to be a widespread consensus in favour of the "polluter pays" principle, accompanied where necessary by palliatives such as financial aid and fiscal incentives, the conflict of interests is not to be underestimated, since the same technical options lead the various parties to draw different and in some cases conflicting policy conclusions. Moreover there exist differences of opinion regarding the practical measures to be taken. In spite of everything, however, there remains a sufficient measure of agreement for discussion to take place on the most urgent aspect of the problem, namely the introduction of effective means of protection at a cost acceptable to the population.

#### **Environmental protection and employment**

In addition to its impact on production, prices and the structure of the economy, environmental protection has direct social repercussions in

<sup>1</sup> From the address of the Vice-President of the CNPF responsible for general economic policy at the Annual General Meeting, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Report by J. Laot in EEC Commission: *Implications of environmental measures for industrial development and the siting of enterprises*, Report No. 6, Conference "Industry and society in the European Community", Venice, 1972 (Luxembourg, 1972), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Arab Federation of Petroleum, Mines and Chemical Workers.



the form of changes in the structure and even the level of employment. The closure of businesses making insufficient profit to bear the cost of alterations, or even of modern factories that are outmoded by some new regulation or condemned by the community, the abandonment of some labour-intensive activity—all these are cases where the repercussions on employment can be only too real. At the same time the creation of new employment is threatened, for example in firms which owing to the nature of their output are handicapped by uncertainty regarding future environmental protection measures.

#### EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES

Employers evaluate the risks for employment in diverse fashion. Some consider that everything depends on government policy, particularly on such factors as the severity of the standards imposed, the time allowed for their implementation, the level of financial and fiscal assistance enterprises are granted, and the extent to which the conditions of international competition are equalised. Others, who as a matter of principle refuse to give environmental matters priority over others considered just as important, naturally argue that employment should not be sacrificed to them. Such employers view with distrust measures which, by their excessive and pointless severity, are likely to discourage or even prevent the creation of new jobs. Others again, while not underestimating the potential gravity of the problem, think that the necessary adjustments may be no more terrible in their effects than the problems involved in technological progress and can be dealt with in the same way. Indeed, it is often old plant which poses the stark alternative of shutting it down or continuing to pollute; in such cases the cost of adaptation is prohibitive, and the plant may anyway be on its last legs. On the other hand it is argued that the growth of "the environment industry" and the supervisory and manning functions it implies should lead to new job opportunities.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF TRADE UNION ATTITUDES

The apparent identity of interest between employers and trade unions in the matter of employment, which is especially noticeable in countries where enterprise unions are the rule and can form a real obstacle to progress in the environmental field, is giving way to a better understanding of the question. Workers are becoming increasingly aware that many threats of closure or redundancy are without foundation in fact. In addition, the trade unions, or at least some of them, have already noted the benefits which the new regulations have brought their members in the form of modernised plant, new and more viable factories offering higher wages and, as a corollary, greater security of employment.

One would naturally expect the unions to be particularly vigilant in such a traditional field of activity as that of job security. Apart from their

general attitudes to the matter, however, it is important to note the opinions they have expressed with specific reference to the new ecological imperative. In accordance with the resolutions adopted by its Maritime Trades Department the AFL-CIO, for example, has pronounced itself in favour of a just balance between protection of the environment and protection of employment. In the words of one of these resolutions, "a clean environment and full employment are not incompatible; in fact they can and should go hand in hand". The implementation of a federal programme and a whole series of legislative measures should demonstrate the compatibility of these objectives. Elsewhere, as in Japan, certain unions consider that workers in small and medium-sized enterprises are the ones most likely to be affected, and that "a balanced approach" would include assistance for such firms.

The unions recognise that jobs will necessarily be lost as the regulations become stricter and are better enforced, but they are not prepared to let the losses exceed a certain level or cause such radical changes in the employment structure as to result in devaluation of skills on a massive scale and require a lengthy and problematical process of retraining. Preserving the level of employment almost necessarily implies preserving its structure. Too brutal an environmental policy would immediately run into opposition from the trade unions<sup>1</sup>, the more so because they are now fully awake to what has often been denounced as environmental blackmail but might more accurately be described as employment blackmail. This consists of the employer putting pressure on the workers—and through them on the authorities—by complaining that if forced to apply anti-pollution measures which he claims to be beyond his means he will be obliged to dismiss employees or perhaps shut down entirely. It is difficult to judge the seriousness of the threat without undertaking a thorough study of the situation, and there have been many cases where employers have succeeded in enlisting their personnel in resistance to the application of environmental norms. However, the days when it was easy to use these tactics seem to be over. For one thing the trade unions are refusing to be intimidated by the threat of redundancies and are now themselves exerting pressure for the norms to be observed. For another they are pressing for legislation that would prohibit employers from providing false information about possible job losses. In the United States the 1972 amendments to the federal law on water pollution require prior estimates of the staff reductions, transfers or losses of employment likely to result from the application of anti-pollution standards; workers threatened with redundancy or who have already lost their employment can request an inquiry at which the employer must prove the need for such measures.

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<sup>1</sup> For some recent examples of this kind of difficulty in the Federal Republic of Germany see "Umweltschutz — Gewerkschaften im Zwiespalt", in *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 21 July 1975, p. 27.

PROPOSALS . . .

Even if it is granted that ecological requirements cannot significantly affect the level of employment, the closure of even a single factory remains a serious matter. There have been enough cases where concern for the environment has prevented the creation of employment to make one wonder how this unfortunate conflict can be avoided in future. Trade unions and employers' associations are practically unanimous in their suggestions on this point. In the first place, a reasonable deadline should be allowed for application of the regulations, which must moreover be flexible. Next, enterprises should be given assistance in meeting the extra costs imposed on them. Finally, action in this field should be planned to fit in with some over-all design; for example, protection of the environment should be associated with industrialisation policy and town-and-country planning. Problems have sometimes arisen—and could occur again—where no such precautions have been taken.

. . . AND DEMANDS

The trade unions insist that they should be notified of proposed changes sufficiently far in advance for workers to be retrained and redeployed if necessary. They consider that adequate information should be given to the workers' representatives or the competent bodies, for example the works council, "regarding the consequences of managerial mistakes in decisions on environmental matters".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, at least in the industrialised countries, workers "are not readily prepared to accept losing their jobs as a result of a cutback in production, or closures caused by new technology, mergers, the market situation or simply inefficient management"<sup>2</sup>; and it would seem that redundancy caused by a firm's incapacity to adapt its production to the requirements of environmental protection must be ascribed to faulty management, no doubt of a new kind but open to the same criticisms by workers and trade unions.

In addition to this demand for information, which is of course a general preoccupation of the labour movement, the unions are calling for several specific types of measure designed to minimise the impact of industrial change. These include adaptation indemnities, increased unemployment benefits and retraining programmes. In Japan the trade union centre Sohyo argues that if circumstances lead trade unions to accept relocation of factories there should be agreements guaranteeing job security, the maintenance of qualifications, union control of work organisation at the new site, retraining opportunities and freedom of association. Guaranteed employment and retraining grants imply the use of public funds. The creation of jobs in the public sector—notably in the

<sup>1</sup> See *Umweltprogramm des DGB* (Düsseldorf, DGB-Bundesvorstand, 1974), pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> J. Schregle: "Labour relations in Western Europe: some topical issues", in *International Labour Review*, Jan. 1974, p. 19.

environmental field—and the multiplier effect of investment should make it possible to absorb any redundancy, while “the negotiation of change”<sup>1</sup> would find new applications.

Since the unions are not prepared “to accept a definition of the environment and of pollution that [does] not include unemployment”<sup>2</sup> and the consequential need for manpower adjustments, these problems have to form part and parcel of environmental policy if they are not to hinder the attainment of its basic goals. The social partners have already found ways of mastering the consequences of change due to technological progress, and there is no reason why these solutions should not be applied to change arising from the pursuit of ecological objectives. The current trade union campaign for security of employment may bear fruit here provided that, as both sides appear to wish, full use is made of existing negotiating machinery backed up by appropriate far-sighted legislation.

### **Protection of the environment and development**

In their capacity as partners in the production process, trade unions and employers' associations can make an essential contribution to ensuring that economic and social development takes due account of environmental considerations. On the whole they agree that development is not incompatible with protection of the environment—or more often that it need not and should not be incompatible. Both sides utterly reject destructive *laissez-faire* and the doctrine of zero growth, feeling that if success in preserving the environment presupposes the maintenance of economic expansion, the latter equally cannot accommodate the continuing degradation of natural surroundings. From this point on, however, their views diverge.

#### **GENERAL ATTITUDES**

In general, employers' associations see the environment as one of the elements of industrial growth. Some consider that growth cannot properly be defined without reference to so important a factor, or declare that “the two objectives are complementary and should be integrated”.<sup>3</sup>

Many trade union organisations are of a similar opinion. Care should be taken, they believe, to ensure that the social cost of material progress does not exceed its benefits, but they denounce the apostles of

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<sup>1</sup> See J.-D. Reynaud: “Industrial relations and the negotiation of change”, in *IILS Bulletin* (Geneva, International Institute for Labour Studies), 1972, No. 9.

<sup>2</sup> N. Willis (Transport and General Workers' Union) in *Workers and the environment*, Report of a TUC conference held at Congress House on July 6 1972 (London, Trades Union Congress, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Federation of Belgian Enterprises.

zero growth as unrealistic. There can be no doubt that, aided and abetted by the widespread indifference of the public and of the firms themselves, industrial expansion has helped to endanger the environment. Nevertheless, "a clean environment and the maintenance of . . . economic growth are *not* mutually exclusive goals".<sup>1</sup> The point is not to presuppose some imaginary incompatibility but to identify real needs and determine how to satisfy them while continuing to promote economic progress. For these reasons the unions would like to see in-depth studies of the effects of economic growth on the environment (and vice versa) and policies designed to reconcile the two.

There is fairly general agreement that in the long run there is no intrinsic conflict between economic and social development on the one hand—provided it is properly planned—and protection of the human environment on the other, though it goes without saying that everybody does not understand the same thing by the word "planned". However, everyone is agreed that it implies at least a degree of forecasting sufficient to minimise whatever contradictions may arise in the short run.

All these attitudes stem from a "reformist" approach oriented towards the gradual establishment of an equilibrium, a sort of refinement of growth. A more radical attitude is to advocate growth and development of a different sort. The proponents of this view do not deny the necessity of growth as such, but since the environment is for them a social and political problem, the crux of the matter is "the very pattern of industrial development".<sup>2</sup> This approach calls for a general overhaul of the production apparatus. Here too planning is essential, but its purpose is new, namely to help "produce something different, to produce it in a different way and to distribute it differently".<sup>3</sup> To this way of thinking, protection of the environment only conflicts with the type of development which causes the abuses, whereas in the new system it would be given priority.

Whatever over-all framework they envisage, trade unions and employers' associations are agreed that it is not just a question of choosing between alternatives. The point is rather to prevent conflict arising because major social objectives are poorly defined or ill-adapted to prevailing conditions. This is why they claim the right to take part in the relevant decision-making processes and thereby help to clarify the options in such a way that properly integrated development policies can be applied.

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<sup>1</sup> *Man and his environment: a balanced approach*. A report by AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department, Tenth Constitutional Convention, Bal Harbour, Florida, October 15-16, 1973, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See the extract from the conclusions of a symposium held by the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Organisation of the World Confederation of Labour, Luxembourg, July 1971, cited by Laot, *op. cit.*, pp. 42 and 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Syndicalisme CFDT* (Paris), 25 Apr. 1974, p. 12.

THE SITUATION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

This is moreover the type of policy recommendable for Third World countries, where environmental problems assume the twin form of widespread poverty, imputable to underdevelopment, and pollution similar to that encountered in industrialised countries. The difficulty is therefore felt most acutely, so that the desire to protect the environment "can only reinforce the commitment to development"<sup>1</sup>, as the employers and trade unions in these countries are very well aware.

Employers' associations emphasise the lack of financial resources which makes it impossible for many enterprises to bear a high proportion of the cost of the measures envisaged. These last should be flexible, progressive, and implemented in order of priority. Industry is already facing new obligations, and development projects are beginning to be subject to certain environmental constraints. At the same time it is to be noted that these countries enjoy real advantages when it comes to reorganising production, relocating enterprises or setting up new ones. However, for many trade unions in the Third World, for example in Latin America, "technical" solutions are not enough: they are convinced that what they see as contradictory objectives can only be reconciled by a transformation of the economic system.

Though to varying degrees, trade unions and employers' associations seem to agree that "a sound development strategy can perfectly well include an environmental component, which is also a long-term insurance scheme for society".<sup>2</sup> Where the "reformist" and "revolutionary" approaches clash is over the means of achieving this integration. Nevertheless they all start from the principle formulated by A. Sauvy when he remarked that "you don't make a vehicle change direction by taking the engine out".

**A new theme for unions and employers' associations**

The attitude of employers' associations and trade unions as it emerges from the inquiry testifies to their awareness of environmental problems. The fact that it is also a positive attitude is worthy of note, inasmuch as a similar inquiry carried out a few years ago would certainly not have led to the same conclusion. A swift, deep-seated change has occurred. Denounced by some as a red herring intended to distract attention from the real struggle and by others as a danger to the workers'

<sup>1</sup> See *Development and environment*, Report and working papers of a panel of experts convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Founex, Switzerland, June 4-12, 1971 (Paris and The Hague, Mouton, 1972), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> See I. Sachs: "Development, environment and technology assessment", in *International Social Science Journal* (Paris, UNESCO), 1973, No. 3, p. 278.

vital interests and to the future of growth, the plea for a better environment seemed to have little chance of winning the support of the groups whose interests it was alleged to threaten. In fact, as this new preoccupation became better understood and was related to others such as the degradation of the quality of life and of the working environment, the tables were turned. Employers and unions took up the matter themselves, clarifying their position on the question and providing the necessary foil to the adoption of official policies; political, industrial and labour thinking was enriched by a new and vitalising theme. The next stage must be to improve communication between the public authorities and the workers' and employers' organisations, while at the same time promoting independent activity on the part of the two latter.

We should not of course delude ourselves about the relative importance they attach to this subject. Obviously, they continue to concentrate their day-to-day activities on tackling the traditional economic questions that are of vital concern to their members. Nevertheless, the fundamental preoccupation with bread-and-butter issues has never prevented new, broader issues from securing a hearing. In fact the interest shown by trade unions and employers' associations in environmental matters can be largely explained by an awareness that when people speak of the growth of the national product they take no or very little account of the degradation of living conditions that is affecting both industrialised and developing societies, though in different ways and to different degrees. We also know what social and economic consequences can be ascribed to protection of the environment, and that the problems raised need to be solved by employers and workers in collaboration. Their efforts in this respect are fully in keeping with the determination currently shown by industry and labour to look beyond mere material growth, a trend that is to be seen not only with regard to questions of power and the environment but also in the desire—not paradoxical but parallel—to preserve the standard of living already attained or to improve it wherever it is insufficient.

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