



WLRI Trade Union Seminar Series 2008

Globalisation, Transportation and Labour: Lessons from the European Union

- **Peter Turnbull, Professor of Human Resource Management & Labour Relations, Cardiff University**
- **Roger Sealey, Transport Sector Researcher at Unite**

September 17th 2008: 4.00-6.00pm

European unions, for example, with their traditional roots in the nation state, seem to be particularly disadvantaged by the developing European institutional structure (della Porta and Kries 1999: 19) as key areas of economic policy fall under the growing influence of the supranational state and trans-national capital. Nonetheless, several European industry federations have recently established themselves as a real (supra-national) force to be reckoned with (see Bieler, 2005) and as Tarrow (2005) demonstrates, there is a course that labour can navigate through the waves of globalization and liberalization. Moreover, in a European context the existence of supranational governance institutions, with jurisdiction coterminous with the scope of the capital-labour struggle in question, can provide a decisive advantage for workers in their struggles against trans-national capital. Recent developments in the European transport industry are a case in point (Turnbull, 2006 and 2007). On two occasions (2001-03 and 2004-06) the European Commission sought to introduce a Directive *On Market Access to Port Services* that would give global capital greater access to the market and the right to employ labour of their own choice. On both occasions, the Directive was rejected by the European Parliament following concerted campaigns of industrial and political action organised by European dock workers and coordinated by international trade union federations. As a result, the Commission has changed its strategy and recently launched a year long consultation with the principal stakeholders in the industry, including organised labour. Thus, whereas liberalization appears to have been "an unstoppable tide for labour interests to contend with" (Greenwood, 2003: 149) port workers have (temporarily) stemmed the flow by "shifting scale" (Tarrow and McAdam, 2005) from the national to the international arena, developing a new "repertoire of contention" in the process and exploiting the structure of political opportunities within the EU to decisive effect.

Peter Turnbull is Professor of Human Resource Management & Labour Relations at Cardiff University. He previously held posts at the Universities of Leeds, Warwick, and London School of Economics, as well as a Visiting Professorship at Queen's University (Belfast) and an Australian Bicentennial Fellowship at the University of Melbourne. During 2008 he is also an IAS Distinguished Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies, La Trobe University. Professor Turnbull has published three books, more than fifty academic papers, and numerous research reports for international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). He is currently working as an advisor to the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the European Cockpit Association (ECA).



Room JS2-73: 4.00-6.00pm
London Metropolitan University,
31 Jewry St, London EC3N 2EY

This event is free, open to all, and there is no need to register.

Contact Max Watson in Room JS2-77 for further enquiries:

0207 320 3042 / m.watson@londonmet.ac.uk