

Survey and analysis of basic information on the structure of the labour movement in Thailand

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Introduction

The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, with the support of the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK), has arranged for the preparation of a project to survey basic information and analyse the labour movement in Thailand, for use by the labour movement and other interested people. From the study, they would learn and understand about labour organizations at various levels in Thailand. One point to note at this point is that the Thai labour movement can be considered as one of the smallest and weakest in the world. And even though in Thailand organized labour comprised only about 1.3% of all labour in the country, but the nature of the Thai organized labour movement is one of complexity and difficult to understand. Information is scattered, unclear, unreliable, and contradictory. Most important is that access to the information is difficult. These are the reasons why the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee and the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland have come together to conceive this project in order to provide clear and complete information. The key objective of the survey is to provide all parties concerned with information and data, to assist them in their search for guidelines for improvement and development of the labour movement so that it would become transparent, strong and unified; the goal being to promote efficiency in working for the benefits of our labour brothers and sisters.

For this survey, the survey team collected information from many sources, the most important being from the Ministry of Labour which is the responsible agency for directly registering all labour organizations. At the same time, the team also cross-checked the data and information from other sources as well and, importantly, also requested information directly from the labour organizations themselves to verify the correctness of the information. In the main, good cooperation was received, and we wish to express our appreciation to everyone and every agency for having supported our efforts.

Although the team took some time in checking and verifying the information, there still was much that we were unable to access. Moreover, some of the information collected was contradictory and difficult to reconcile. Thus, if it is found that some of the information presented is not in accord with reality, the team would like to apologize. It is requested that one should view this report as an effort to create a sense of openness and transparency concerning information on the Thai labour movement. The work should be seen as a piece of intellectual property owned by the labour movement in

general. And it is the hope of the team that all concerned parties should see it as a joint task to continually add to the information, modify it for correctness, and make it more complete and accurate.

Finally, the survey team would like to express appreciation for the cooperation given to it by all individuals and organizations, and would like to thank the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK) very much for its support of this project. It is hoped that the report will be useful in the creative development of the Thai labour movement so that it becomes strong, unified, and is efficient in its work to serve fellow workers

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1. A brief history of the Thai labour movement

1.1 The Thai labour movement prior to the change in political regime in 1932

The capitalist system in Thailand entered a period of expansion in Thailand after 1855 when the Thai government entered into agreements with many western countries. But at the time Thais were still tied to a forced labour system or corvee labour, with no freedom to sell their labour freely. Moreover, Thailand was at the stage of entering into the international division of labour system, to function as a rice exporter. And the Thai government then encouraged Thai people to participate, as farmers, in the production of rice for export, with the result being that there emerged a shortage in the labour market. The Thai government subsequently turned to importing Chinese to work as hired workers in the country. Thus, it can be said that Chinese labour was the first generation of hired workers in Thailand, coming into the country complete with their own culture of organizing into groups and associations, something which was not practiced in Thai traditional Thai culture. A secret society called *Ang Yee* or the Chinese Secret Society became widely active in Chinese communities in Thailand, and even though it could not be called a labour union in the traditional sense of the term but very often the *Ang Yee* did engage in the function of fighting to protect the rights and interests of Chinese labourers. For example, many strikes that occurred during these times were organized by the *Ang Yee*. Thus, the Chinese Secret Society was the first form of labour organization in Thailand, and as such provoked much worry among Thai state officials, the result being issuance of a law in 1897 completely forbidding free organization by the people in general. Consequently, all activities aimed at organizing had to be submitted to the state for approval and then registered in the form of association or club, otherwise such activities were deemed as illegal and harshly penalized. In the event, it so happened that not one of the submissions for formal organization was ever approved and registered. It was only until after the change in political regime in 1932 that a tram workers association received approval to register, thus making it the first workers' association to be formally registered.

Chinese labourers formed the majority of hired workers in Thai society for many, many years. Then, in 1949, a new law aimed at blocking or discrimination of Chinese by limiting the immigration of Chinese workers to a

maximum of 200 per year was issued, resulting a gradual decrease in the proportion of Chinese workers in the Thai labour market.

Because the forefathers of hired workers in Thailand happened to be mainly of Chinese descent, the activities of the labour movement was made more difficult than it would have been normally. The problem was the nationality factor and subsequent political restrictions base on it. Chinese labourers were seen as aliens and after the political changes in China, Chinese workers in Thailand were more carefully watched as the Thais feared that Chinese labour would be "the conduit in the carrying of the diseases of republicanism and socialism" which at that time was popular in China. The Thai government, although being of one of the founding member countries of the International Labour Organization or ILO, declined to issue laws to protect the rights of labour as demanded by the ILO, on the grounds that the majority of labour in the country was migrant labour.

The Thai state utilized the idea of "national security" as the overarching framework in formulating its labour policy from the beginning, and the concept remained influential until this day.

The activities of the Thai labour movement in its first stage of development, that is, before the change in political system in 1932 was one of an underground movement, spearheaded by Chinese labourers who formed the majority of hired workers in Thailand. They suffered drastic suppression from the state. After the economic crisis and drought that occurred following World War One, which resulted in huge numbers of farmers abandoning their rice paddy fields to move to urban areas to become hired labourers in factories, we find the proportion of ethnic Thai in the labour market had increased. And the result was more organizing by ethnic Thai hired labourers, to the extent of a "Thai Labourer Committee" being set up and a worker-oriented newspaper being issued as a mouthpiece of the labouring classes. Nevertheless, the Thai labour movement still remained an underground movement under the leadership of workers of Chinese-descent.

1.2 The Thai labour movement and overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932

There is no clear evidence that shows the Thai labour movement participated in the change in political regime engineered by the "People's Party" on 24 June 1932. But there is much evidence to indicate that after the political regime change, the labour movement did play a creative role in building up the democratic system of rule by commoners, and was an important force in the political fight to protect the constitutional regime and defend it against an attempted rebellion by monarchist forces in October 1933.

The result of the political change of 1932 was that workers gained more rights and freedom. The idea of organizing which was rejected and in

principle forbidden under the absolute system of government became accepted and deemed as legal. The new government acceded to the idea of registration of worker's association. The Siam Association of Tram Workers was the first formal labour organization in Thailand and was duly registered on August 1932. Thus, the labour movement which had previously been underground now was able and did engage in over ground activities openly and publically. The relationship between the leader of the worker's movement, Mr. Tawat Rittidej, and the left-wing leader of the country's ruling People's Party, Mr. Pridi Panomyong, was one of the factors responsible for the labour movement's growth at the time. Not only was there a flowering of worker's associations in various occupations then, but such associations did coalesce into a prominent national organization called the "Association to Aid Workers"(Samakom Anukulkrammakorn). And membership of the labour movements was not just limited to workers in factories or employees only, but also included those working as self-employed such as rickshaw labourers, independent craftsmen, and also included the unemployed of which there were many at the time. These were absorbed as part of the labour movement. However, there was still a group of workers unable to engage in activities openly and still had to act underground. These were workers of Chinese-descent, especially those that admired communism. They still were watched by and not trusted by the state. Later on a conflict occurred on the issue of the first draft economic development plan, or what also was called the "National Economic Framework", between Mr. Pridi Panomyong who was assigned to draft it, and the opposing side who were against the plan led by King Prajadhipok (King Rama 7) and Phraya Manopakorn Nititada, the prime minister. The latter side was violently opposed to the plan, accusing "the Framework" as being communistic in nature. They opposed the plan successfully, engineered the shelving of the plan, and forced Mr. Pridi into political exile. The government subsequently crafted an anti-socialist policy, and an anti-communist act was promulgated in 1933, which was used as a tool to get rid of those who opposed the government, one such important group being labour. Thus, such events forced a part of the labour movement to continue to work underground.

1.3 The labour movement under the "follow the leader" regime and the Second World War.

The victory of the People's Party over the monarchists as evidenced in the successful suppression of the Bovoradej monarchist rebellion in October 1933, coupled with the onset of World War 2, and the rise to power of Major-General Luang Phibun Songkram, the leader of the authoritarian-wing of the People's Party, resulted in the People's Party government having to rely more on the armed forces to prop up its power. But in the event, the left-wing of the People's Party was forced out of the apex of political power, with the result that the labour movement, which had good relations with the left-wing of the People's Party, suffered a diminution of influence. The subsequent dictatorially inclined government did not want to see a strong labour movement and thus used measures to limit the rights of workers, with the

effect that the movement had to go underground, and developed close relations with the Communist Party of Thailand which announced its birth on 1 December 1942.

1.4 The revival of the Thai labour movement after World War 2

After the political failure of Field Marshal Phibun Songkram, the end of World War 2, and the return to power of Pridi Panomyong's group and its supporters called the Free Thai movement, the labour movement was able to revive itself and once more played an active and stronger role. Under the leadership of the Labourers' Association of Thailand (Saha – Acheewakrammakorn) in which its leader was close to the left-wing of the People's Party and close to the Communist Party of Thailand, the Association was able to include all labour within the formal economy (meaning workers who were members of registered workers' associations) and those in the informal economy (meaning, at the time, those self-employed) under its umbrella as had never been done before. In 1946, the Anti-Communist Act was repealed and this was an important step forward in the expansion of political freedom, that is, it was now possible to publicly propagate the socialist idea of putting labour interests in the forefront; and this had a positive effect on the growth of the labour movement. Such a democratic atmosphere enabled workers to express their wants publicly for the first time, as indicated in the first big celebration of international worker's day in Thailand, organized in 1946 and also in 1947.

1.5 The fate of the labour movement after the coup d'état of 1947

Things were progressing smoothly for the labour movement. Democracy, socialist ideology, and the labour movement were at the first steps of development. But then a political crisis occurred as a result of the mysterious death of King Rama 8. Monarchists spread the rumour that Pridi Panomyong and his political faction was behind the king's death, and at this point the growth of the labour movement and political development was arrested. Thai politics then promptly fell once more under the influence of the military and the monarchists after a coup d'état by a group of army officers on 8 November 1947. The coup ended the prominent role of Pridi Panomyong, and of the Sahachep Party and Constitutional Front Parties, both which had close relations with the labour movement then under the leadership of the Labourers' Association of Thailand. The consequence of the coup was that the Association was subject to tighter control and closely watched by the state, and eventually had to end its role completely in 1951 when the government refused to extend its registration permit. During the period of subverting the the Labourers' Association of Thailand—that is, prior to 1951—the state encouraged the setting up of a new national labour organization called the " Association of Thai Workers"(Samakom Krammakorn Thai), which the state penetrated by sending its people to control activities and also gave it financial support in order to make it dependent on the government. This Association of Thai Workers, although subject to influence

and intervention by the state, nevertheless was not completely under its control because the left-wing element of the labour movement also sent its people into the association—and played a role in its administration. The association thus in effect became a battleground in the fight for labour leadership between the left and right wing of the labour movement. But then, in 1952, when the suppression of a people's movement called the "Peace Revolt" by the state began, involving the re-issuance of the Anti-Communist Act, the labour movement suffered yet another setback and became further weakened.

The discord within the Phibulsongkram military government plus the intervention of the US in Thai politics resulted in the government becoming unstable. Phibun Songkram then tried to steer a new political course to be free of American influence and domination. He moved to institute political reform by allowing more domestic political freedom and attempted to build a mass political base for himself to balance the power of his rivals in the armed forces who had of late not accepted Pibun Songkram's authority and had hardened their opposition towards him. The fact that Pibun Songkram had to court a broader section of the political spectrum to balance the power of his military rivals was the context, a sort of window of opportunity, for the Thai labour movement to advance its cause, the result of which was a substantial change in the structure of the Thai labour movement. The movement which had become fractured and heavily penetrated by the state for many years, now turned to organize itself anew aiming to become stronger and more united. A "16 Worker Unit Group" (Krum Krammakorn 16 Nauy) was established, as an amalgamation of labour organizations in 16 occupations, and this coalition played an influential role at the time; it was able to make demands on the state such that the latter had to issue the first labour protection law in Thailand in 1955. This law gave guarantees for many labour rights such as the right to organize and engage in bargaining.

1.6 The labour movement during the era of military dictatorship and American domination of Thai politics

A new development in the 1950s was the rise of the domino theory in regional international politics. The cold war and the American military presence in Southeast Asia led to another military coup on 20 October 1957, the coup being backed by the American government. The result was a total military dictatorship under the leadership of Field-Marshal Sarit Thanarat, and this time the Thai state was effectively transformed into the 51st state of the USA, its foreign policy following closely that of the USA which now became an ally of Thailand. The labour laws which had been in effect for only 2 years were abrogated, and rights of all labour was drastically limited; the logic being that the Thai government wanted Thailand to be a paradise for investors, both domestic and foreign. Organizing, bargaining by labour were seen as destroying the investment climate and was thus not permitted. All key labour leaders were arrested and put into jail; some were executed

without going through the judicial process. The result was that the Thai labour movement was stunted for a full 15 years.

1.7 The golden era of the Thai labour movement after the people's uprising on 14 October 1973

Prior to the uprising, workers in the country, the International Labour Organization, the international labour movement had jointly acted to pressure the Thai military dictatorial government to issue laws to protect labour, and finally a Revolutionary Announcement No. 103 came into being in 1972. This labour law guaranteed the right to set up labour organizations, to allow bargaining and strikes by workers. Thus, the labour movement was revived, more so after the student uprising on 14 October 1973 which led to the immediate collapse of the military dictatorial regime. After the event, the political atmosphere once again became more democratic and there was a flowering of socialist ideology and movement, which played a key role in reviving the labour movement—it was during this period that the movement grew fastest as never before in Thai history. Socialist ideology was very influential in all Thai progressive movements operating at the time, including the labour movement. The saying “an attitude of self-sacrifice, love of the country and people” became a sort of new frame of mind, a “new morality” adhered to by the progressives, which had the effect of focusing sympathy towards the farmers and workers. Thus the activities of the labour movement now gained support from progressives animated with such new morality. What is important is the formation of the “three coordinating forces” (comprised of workers, farmers, and students) during these times which played a role in enhancing the labour movement’s strength and success. But at the same time, a new form of dependency relationship – on external actors--was also formed (a change from dependence on politicians to dependence on students and intellectuals), rather than a concept of trying to search and develop internal strength by relying on membership.

The labour movement during these times although was strong but nevertheless not united. It was fractured into three parts. One was led by the National Coordinating Centre for Workers (Soon prasarnngan krammakorn), an ultra-left wing faction of the labour movement which adhered to the path of revolutionary socialism and class struggle; key leaders being Terdpume Jaidee, Bundit Jantngam, and Seksan Prasertkul. The second group was led by the “Trade Union Group” (Grum Sahapap Rangnan), led in turn by Paisal Thawatchainant and Arom Ponpangan both who believed in the idea of “trade unionism”. This group also was a reflection of the idea of democratic socialism or social democracy. The third group was the liberals and conservatives, led by Tanong Laowanij and many others, all who had worked closely with ultra-right movements.

1.8 The labour movement after the suppression of 6 October 1976 and a crisis of faith in Socialism

During 1975-76, Thailand was a battlefield in a conflict of ideologies. The armed forces and the conservatives felt insecure and anxious about the growth of democracy, and were fearful after the victory of the leftists in Indochina. They therefore joined forces to oppose the democratic and socialist movements that had been proliferating in Thailand; the result was a violent, cruel suppression incident on 6 October 1976 which ended with a military coup that returned Thailand once more to a long period of dictatorial rule. Progressives were forced to flee to the safety of Thailand's large expanse of forests and jungles, to join forces with the Communist Party of Thailand. What was left in the labour movement still operating normally over ground were the other two players, those who held to the ideology of trade unionism and the extreme right, which continued their activities until this day. As to the labour movement which formerly had been a movement of broad and varied composition, inclusive of labour in the informal and formal sector, it then evolved more narrowly into a movement of worker-employees in establishments, governed by the Labour Relations Act of 1975, which after the coup of 6 October was enforced strictly. The labour movement thus developed into a movement whose activities were bounded by the framework of trade unions and subject to the Labour Relations Act; workers not qualified to be covered by the Act were excluded from the movement.

2. Legal framework on the rights of labour to organize and bargain in Thailand

In the laws that define the legal framework on labour relations in Thailand, there are no specific provisions which promote or give adequate guarantees to labour concerning the right to organize or to engage in bargaining. On the contrary, the framework divided labour into groups such as employees in the formal economy, informal sector labour, state enterprise workers, state employees, and migrant labour. Such division was designed to prevent labour from organizing on a unified and integral basis.

2.1 The Thai constitutional framework on labour's right to form organizations

The 2007 Thai constitution gives guarantees on the right to organize as follows:

"Section 64. A person shall enjoy the liberty of assembly in the form of association, unions, cooperatives, farmers' associations, private organizations, nongovernmental organization and other groups.

Civil servants and State officials shall enjoy the liberty of assembly like the general public, provided that doing so does not affect the efficient administration of State affairs and the continuity of delivery of public services as providing by law.

Restriction of liberty under paragraph one and paragraph two is prohibited except by virtue of law specifically to protect public interests, to

maintain public peace and order or good morals, or to prevent economic monopoly."

Thus, it can be seen the Thai constitution gives guarantees to every section of society to form organizations in many varied forms. What is worthy of note is that this new constitution clearly states such rights extend also to that of civil servants and other state officials, previously not permitted to associate together in the form of trade unions.

2.2 The Labour Relations Act 1975

The Labour Relations Act of 1975 is a body of laws laying down rules and regulations covering the formal organization of labour in Thailand. Key features are as follows:

1. Trade unions

1) Trade unions according to Thai law are divided into two types: 1. a trade union of which members are employees of one employer (often called "house union"). 2. a trade union of which members are employees in the same line of work or occupation, regardless whether they are working for one or many employers (often called " industrial union").

In addition, the law divides trade unions into 2 levels: 1. a labour union in which members are employees but who are at the supervisory level upwards, who have authority in hiring, firing, dismissal, granting gratuities, or invoking penalties. 2. labour unions whose members are employees but do not have authority and power.

2) In the setting up of a labour union, at least 10 employees, acting as promoters, must make application (they must also hold Thai citizenship) with the Ministry of Labour. Once the application is approved, the union will have the status of a juristic person and must arrange a general meeting within 120 days in order to elect a committee. It must also approve the draft articles of association that had been submitted to the registrar at the Ministry. Once this has been done, a copy of the committee membership and rules of the union must be registered within 14 days.

3) As for qualifications of the union's membership, they must be employees of the same employer that had submitted the application for establishment of the union, or they must be employees who work in the same occupation as the person(s) who had submitted the application for establishment of the union and must be at least 15 years of age. The law does not forbid foreign workers to be member of trade unions.

- 4) Qualifications of committee or subcommittee members:
1. They must be member of the union.

2. They must be a born citizen of Thailand, meaning that the law forbids foreign labour to be member of the union's executive committee.
3. Their age must be not less than 20 years old.

5) Powers and functions of trade unions:

1. Make demands, negotiate, make agreements, acknowledge adjudications made, and any agreements made with employers.
2. Act in ways beneficial to members, subject to the objectives stated in the union's charter.
3. Arrange information services for members to use when they are looking for work.
4. Provide consultation services to solve problems or conflicts connected with work.
5. Arrange for allocation of money or assets, in order to assist in the welfare of members or for helping the public, as deemed appropriate by the union's general meeting.
6. Collect membership application for membership and membership fees at the rate fixed in the union's charter.

6) Activities allowed for, but only by resolution of the general meeting:

1. Amend and add to the charter and rules.
2. Perform activities affecting the interests of members.
3. Elect committee members, auditors, approve the balance sheet, the annual report and the budget.
4. Allocate money or assets for the welfare of members or for the public benefit.
5. Dissolve the union.
6. Merge with another or other unions.
7. Set up federation of labour or become member of labour federation.
8. Exercise the right of strike.

7) Employees, the labour union, the committee and subcommittee, and the officials of the labour union shall be exempted from criminal or civil legal accusations when:

1. They participate in negotiations to arrive at agreements aimed at demanding rights or benefits the members are entitled to.
2. They engage in strikes or help or solicit or support members to go on strikes.
3. They explain or publicize the truth about labour disputes.
4. They arrange for assemblies or peacefully join in strikes, except if such actions are a violation of criminal law, that is, such actions create danger to life and property, to freedom and reputation of persons in relation to assets. They are

also liable to civil litigation related to their violation of the criminal law as stated above.

8) Special rights of labour union committee members. Employees that are committee members of labour unions have the right to take leave to perform activities of labour unions if acting on behalf of employees in such things as negotiating, mediation, and adjudication of labour disputes, and can take leave to attend meetings when specified by the government. In the latter case, the employee who is a union committee member have to inform the employer in advance as to the reason for requesting leave, with supporting documents if available, and if all is in order, leave is given with pay.

2 labour federations

A labour federation is a union of two or more labour unions. Each labour union comprises of members who work for one and the same employer or who are working in the same occupation. The unions can join together to register a labour federation to promote good relations between or among the federations, as well as protect the interests of the unions and its employee members. For labour federations to achieve registration as juristic persons, or for the act of establishment of a labour federation, or the act of being a member of a labour federation, there must be consent by more than half of the members in each of the labour unions involved.

3 Trade union congresses (also termed "national centre" in Thailand)

At least 15 labour unions or labour federations may join together to establish a trade union congress, or national centre as it is sometimes called in Thailand). The law lays down a framework that the congress has to have the objective of promoting education and labour relations. Upon registration, its status is that of a juristic person.

4 Campaigning by the labour movement to push for a new draft labour relations act

The 1975 Labour Relations Act had been in force for so many years and it was found not to generate smooth labour relations. Many of its provisions limit the rights of labour thereby posing difficulties in the setting up of labour organizations. Also, there were insufficient guarantees for those working in the unions. Thus, the Act made the labour movement weak and divided. The movement therefore demanded a change in the Act, by drafting its own version of a labour relations act. Thai Labour Solidarity Committee is also providing active support by trying to gather 10,000 signatures—a move allowed for by the constitution if a group of people wants to change a law—to support the submission of the draft to the Thai parliament for consideration. The key substance of the proposed draft law is as follows:

- The employer is not allowed to
 1. cease employing those persons who act to set up a labour union, and those who have been selected as committee members of such union, until the labour court permits it.
 2. Lock out certain jobs worked by those workers involved in making demands or who are members of labour unions.
 3. hire other people to work in place of workers who have gone on strike.
 4. move raw materials and machinery during the time workers are on strike or when the employer shuts down specific operations which involve those on strike.
 5. ask to check on the numbers of those workers belonging to labour unions, or names of those who put down their names in support of demands, even though such persons may have withdrawn their names afterwards, or even though the number of trade unions members had decreased.
 6. order the suspension of work for those workers who are members of the labour union committee, worker committee, and other workers who are involved in the demands made. Wages must continue to be paid. The employer also is not allowed to stop assigning work to such persons or deny them entry into the factory; this is because such acts violate the intent of the employment contract, the nature of which is a reciprocal contract; such acts are also a drastic violation of the right of the employee to work as well as an obstruction to activities of labour unions, who are representatives of employees in workplaces, in accordance with the Labour Relations Act.
 7. send individuals who have not been given full authority to negotiate to do so with the employee side.

- The powers of the minister or state official are to be cancelled in the following matters, i.e. they can not do the following:
 1. Abrogate registration of advisors to labour unions.
 2. Have the power to divide employees into those who have supervisory or management function and those who are general employees, when a labour union is in the process of setting up.
 3. Issue royal decrees or ministerial notices, for example, on exemption of certain economic activities from having a labour union, or forbidding of strikes, or shutting down certain operations in the plant.

- Extending the rights of workers in setting up of trade unions and protecting their right to bargain such as
 1. Freely allowing workers in all types of enterprises, occupations, nationalities to form trade unions and engage in its activities,

without regard to their employment status i.e. employed or unemployed, and without regard to the condition of their employment.

2. The employee shall have the right to set up 4 types of trade unions, as practiced universally. That is, labour unions whose members are employees of one employer (the enterprise union); unions with members who are employees in the same line of work but working under many employers (the industrial union); union members belonging to the same profession (craft union); and unions whose members come from many occupations and work in many types of establishments (general union)

3. They can make demands allowed for by law, and even though the number of workers making the demands has decreased, the demands are still to be deemed as having legal effect as before.

4. Employees who are not members of trade unions have the right to participate in strikes.

5. Employees have the right to strike within the compound of the enterprise or within the factory, and employers are not allowed to hire new people or move raw materials or machinery out of the factory during the time a strike is in progress.

2.3 The 2000 State Enterprise Labour Relations Act

Originally, a worker in state enterprises was subject to the same set of labour laws as that of workers in the private sector. But after the coup d'état by the military in 1992, the military dictatorial government issued a law to separate out workers working in state enterprises from those in the private sector and did not permit state enterprise workers to organize into trade unions. It did allow state enterprise workers to form an association of state enterprise workers but they did not have the right to bargain. Workers fought this ruling for many years until finally they were able to push through a state enterprise labour relations act in 2000, which allowed workers in such enterprises to form trade unions once more. But many limitations still existed concerning bargaining i.e. they were not permitted to strike, nor go and organize with workers in the private sector, because it was argued, both were subject to different sets of laws. Workers in both sectors were allowed to join together only at the level of the trade union congress, in which the law determined that in order for state enterprise unions to join together at this level, state enterprise unions must be able to set up a federation of state enterprise unions first with at least 10 unions as members. Once this is achieved then they can become members of the nationally based trade union congress to join together with their comrades from the private sector unions. Presently, one federation of state enterprise workers has been established but it has not yet applied for membership in any of the private-sector based trade union congresses, nor has it set up a new type of congress level organization.

The State Enterprise Labour Relations Act of 2000 laid the framework for labour relations as follows:

1. It affirms the right to set up trade unions in order to make demands to further interests related to the condition of employment, and to cooperate with management to grow productivity and protect the interests of the state enterprise.

2. It specifies the establishment of a *relation affairs committee* in every state enterprise, comprised of representatives from the management side and from the labour union side, the aim being to consult and discuss together issues on conditions of employment.

3. It specifies the establishment of a *state enterprise labour relations committee*, with a minister as chairman, and consisting of 5 representatives each from the government, employers and employees. Its function is to determine minimum standards in conditions of employment as well as to adjudicate on labour disputes that the parties could not come to an agreement.

2.4 The labour relations system in Thailand, in the framework of existing laws

1. Agreements on conditions of hiring:

a. According to the labour relations law, establishments with 20 or more employees must arrange to have in place a written agreement on conditions of employment. If one did not exist, then it is deemed that provisions on work as contained in the labour protection law is treated as the agreement on working conditions.

b. For the time frame of the agreement, it is to be in effect for the time period agreed upon by both parties, but not to be more than 3 years. If no time frame is specified, it is deemed to be effective for a period of 1 year, counting from the date of the agreement or counting from the date in which the employee is hired, which counting method to be used depending on the context. Once the agreement ends and no negotiation was engaged in to extend it, then the agreement is deemed to be extended automatically and consecutively for another year.

2. Procedures, amendments, additions on the agreement on conditions of employment

a. Demands made must be in writing and handed to the other party.

b. If demands are made by the employees, there has to be submission of names and signatures of employees connected with the issue to the proportion of not less than 15% of the total employees who are similarly connected to the subject of the demands. Also, employees who are to act as representatives must be identified and they must be connected with the issue in which the demand is made. The number of such representatives is not to be more than 7. Or, the representatives could be committee members of the trade union or of the federation of trade unions. Advisors can be appointed but they are not to number more than 2.

c. If the union submits the demands on behalf of the employees, such union must have as members not less than 1/5 of the employees of the firm receiving the demand. If the employer doubts this, he/she has the right to check and verify.

d. Once the demands are submitted, the other party must inform as to who would be its representatives.

e. Advisors who are appointed by both parties must be registered advisors and must have been so registered for at least 2 years. Registration can be renewed.

f. Both sides must start negotiating within 3 days after having received the demands.

g. If an agreement is reached, the following must be done:

i. The agreement reached must be recorded in writing, and signed by both sides' representatives who conducted the negotiation.

ii. The employer shall publicly announce the agreement at the employees' workplace for 30 days, starting 3 days after the agreement is reached.

iii. The employer must bring the agreement to be registered and must do it within 15 days after the agreement is reached.

h. The agreement is binding on all employers and employees of demands for them. If the agreement was negotiated between the employers or employers' association on the one hand, and labour unions or employees working in the same occupation on the other, and such employees are union members or more than two-thirds of all the employees participated in the demands, then the agreement will be binding on all the employers and employees in that occupation.

i. Once an agreement has been established, the employer is not permitted to enter into a hiring contract with an employee, who opposes or goes against the agreement, except if such hiring contract gives a better benefit to the employee compared to the agreement.

3. Method of resolving disputes

a. If no negotiation is started within 3 days of a disagreement arising, or negotiations had begun but no agreement could be reached, only then is it deemed that a labour dispute has arisen. If the party making the demands still want to continue its demands, it must inform the conciliation officer in writing within 24 hours, counting from the lapsed time or from the time no agreement was reached, as stated above, to do the conciliation.

b. The conciliation officer will conciliate such that an agreement is reached within 5 days after he had received notice to do so.

c. If an agreement is reached, then it must be recorded in writing (announced and registered). If agreement cannot be reached, the situation is defined as a labor dispute in which no agreement was reached.

d. In such a case, if the case falls outside Section 23 then the parties to the dispute may do one of the following:

i. Mutually and voluntarily agree to appoint a labour adjudicator.
 ii. The employee if he wants to lock out jobs can do so only after informing the authorities and the other side in writing 24 hours in advance.

iii. The employees if they want to strike can do so only after informing the authorities and the other side in writing 24 hours in advance.

e. In the case where the labour union wants to exercise the right to call a strike, it must hold a union general meeting to ask for a resolution. The resolution to strike must be approved with a vote by more than half of all the members and the voting must be done by ballot (i.e. secret vote).

f. If the dispute can not be resolved in the following areas, then the conciliation officer must bring the dispute to the Labour Relations Committee for adjudication, and the committee must inform both parties of its decision in 30 days. Both sides have the right to appeal to the Minister of Labour.

i. Railways

ii. Ports

iii. Telephone or telecommunication services

iv. Production or distribution of energy or electricity for the people

v. public waterworks

vi. Production or distillation of petroleum and fuels

vii. Hospital or medical care establishments

viii. Other establishments as specified in the ministerial regulations:

1. All types of state enterprise, that operates under the Act on Budget Procedure.
2. Private colleges and schools
3. Co-operatives
4. Enterprises connected with land, sea, and air transport; also includes activities and services supplementary and connected to transport at wharfs, ports, airports, and those connected with tourism.
5. Enterprises in the distribution and sale of fuels and petrol.

ix. If the Ministry of Labour deems that any unresolved labour dispute might have an effect on the country's economy, or on the peace and order of society, the Ministry has the power to order the Labour Relations Committee to adjudicate and decide in such disputes. Its decision is then deemed final, both parties being required to implement it.

g. In the case where martial law or a state of emergency is declared, or when the country is suffering from a severe economic problem, the

Minister of Labour has the power to announce in the Government Gazette that an resolved labour dispute be brought to adjudication by a group of people appointed by the cabinet. Once this group decides on the dispute, its decision is final and the parties must adhere to it.

h. In the case where the Minister of Labour is of the opinion that a lockout or a strike might result in damage to the country's economy, or in hardship to the people, or might harm national security, or go against the peace and order in society, then, the Minister has the power to: order the employer to re-accept the employees back to work and pay them the wage rate previously paid to them; order the employees who participated in the strike to return to work; arrange for other people to work in place of the workers who went on strike or who were locked out; and order the Labour Relations Committee to adjudicate the labour dispute in question.

4. Prohibitions for employers

In the event that a demand has been made, and such demand is in the process of negotiation, or mediation, or adjudication, the employer is not allowed to cease hiring or transfer employees, representatives of the employees, committee or members of the trade union or committee or subcommittee of the federation of labour who are connected with the demand, to another job function, except if such individuals:

- a. act in a corrupt manner towards the employer or violate the criminal code with intent to do so.
- b. act with intent to cause damage to the employer.
- c. violate rules, regulations, or legal orders in which the employer had warned against such behavior in writing--except if the act is one of severe consequence, then no warning is required. But the rules, regulations, or orders must not have been issued in order to obstruct the employees' pursuance of their demands.
- d. went absent without leave for 3 consecutive working days without good reason.

5. The employees' committee

- a. In the case of an establishment of 50 or more employees, the workers may set up an employees' committee.
- b. If 1/5 of all the workers in the establishment are members of trade union and the union has appointed one union member more than non-union member in the committee, and if more than half of the workers in this establishment are union members, then the union has the right to appoint the whole employees' committee entirely.

- c. The employer must organize a consultative meeting with the employees' committee at least once every 3 months, or when more than half of the committee requests it, and if appropriate reasons exist to hold it. The objectives of such meeting are to:
- i. arrange for welfare for the employees.
 - ii. Consult with employers about rules and regulations concerning work.
 - iii. Consider complaints of the employees.
 - iv. Seek ways to enhance harmony and end conflict in the workplace.
- d. Things the employer is forbidden to do towards the employees committee:
- i. For such committee, he cannot dismiss its members, decrease their wages, penalize, obstruct the performance of functions of the Committee which may result in the committee not being able to do its work, except if permitted by the Labour Court.
 - ii. It is forbidden for the employer to give or agree to give money or assets to the employees' committee, except if it is in the nature of wages, overtime pay, holiday pay, bonuses, dividends, or other benefits the employee committee member is normally entitled to receive as an employee.

3. Labour organizations in the private sector

Reports from the National Statistical Office of Thailand show that the country has a working population of 36.54 million people. Of this number, there are 3.23 million who are civil servants and state employees. Employers number 0.99 million. The rest are labour working in the private sector. But statistics from the Social Security Office show that workers who provide their own funding in the social insurance scheme number only 8,886,681 persons. Therefore, the remaining workers are those in the informal sector of the economy.

The labour relations law gives the right to organize in the form of union or federation or trade union congress only to workers who work under an employer or labour who work within the formal economy. Out of the 8,886,681 million employees who have the right to organize in accordance with the labour relations law, only 331,853 employees or 3.7 % of workers in the formal economy can exercise their right to organize into a labour union or labour federation or trade union congress.

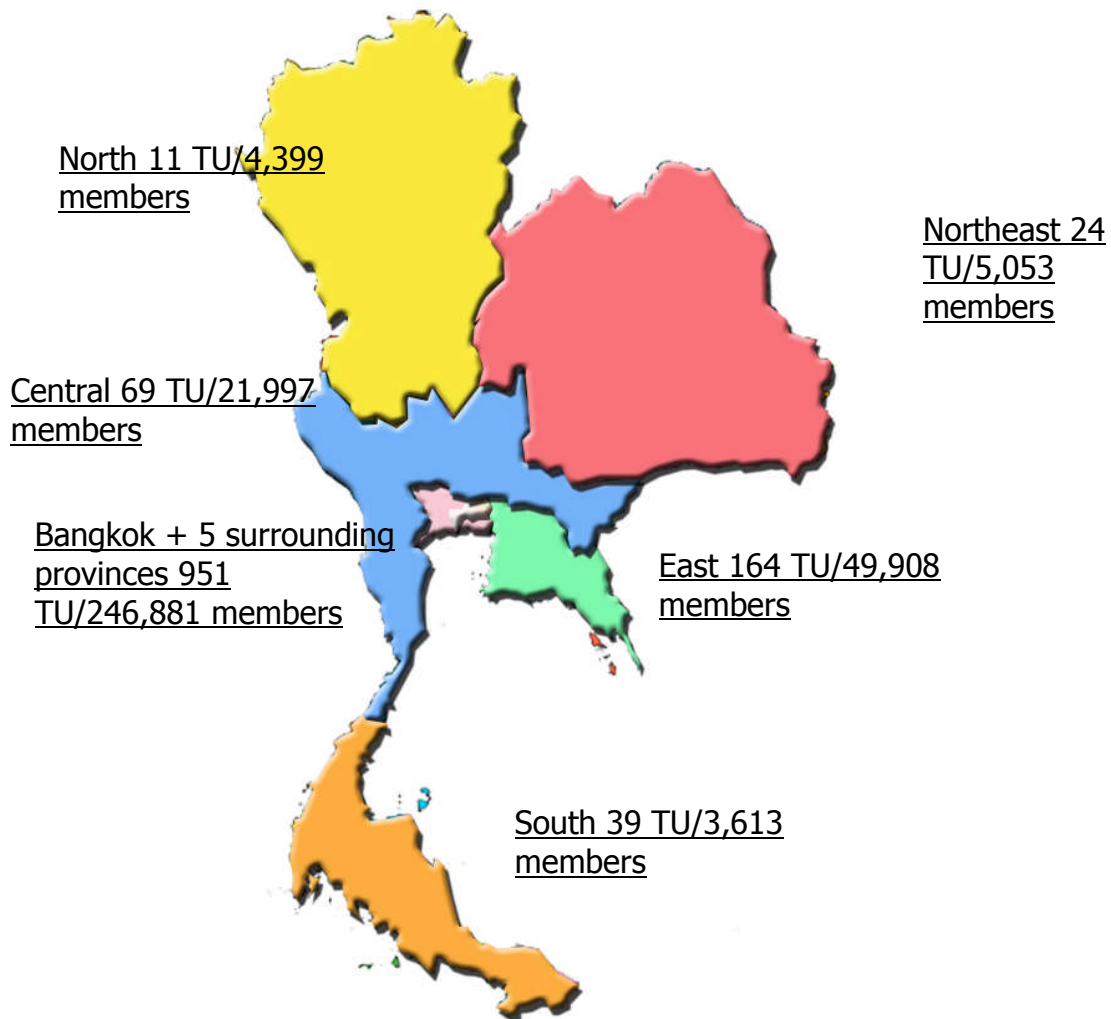
Apart from the 3 forms of labour organizations allowed for by the law, other types of organizations outside the legal framework exist, such as, labour union groups based in industrial areas, labour federations, or working groups set up for specific purposes. In the informal sector, workers do engage in some form of organization, for example, taxi drivers' clubs or cooperatives, groupings of motorcycle taxis at the passenger queue, and groupings of agricultural workers. Several networks of informal sector workers have been formed but they do not have much bargaining power.

What is worthy of note is that in the past, informal sector workers joined formal sector workers in the labour movement, but after the introduction of the 1975 Labour Relations Act, these informal sector workers were in effect pushed out of the Thai labour movement.

3.1 Labour unions

Data from the Welfare and Labour Protection Department as of 17 September 2008 and collation from other sources showed that in Thailand 1,258 labour unions have been registered, with a total of 331,853 workers being members. This represents 3.73 % of all employees working in establishments, which number 8,886,681 persons. The 3.73% are those who are covered by the social insurance scheme and have the legal right to join a trade union, in accordance with the 1975 Labour Relations Act. Most trade unions in Thailand are clustered in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and the surrounding 5 provinces, that is, 951 unions are located there representing 75.59 % of all the unions in Thailand. The unions in and around Bangkok contain of 246,881 worker-members, or 74.39 % of all the private sector employees in the country who have trade union membership.

A map showing the number of trade unions and their members in areas of Thailand:



Nevertheless, if we consider in terms of percentages of the total number of workers in the area which number 4,968,468 persons, we can see that there are very few employees who are trade union members, that is, only 4.96 %. Now the reason why Bangkok and surrounding areas have more trade unions than in other areas is because it is a traditional industrial location of long standing, Manufacturing is concentrated there and it has received investment promotion privileges from the Board of Investment.

After the coups by the military with American support, we can say contemporary history of the labour movement can be traced back to 1972 with the Revolutionary Party Announcement no. 103, which permits workers

to once more organize themselves, after a period of prohibition for a decade and a half.

In the central region, there are 8 provinces with trade unions, having membership of 21,997 worker members out of a total of 898,180 workers, or 2.45% of the total. The northern region of the country has the least number of trade unions. That is, only 11 unions, with 4,399 workers joining the unions out of a total of 599,911 workers, or 0.73% of the total. In the northeastern region, 24 labour unions exist, with 5,053 workers being members or 0.73% of the total number of workers in the region. The South has 39 labour unions, but only 3,613 workers as members, or 0.62% of all the workers there. For the eastern region, industry has only recently been established and developed there, clustering in specific locations, with an interesting rate of expansion of trade unions. Presently, there are 164 unions with 49,908 members or 4.31% of total number of workers in the region. In Chonburi and Rayong provinces since 2004, trade unions have been mushrooming at a stunningly fast rate, because there has been a heavy transfer of production bases into the area which is close to a deep water seaport. Enterprises in the two provinces are owned or run by multinational investors who are familiar with factories where trade unions are a normal environment or context. In addition, teams to set up trade unions have been embedded in the worker community and serious and continuous campaigning was done.

Table 1 Number of trade unions and members broken down by province

Rank	Province	No. of TU (%)	No. members (%)
1	Bangkok Metropolitan Area	341 (27.10)	112,415 (33.87)
2	Samut Prakan	401 (31.88)	90,495 (27.27)
3	Pathum Thani	137 (10.89)	27,531 (8.30)
4	Nonthaburi	12 (0.95)	4,308 (1.30)
5	Nakhon Pathom	12 (0.95)	2,019 (0.61)
6	Samut Sakhon	48 (3.81)	10,113 (3.04)
7	Chon Buri	90 (7.15)	20,493 (6.17)
8	Chachoengsao	19 (1.51)	9,553 (2.88)
9	Saraburi	23 (1.83)	10,303 (3.10)
10	Ayutthaya	36 (2.86)	10,112 (3.03)

11	Phuket	28 (2.23)	3,455 (1.04)
12	Khon Kaen	2 (0.16)	786 (0.23)
13	Udon Thani	5 (0.40)	408 (0.12)
14	Ang Thong	2 (0.16)	956 (0.29)
15	Nakhon Ratchasima	9 (0.72)	2,812 (0.85)
16	Buri Ram	1 (0.08)	700 (0.21)
17	Nakhon Phanom	1 (0.08)	36 (0.01)
18	Maha Sarakham	3 (0.24)	69 (0.02)
19	Kalasin	1 (0.08)	10 (0.00)
20	Si Sa Ket	1 (0.08)	105 (0.03)
21	Nong Khai	1 (0.08)	127 (0.04)
22	Sing Buri	1 (0.08)	220 (0.06)
23	Sa Kaeo	1 (0.08)	262 (0.07)
24	Phetchaburi	2 (0.16)	146 (0.04)
25	Nakhon Sawan	1 (0.08)	286 (0.08)
26	Prachin Buri	10 (0.79)	4,424 (1.32)
27	Rayong	45 (3.58)	15,438 (4.65)
28	Ratchaburi	3 (0.24)	(unable to contact)
28	Songkhla	8 (0.63)	60(0.02)
30	Nakhon Si Thammarat	2 (0.16)	45 (0.01)
31	Uthai Thani	1 (0.08)	10 (0.00)
32	Surat Thani	1 (0.08)	53 (0.01)
33	Chiang Rai	2 (0.16)	25 (0.01) (unable to contact 1 union)
34	Phayao	1 (0.08)	28 (0.01)
35	Lampang	2 (0.16)	(unable to contact)
36	Chiang Mai	1 (0.08)	(unable to contact)
37	Tak	1 (0.08)	(unable to contact)
38	Kanchanaburi	1 (0.08)	(unable to contact)

39	Lamphun	2 (0.16)	4,050 (1.22)
Total of 39 provinces		total 1,258 (100)	Total 331,853 (100)

Although Thailand has not declared a special economic zone for export that is trade union-free as is the case in many developing countries, and there is no law in place that discriminates or obstructs trade unions, but in practice trade unions are still not accepted in Thailand and face obstacles in the real sense from state officials and businesses; these tend to view labour unions as an enemy and an hindrance to industrial development and investment. This attitude is true especially in the upcountry provinces--or provinces outside of Bangkok--where the initiation of trade unions is a very risky proposition for activists and employees, because not only do they face opposition from state officials and business owners but also from influential persons in the locality who have good relations with businesses there, having established mutual interests of long standing. In fact, in many places such influential persons are responsible for taking care of the safety aspects of the factory, and in many cases act as recruiter of workers for companies in the area. Thus, attempts to recruit for trade unions faces difficulties for activists.

Moreover, employees in upcountry provinces lack understanding of their rights, most never having had experience working with trade unions, coupled with the fact that the image of trade unions have been conjured up to be threatening, and hence this turned many off because of fear of danger. Thus, many would not dare to associate with trade unions, plus there is the fact that Thai labour law does not have provisions which protect those who set up trade unions. What has happened is that employers would try to dismiss workers who are the leaders in the setting up of trade unions, and would do so legally, this in order to get rid of the problem before it occurs and also as a warning to workers in general not to involve themselves in trade union affairs. The latest is that in Lamphoon province, workers in the electrical appliance business have successfully formed a trade union but have had to face severe opposition from the employer side—which it used the technique of firing all the core leaders initiating the union.

The fact that so many areas in Thailand do not have labour unions and so few workers are its members has resulted in Thai workers in general having very little bargaining power. From a Department of Welfare and Labour Protection report summarizing the state of labour relations in 2007, it was found that in out of the 237 demands made by labour in 2007, most were made by the trade unions i.e. 207 demands or 85.6 %; the rest or 34 demands were made the employees themselves. This reflects the fact that if no labour unions existed, it would be hard for workers to exercise their right of collective bargaining as allowed for in the Labour Relations Act because

labour without trade unions would lack bargaining power. For this reason, the power to determine working conditions and divide up revenue from work between the workers and employers rest squarely with the employer side. At present, industry is being set up in many more areas around the country, and in most of these new industrial zones labour unions do not exist, and labour exploitation is prevalent. Many enterprises have also moved out of the traditional industrial areas in and around Bangkok to these new places hoping to gain competitive advantage as they can achieve lower wages and other social costs there.

After the 1997 economic crisis, Thailand received advice from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to find ways to control wages so it would not increase, as they saw that Thai wages were too high thus raising costs which put Thai producers at a competitive disadvantage. This was why Thailand then changed the minimum wage setting system, by shifting the body determining minimum wage from the National Wage Committee, which is a tripartite body, to provincial wage committees—which incidentally are also tripartite bodies—so as to fix minimum wages deriving from area-specific information. This policy adjustment was objected to by labour movements, but it was not effective. The end result of setting minimum wage this way is of more benefit to business owners because in the new industrial areas workers have low bargaining power. And this saps the will and ability on the part of workers to set up trade unions.

From information gathered by the research team, it was found that out of the existing 1,258 trade unions, the team was unable to contact 251 of them. Out of the 251, some did not engage in activities anymore, which means that the Thai labour movement which is already small in terms of numbers and size is even smaller if we check with the official data. And with the unions found in the database, a proportion had not engaged in any activities at all from the beginning; a number having been set up to act as a political base for persons wanting to compete for positions in the many tripartite organizations in which the competition rules put weight on the number of trade unions backing such persons without further specifying the number of members such unions; thus, small unions with a few members had equal voting weight to those having many thousands of members. The labour leaders in this competitive political game, hoping to gain a majority vote in the tripartite organization elections, would thus go and set up many small trade unions to support them and their cliques in the race, and most such unions served merely as a front for these labour leaders without engaging in activities beneficial to their members.

Table 2: Membership fees collected by the trade unions

Membership fees/month/ Baht	No.trade unions[TU] (%)	Membership fees in % (Baht)	No.TU (%)	Annual member ship fees	No. of TU (%)
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				/Baht	
10	10 (2.75)	1	17 (89.48)	100	6 (4.29)
20	157 (43.25)	2	1 (5.26)	120	4 (2.86)
25	1 (0.28)	0.7	1 (5.26)	150	4 (2.86)
30	115 (31.68)	-	-	160	1 (0.71)
35	2 (0.55)	-	-	180	3 (2.14)
40	2 (0.55)	-	-	200	31 (22.15)
45	1 (0.28)	-	-	210	1 (0.71)
50	64 (17.63)	-	-	220	3 (2.14)
60	2 (0.55)	-	-	240	20 (14.29)
80	2 (0.55)	-	-	250	1 (0.71)
100	6 (1.65)	-	-	260	1 (0.71)
230	1 (0.28)	-	-	300	24 (17.15)
-	-	-	-	320	1 (0.71)
-	-	-	-	340	1 (0.71)
-	-	-	-	360	2 (1.43)
-	-	-	-	400	4 (2.86)
-	-	-	-	480	5 (3.57)
-	-	-	-	500	17 (12.15)
-	-	-	-	600	7 (5)
-	-	-	-	820	1 (0.71)
-	-	-	-	1,000	3 (2.14)
total	363(100)	total	19(100)	total	140(100)

Note: The data shows there were 522 TUs which collected membership fees.

Access to information direct from the trade unions was found, by the research team, to be very difficult, because the address declared in the registry, when the team called them, they were unable to make contact. But from our inquiries with members of trade unions it was found that 522 trade unions actually collected membership fees, for the rest some of them were not active anymore, some of them did not collect any such fees, some of them we were unable to ascertain the facts. But from the 522 unions that we were able to reach as shown in Table 1.9 above, it was found that most unions in Thailand, that is 363 of them, did collect monthly membership which was set as a fixed rate, as shown in Table 1.9 above. The fee collected per member can be viewed as very small amount, most or 273 unions (75.20 %) collected at a rate of 20-30 Baht a month. And 140 unions charged fees annually at the rate of 200-300 Baht. Only 19 unions collected fees as a percentage of income.

This fact of Thai unions collect fees at a fixed rate and a very low rate at that, plus the fact that most unions are from small business establishments, results in unions not having enough income to pursue activities with efficiency. The income from fees collected is so low that they are unable to stand on their own feet. Another result is the are unions unable to invoke a sense of ownership among members, and can not entice them to get much involved in union activities. The consequence is that that the trade unions are not strong and cannot do their work effectively. Once they are found not to work effectively, they thus do not gain acceptance and support from members.

Moreover, the fact that the unions--which could be termed an "upstream organization" of the labour movement-- are weak and unable to be financially independent, does have consequence on other labour organizations at various levels as well i.e. making them weak, whether it be organizations at the level of labour federations whose role is to look after the interests of workers in the same industry, labour unions based in industrial areas that look after worker interests at the local level, and national level labour organizations. Even the international work of the Thai labour movement suffers as well, being handicapped and not fully effective as a result of the weakness of the unions.

Table 3: Breakdown of labour unions according to industry

ranking	Industry	No. of trade unions (%)
1.	Textile, garments, and leather products	130 (10.34)
2.	Vehicles and spare parts	114 (9.07)
3.	Electrical appliances	84 (6.68)
4.	Rubber, petroleum, chemical products, plastics	79 (6.28)

5.	Food and drink	56 (4.45)
6.	Construction and construction equipment	19 (1.51)
7.	Steel and metals	40 (3.18)
8.	Transport services	30 (2.38)
9.	Hotel and services	27 (2.14)
10.	Paper and printing	27 (2.14)
11.	Banking and financial services	21 (1.67)
12.	Labour services and other services	23 (1.83)
13.	Agriculture and related equipment	3 (0.24)
14.	Educational establishments	4 (0.32)
15.	Toys	6 (0.50)
16.	Glass and mirrors	5 (0.40)
17.	Fisheries equipment, shipbuilding	3 (0.24)
18.	Precious stones, personal decorative items	8 (0.64)
19.	Superware, ceramics	7 (0.56)
20.	Hospitals	2 (0.16)
21.	Product verification	3 (0.24)
22.	Oil rigs	2 (0.16)
23.	Cosmetics and beautifying items	2 (0.16)
24.	Artificial flowers	2 (0.16)
25.	Mining	2 (0.16)
26.	Containers	1 (0.08)
27.	Export	1 (0.08)
28.	Sport equipment	1 (0.08)
29.	Medical equipment	1 (0.08)
30.	Film	1 (0.08)
31.	Airplane parts production	1 (0.08)
32.	Resins	1 (0.08)
33.	Cannot specify which industry it belongs to	337 (26.81)
34.	Ceased business operations	214 (17.02)
total		1257 (100)

When the research team tried to check the data to find the type of industry in which labour unions operate in, it found only 706 unions that one can verify which industry it operates in. For the rest, the team was unable to find enough data to confirm which industry the union operates in; within this unable-to-classify grouping the team found 214 unions had ceased to operate.

The industry where we found to have the highest number of trade unions was the textile, garment and leather products industry i.e. 130 unions or 10.34 % of all the unions in Thailand. The next in ranking was the vehicle and spare parts industry, with 114 unions. Third and fourth and fifth down the line were electrical appliance industry with 84 unions, plastics industry at 79 unions, and food and drink at 56 unions.

What is worthy of note is that labour unions in the industries mentioned in the table above have not formed themselves into a strong coalition within the existing labour federation framework, as can be seen in the fact that the federation of trade unions in the textile, garment, and leather products industry contain only 28 members out of 130 trade unions. The federation of trade unions in the vehicle industry in Thailand has only 27 out of 114 unions as members; the Thai federation of trade unions in the electronic appliances and electronic industry has a membership of 21 out of 84 unions. As for the petroleum, chemicals, and plastic industry, 3 trade union federations have been set up, whilst in the food and drink industry 2 federations have been set up.

Table 4: Number of enterprises and insured persons broken down according to type of enterprise for 2006

code	Type of enterprise	no. establishments	No. of insured persons
100	survey, operation of mines	1,586	57,688
200	Production of food and drink	12,150	672,984
300	production of textiles, accessories	9,349	723,774
400	Forestry and forestry products	5,451	198,885
500	Products from paper and printing	6,424	188,158
600	Products from chemicals and petroleum	9,729	584,303
700	Products from non-metallic minerals	4,4511	164,948
800	Production of basic metals	6,827	126,528
900	Metallic products	20,951	1,025,480
1000	Production and assembly of vehicles	17,946	400,862
1100	Other industrial products	3,506	158,792
1200	Public utilities	1,255	33,544
1300	construction	20,604	387,089
1400	Transport and communication	17,680	367,103
1500	Trade	110,479	1,255,437
1600	Other types of enterprise	99,998	1,646,450
	total	348,386	7,992,025

Source: adapted from Social Security Section statistics 2006

From the 2006 annual report of the Social Security Office which was the latest year in which a categorization of establishments based on types of industries and how many self-insured are there in each type of establishment was done, we can find some interesting data for trade unionists. This is because establishments and employees within the social security scheme are actually workers who are able to organize themselves into trade unions and negotiate collective agreements in accordance with the 1975 Labour Relations Act. The data shows the presence of many employees who are not yet members of trade unions and many business establishments that do not have trade unions spread out across many industries. From the perspective of the labour movement, this reality is the target for its activity, a situation to

change; that is, to move the situation towards one with a greater union presence and hence grow the presently small labour movement. Establishments in the commercial sector have the highest number of employees, that is, 1,255,437. But looking at the data, we find that very few are in the labour union movement. The big retail stores and convenience stores hire huge numbers of employees, yet their bargaining power is very weak. These people receive paltry levels of welfare, work long hours, and do not have enough days off. Many big retailers are multinational companies making huge profits from operations here but their workers rights to organize are still not accepted, with only Tesco Lotus having a trade union.

As for the construction, the forestry and wood products industries, these show very low levels of union organization, with only 19 unions. In these unions, only 3,772 workers are members of the federation of construction and wood workers, whilst there are 585,974 workers in the industry who are insured persons.

The data from the Social Security Office is important and very useful to the establishment and growth of the workers' organizations in various industries. But unfortunately information is not given out transparently to the public. The Thai labour movement must demand access to such information so as to target its campaigning effort to increase knowledge on workers' rights better.

Table 5: Number of enterprises and insured persons according to size of enterprise

Size of enterprises	Enterprises		Insured Persons	
	places	%	persons	%
<10	266,806	69.94	942,487	10.73
10-19	52,641	13.80	709,072	8.08
20-49	35,489	9.30	1,078,695	12.28
50-99	12,454	3.26	865,262	9.85
100-199	7,159	1.88	999,665	11.38
200-499	4,695	1.23	1,439,982	16.40
500-999	1,466	0.38	1,007,671	11.48
>999	796	0.21	1,738,428	19.80
total	381,506	100.00	8,781	100.00

Source: annual report of Social Security Office 2007, page 32

The 2007 social security office annual report points out that most enterprises in Thailand are small scale, that is, with less than 10 employees. There are 266,800 such enterprises amounting to 69.96 % of 381,506 enterprises that are enrolled in the social security scheme. Workers in these small scale enterprises face difficulties in forming trade unions, because in Thailand most labour unions are of the type operating within the firm or

enterprise, even though they may have been registered as an industry-based trade union; this is because the Labour Relations Act sets the framework for collective bargaining to be only at the enterprise level. And the nature of small enterprise is that the bargaining powers of employees is weak, with employers being closer to employees and have more influence over them. As for the large scale enterprises, there are only 2,262 large enterprises with more than 500 employees in the whole of Thailand. The fact of most workers working in small enterprises means the form of labour unions in general should in theory be one of an industry-based trade union in which membership is open to workers from many establishments. But the idea of attracting workers in small companies or factories to join a trade union is one that is difficult to implement, as most employees are fearful and do not want to offend their bosses. Moreover, most workers do not know that to organize into trade unions is one of their rights as workers; indeed, most are not familiar with the idea of labour unions. So there is a need to undertake a national campaign to change the attitude of people, not just employees, but also employers and society in general, so that they would understand and accept the general right to organize, to negotiate, and to bargain. This must be set as an urgent national agenda and seriously implemented as well, in order to lay the groundwork for successful efforts in organizing the workers.

Because Thai labour unions operate mainly in small firms, there is thus a need to coalesce strongly and with unity in the form of a federation of labour, trade union congress, or labour unions based in industrial areas or industrial zones. But a survey of 1,257 trade unions in general, it was found that a large number of trade unions--555 of them--were not members of any labour federation or trade union congress.

3.2 Labour federations

Because Thai labour unions are mostly small in size and limited in terms of their activities within the enterprise, attempts have been made to build up their strength and enhance mutual help by forming labour federations (or trade union federations). According to the Labour Relations Law of 1975, two or more trade unions can organize to form and register a labour federation. But the role of the federation of labour has been limited to provision of education and dispensing advice to the trade unions, rather than in bargaining, because in the Thai system bargaining by the unions is still limited to within the boundaries of the enterprise and has not yet allowed to develop to become a negotiation party with the employer side at the industry level. Therefore, federations of labour in Thailand cannot negotiate formally with employers. At present, 18 labour federations are registered with the Ministry of Labour and each federation is not equal to another in terms of strength. Some of these 18 engage in virtually no activity at all. And out of the total of 1257 trade unions, only 212 are members of labour federations, so that most unions are not federation members. As to federation membership fees, for each federation the rate differs, but generally they are low because trade unions fees collected from membership are low to start off

with. And in general, labour federation fees are not fully collected; as the system is that the trade unions --which are stronger than the labour federations--will look after the internal expenses of the labour federation. Since not every trade union pays their dues to the federation consistently and equally, the general participation level of the trade unions in federation affairs is low; those unions that contribute less participate less. Most labour federations are not strong enough to attract acceptance from the state and employers to the extent of them being prepared to ask federations to sit down at the negotiating table to discuss policy setting or standards, both at the industrial and national level.

The Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand used to be very strong in the past but in the 10 years after the economic crisis of 1997 it suffered a decline and now is not as strong as before. The labour federation with the most members is the Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand which has a membership of 29,745 but still, this federation is not strong and unified because the members-- which are trade unions-- do not place importance on working seriously together within the federation. For example, payment of dues has been sporadic. Another interesting case is that of the Thai Automobile Workers' Federation which had shown promise to develop into a strong organization with bargaining clout. But in the past 2 years it faced the challenge of internal division of critical importance when a portion of the members led by the Toyota trade union and other allied unions resigned to set up a new labour federation and trade union congress-- a move which shocked union circles.

In addition, many of the labour federations that have been set up duplicates others in the same industry, for example, in the petroleum, vehicle, and metal industry group, one finds 3 federations in operation.

Labour federations which are able to pursue activities vigorously tend to be members of global union federations connected with their industry. These federations would receive budgetary support from the global federations for certain technical activities. For example, out of the 18 labour federations in Thailand, 12 are members or else engage in activities with the global labour federations which they are connected with.

In any case, federations of labour will need to find ways to build up their strength, to expand the membership base, and play a more prominent role in supporting their member organizations to achieve success. They must also upgrade their status such that they can be truly become a negotiating party with the state and employers at the industrial and national level. They should try to achieve influence on determination of national and industry policies and measures. They need to achieve this in order to bring about faith and confidence from the mass of members, in the idea of influence through organization.

Another role for trade union federations is to try to link the Thai labour movement with the global labour movement, in order to create more international solidarity. There is a need to utilize the global movement's knowledge base and mechanisms to the benefit of Thai trade union members.

Table 6: Data on labour federations= date established/no. of organizational members/ no. of worker members

rank	Name of labour federation	Date established	No. organization members (%)	No. of worker members (%)
1	Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance Workers' Federation	14.10.1980	21 (10.00)	27,417 (19.99)
2	Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand	24.3.1981	28 (13.20)	18,483 (13.48)
3	Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Federation of Thailand	13 10.1982	22 (10.37)	7,894 (5.75)
4	Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand	1.10.1982	16 (7.54)	29,745 (21.69)
5	Thailand Metal Workers' Federation	11.2.1983	3 (1.41)	1,504 (1.09)
6	Federation of Thailand Automobile Workers' Union	22.9.1997	27 (12.73)	19,491 (14.20)
7	Petroleum of Thailand Federation	14.12.1998	2 (.94)	616 (0.45)
8	Federation of All Toyota Workers' Union	16.1.2007	11 (5.18)	8,832 (6.43)
9	Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand	19.5.1983	16 (7.54)	6,003 (4.38)
10	Federation of Beverage Industry workers of Thailand	15.6.1983	No data	No data
11	Construction Industry Workers and Woodworkers' Federation	27.11.1992	17 (8.02)	3,772 (2.75)

	of Thailand			
12	Phuket Federation of Hotel and Service Labour	2.10.1996	16 (7.54)	3,455 (2.52)
13	Thailand Alloy and Metal Industry Workers' Federation	22.1.2003	4 (1.88)	1,841 (1.35)
14	Thailand Metal Industry Workers' Federation	28.7.2003	2 (.94)	520 (0.38)
15	Food and Drink Workers' Federation	10.2.2005	14 (6.60)	3,415 (2.48)
16	The Hotel Workers' Federation of Thailand	13.10.1949	4 (1.88)	1,217 (0.89)
17	Thai Oil Workers' Federation	27.8.2007	4 (1.88)	878 (0.64)
18	Thailand Auto Parts Workers' Federation	3.4.2008	5(2.35)	2,098 (1.53)
total			212 (100)	137,181 (100)

Table 7: Data on labour federations, chairperson/secretary-general/address

Name of labour federation	Chairperson	Secretary-general	Address
1. Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance Workers' Federation	Mr. Jongraks Supoljitr	Mr. Chalee Loysoong	1222 Moo 9 Sukumvit, Samrong Nua, Samut Prakan Province
2. Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand	Mr. Promma Phumee	Mr. Siah Jumpathong	264/57-58 Suksawad 13, Suksawad, Bangpakeaw, Ratburana, Bangkok
3. Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Federation of Thailand	Mr. Manas Yimkiat	Mr. Saman Pornprachadham me	50/9 Paholyotin Km.36, Klong 1, Klong Luang, Patum Thani
4. Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand	Mr. Chaiyasit Suksomboon	Miss Angkana Piromsiriporn	264/57-58 Suksawasdi 13, Suksawasdi, Bang Pakok, Ratburana, Bangkok
5. Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand	Mr. Chalermpong Siriwongse	Mr. Witaya Intarawan	87/33 Wat Dong Mul Lek, Jaran Sanitwongse, Bangkok Yai, Bangkok
6. Thailand Metal Workers' Federation	Mr. Boonpin Suntarakse	Mrs. Wanpen Premkaew	14/17 หมู่ 9 Pu Jao Samingprai, Samrong Tai, Phra Pradang, Samut Prakan Province

7. Federation of Thailand Automobile Workers' Union	Mr. Yongyut Mentapao	Mr. Komrit Sarnpan	1/451 Moo 14 Old Sukumvit Rd., Tai Muang, Samut Prakan Province
8. Thailand Metal Industry Workers' Federation	Mr. Pavis Pasuk		11 Moo 4, Praaksa, Samut Prakan Province
9. Thailand Alloy and Metal Industry Workers' Federation	Mr. Pradit Chaisuwan	Mr. Wuthipong Pimpa	102/32 Moo 7, Suksawasdi 78, Bang Jak, Phra Pradang, Samut Prakan Province
10. Petroleum of Thailand Federation	-	-	2/440 Klong 4, Praeksa, Samut Prakan Province
11. Federation of Beverage Industry workers of Thailand	-	-	48 Moo 1, Suksawasdi 78, Baang Jak, Phra Pradang, Samut Prakan Province
12. Construction Industry Workers and Woodworkers' Federation of Thailand	Mr. Nikom Songsorn	Mr. Korakit Saengloon	36 Supapongse 2, Sukumvit 101/1 Bang Na, Bangkok
13. Thailand Auto Parts Workers' Federation	Mr. Amornrit Kasantad	Mr. Ud Boonjaroen	5 Moo 4 Samrong Klang, Phra Pradang, Samut Prakan Province
14. Phuket Federation of Hotel and Service Labour	Mr. Vijit Dasantad	Mr. Narate Nomprawat	17/14 Moo 2 Viset Rawai, Muang District, Phuket Province
15. Food and Drink Workers' Federation	Mr. Subsawas Aim-od	Mr. Tosaposrn Kumtakoe	2/105 Moo 7, Sri Samit, Taparakse, Samut Prakan Province
16. The Hotel Workers' Federation of Thailand	Mr. Apirak Nutaman	Mr. Ukrit Ruanghairun	104/935 Moo 3 Phra Pin 3 housing estate, Bang Bon, Bangkok
17. Toyota	Mr. Pongtep Chaiyawan	Mr. Manit Promareekul	59/280 Wat Hnam Daeng, Bang Kaew, Bang Plee, Samut Prakan Province
18. Thai Oil Workers' Federation	Mr. Nipon Piromlapa	Mr. Issara Musikong	150/17-18 Moo2 Surasak Subdistrict, Sri Racha District, Chon Buri Province

3.3 Trade union congresses

The trade union congress --or sometimes called national centre--is a national level employee or worker organization set up in accordance with the Labour Relations Act, which specifies that for a congress to be set up, at least 15 trade unions and/or labour federations, must together apply for registration. At present, 12 trade union congresses have been established. Gathering information on these congresses was quite difficult because some wanted to conceal the true number of their members. Some could not provide clear data because their own database was still incomplete. Some resorted to doctoring the membership numbers i.e. to make them higher. In Thailand, a system of verifying data on labour organizations has not yet been set up, despite the fact that the congress is a public organization which by nature has to be transparent subject to checking, since after all it functions as the voice of workers in various tripartite bodies. The lack of transparency has the effect of enabling some labour leaders to exploit the intransparency to gain positions and certain benefits in the congresses for themselves and their cronies. News on corruption at the higher echelons of the congresses has surfaced regularly. But no follow-up or inquiry has been done, and in none of the cases were court proceedings instituted to catch the perpetrators. Some congresses operate as if it were a private asset of the leaders; all decisions being made by them and they being responsible for overseeing the expenses of the congress.

The fact that Thailand has as many as 12 labour congresses has made the work of the congresses, which normally should be the determination of appropriate standards and national policies, to be lacking in unity and without one single voice. The result is the government is able to decide things freely with independence, that is, without having to take into account the voice of the congresses. Or at least one can say because such lack of unity, the government is in an advantageous position of being able to choose to pay attention only to congresses whose positions are allied to that of the government. Note the Labour Confederation of Thailand, Thai Trade Union Congress, and Private Sector Industrial Trade Union Congress are members of ITUC.

These congresses have different degrees of organizational strength and working efficiency. Most are interested in sending representatives to work in the various tripartite organizations. Thus, the congresses would try to accumulate as many trade unions as possible in order to use them as a voting base in the competition for positions in the tripartite organizations; the latter which uses the rule of one union one vote irrespective of how many members each union has. The result of this kind of system is the establishment of many specific-purpose and small unions, some which hardly perform any bargaining to further the interests of their members. In addition, the various labour congresses themselves try to form blocs in order to enhance their chances of winning the competition for power within the tripartite organizations.

At present, the 12 trade union congresses are divided into 2 camps. All collect low membership fees like the other labour organizations, and such low fees undermine their strength.

Table 8: The 12 trade union congresses. No. of organizational members/no. of worker members/membership fees

Rank	Name of TU congress	Date established	No. of trade unions	No. of workers (%)	Membership fees/Baht/month
1	Labour Congress Of Thailand (LCT)	14.2.1978	87 (11.92) 43 unions exercised their right to elect their executive committee (totalling 14,728 workers)	123,000 (32.67)	1 Baht per worker/month or minimum fee per union is 300 Baht
2	National Free Labour Union Congress (NFLUC)	29.3.1978	40 (5.48)	22,000 (5.85)	8 trade unions paid 2 Baht /worker/month the rest paid 100 Baht/TU/month
3	National Congress Of Thai Labour (NCTL)	27.1.1979	140 (19.18)	20,049 (5.32)	1 Baht per worker/month
4	Thai Trade Union Congress (TTUC)	20.9.1983	98 (13.42)	30,000 (7.97)	1 Baht per worker/month
5	National Labour Congress (NLC)	12.6.1991	12 (1.64)	9,940 (2.64)	200-300 Baht/month per union. Maximum of 1000 Baht/union/month
6	Confederation Of Thai Labour.	29.10.1993	149 (20.41)	60,000 (15.94)	1 Baht per worker/month
7	Labour Congress Center for Labour Union of Thailand	6.1.2000	90 (12.33)	43,576 (11.58)	2,400-3,600 Baht/trade union/year
8	National Labour Congress 2 (NLC)	16 1.2004	43 (3.84)	6,764 (2.66)	No data

9	Thailand Council of Industrial Labour (TCIL)	19.2.2004	28 (3.84)	10,000 (2.66)	2 Baht per worker per month
10	Labour Congress Freedom of Thailand (LCFT)	4.5.2007	37 (5.07)	12,942 (3.44)	Small unions= 1200 Baht/year. Large unions= 1500 Baht/year
11	Thai Labour Organization(TLO)	22.2.2006	26 (3.56)	22,145 (5.88)	2400 Baht per trade union
12	Automobile Labour Congress Of Thailand (ALCT)	13.7.2007	23 (3.15)	22,779 (6.05)	2 Baht per worker per month
total			773 (100)	383,195 (100)	-

Note

1. The above figures were gathered directly from the trade union congresses, which still need to be verified. Most such congresses try to tell the public that their congress contain many members but there has not been serious attempts to verify such claims, especially by the Ministry of Labour whose role is to oversee such congresses particularly during times in which they are competing for positions in the tripartite organizations.

2. Mr. Suchart Thailuan, Chairman of the Thai Labour Congress, said that he cannot reveal the Congress' data to researchers or anybody else as it is deemed to be secret. No one else could give out the true data. For the Labour Confederation of Thailand, 2 sets of figures are available: one set puts the number of trade unions affiliated with the congress at 87 unions, comprising 123,000 workers; another set of figures put the number of trade unions at 43, with 14,728 workers.

3. Some trade unions are members of more than 1 congress, thus such congress contain over-inflated figures.

4. Many trade unions have resigned from their congress, but this is not adjusted in the congress member registry, and thus their names still remain.

3.4 Trade union groupings in industrial areas

In addition to groupings of labour unions in the form of federation and trade union congress, both types which must registered with the authorities according to the Labour Relations Act, in Thailand, labour unions which congregate in the same area have grouped themselves together to offer mutual help, being in effect area-based labour organizations called trade union groupings in industrial areas (or some would use "zones"). This type of area-specific coalition is one of long standing, tracing its origin to the

revival of the labour movement after the 14 October 1973 upheaval. Three industrial area-based trade union groupings have a long history of struggle: the trade union grouping at Om Noi Om Yai area (these are in the Bangkok Metropolitan areas, the trade union grouping in Phra Pradaeng area, and the trade union grouping in the Rangsit and nearby areas. These trade union groupings, although lacking legal underpinning, nevertheless play an important role because they developed spontaneously due to their members having a genuinely close relationship, and having the characteristic of a community organization as well. Besides functioning as a labour organization, these groupings have also been engaged in activities with the local community.

These union groupings therefore are in reality organizations capable of mobilizing the masses efficiently. But organizing by the industrial area-based unions is done on an informal basis, without legal backing, and collection of membership dues is not too strict. Normally, the stronger and larger trade unions would largely shoulder the responsibility for expenses of these area-based groupings. Note also that there are still many industrial areas in which no such local trade union groupings exists.

Presently, 8 industrial zone trade union groups are in operation. The strongest can be found in the eastern part of the country. These are new groupings but they consist of many large unions with many new generations labour leaders who are "firebrands". This group currently has 76 unions affiliated, comprising a total of 26,870 workers.

Industrial area based trade union groupings in Navankorn, Phra Pradang, Suk Sawasdi, and Ratburana districts (all in Bangkok metropolitan area) now have changed their status by registering to become trade union congresses. As a consequence, their activities have decreased in importance as they shifted to work as labour congresses.

The problem of area-based union groupings is the same as that of unions operating at other levels, that is, they are no so strong, because income for collection of dues is very low. Actually, this type of coalition is the one closest to the workers on the ground. Therefore, what has not been discussed much relates to their role in developing an electoral power base for the labouring class, so that workers in industrial zones areas will have political bargaining power with the politicians, both national and local.

Table 9: Details on industrial- area- based trade union groupings in Thailand

No.	Name of area based trade union groupings	Address and telephone numbers	Number of unions	Number of members
1	The Omnoi-Omyai Area Group of Unions	Metropolitan Area Textile Trade Union, 50-32 Moo	13 (7.98)	4,207 (6.28)

		6 Sri Satian housing estate, Ta Kaam Subdistrict, Sampran District, Nakhon Pathom Province 73110, tel. 028125277		
2	The Phrapradaeng-Suksawas and Rasburana Area Group of Unions	283 Moo 1, Suksawas Rd., Pak Klong Baang Pla Subdistrict, Phra Samutjedi District, Samut Prakan Province 10270, tel. 024630058 ext. 157283	The group has ceased activities and has changed itself to become a trade union congress	
3	The Rangsit Area and Vicinity Group of Unions	Trade union TTL, 175 Vipavadee Rangsit Rd., Don Muang District, Bangkok 10210, tel. 029959339	28 (17.18)	16,436 (24.54)
4	The Nawanakorn Group of Unions	362 Paholyotin Rd. Klong Nueng Subdistrict, Klong Luang District, Pathumthani Province 12120, tel. 025291710, 025293657	The group has ceased activities and has changed itself to become a trade union congress	
5	The Eastern Union Group	33 Sri Racha Rd., Nakorn 5, Sri Racha Subdistrict, Sri Racha District, Choburi Province 20110, tel. 038770504	76 (46.62)	26,870 (40.13)
6	Saraburi and Nearby Labour Group	Thai Acrylic Fiber Trade Union, 54 Moo 5, Taal Diew Subdistrict, Kaeng Khoi District, Sara Buri Province, tel/fax 036246162	24 (14.72)	11,425 (17.06)
7	Central and Bangna-Trad Group of Unions	Transport and Export Transport Services Trade Union 415/1 Rat Patana Rd., Baang Prakok Subdistrict, Khet Rat Burana, Bangkok, tel. 024274701, 028722297	Group currently does not appear to engage in any activity	

8	Ayuthaya and nearby Labour Group	Ayuthaya and nearby Labour Group, 33/4 Moo 4, Kaan Haam Subdistrict, Uthai District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province 13210	22 (13.50)	8,027 (11.99)
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4. Labour organizations in the state enterprise sector

Thailand used to have many state enterprises. This was because after the change in political regime in 1932 the government pursued a nationalist economic policy and had the state invest in certain activities connected with public utilities, and also in large-scale enterprises that the Thai private sector was unable to compete with foreign capital. Then, after the entry of the US to a position of political influence in Thailand, especially after the coup of 1958, serious attempts were made to privatize state enterprise. The Thai state enterprise sector hires a large number of workers, who have a long history of fighting consistently for their rights and interests. State enterprise labour unions have played a long standing and critical role in the Thai labour movement because these unions have been successful in engaging many full-time workers to work on union affairs. Moreover, state enterprise unions in the beginning worked closely with private sector trade unions as one, subject to the same laws. But after the coup d'état of 1992, the military dictatorship ordered the dissolution of state enterprise unions and also moved to separate state enterprise workers from private sector unions. It was only in the year 2000 that state enterprise workers were once again able to set up their union as a result of the issuance of the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act. But still such unions were separated from private sector unions i.e. state enterprise unions were not allowed to be in the same federation or the same confederation with the private sector unions. The law also determined that in each state enterprise only 1 union can be formed, which from one perspective might be seen as diminishing the right to organize. But from another viewpoint this did strengthen and unify the unions as never happened before; note in the past, in some state enterprises as many as 26 unions were established.

Even though it has unity and attracted much participation by workers, but the state enterprise unions because it collects low membership fees like in the case of private sector unions-- most collect a fixed amount, mainly 15-30 Baht a month--it is thus not surprising that they have not been able to invoke much commitment by the workers. Nowadays, the image of emotional heat and pro-activism of state enterprise workers that prevailed in the past is no more. The consciousness of being an active trade unionist as well as being just a member is not very high as can be seen in the fact that even though with 170,000 trade union members, the unions were unable to gather enough of the required signatures to support a motion to abrogate the 11 laws that

state enterprise workers in general view as laws selling out the nation to foreigners and which would lead to privatization.

4.1 Labour unions in the state enterprise sector

Table 10: State enterprise labour unions/number of members/membership fees (Baht)/affiliation with/membership fees (Baht)

SERC = The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation

SEWFOT = State Enterprise Workers' Federation of Thailand

State enterprise labour unions					
No.	State enterprise union of..	No. members	Member fees	Affiliated with..	Member fees
1	Bangkok Mass Transit Organization	8,733	20/month	SERC	1500/mo.
2	Metropolitan Electricity Authority	8,386	15/ month	SERC	1500/mo.
3	Telephone Organization of Thailand		month	SERC	1500/ month
				SEWFOT	4,800/yr.
4	Metropolitan Water Supply	2,128	0.25% but not more than 150 /month	SERC	1200/ month
5	Port Authority of Thailand	13,074	30/ month	SERC	1200/ month
6	Aeronautical Radio of Thailand	1,400	40/ month	SEWFOT	4,800/yr.
7	Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand	16,922	180/ yr.	SERC	1500/ month
8	Public Warehouse Organization	300	100/ yr.	SERC	450/ month
9	Dairy Farming Promotion Organization of Thailand			SERC	600/
				SEWFOT	400/ month
10	The Provincial Electricity Authority	21,500	15/ month	SERC	1500/ month
	Fish Marketing		yr.	SERC	450/ yr.

11	Organization			SEWFOT	400/ month
12	Pharmaceutical Organization of Thailand	1,280	20/ month	SERC	900/ month
13	Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives	11,767	300/ yr.	SERC	1500/ month
14	The Government Savings Bank	6,029	240/ yr.	SERC	1500/ month
15	National Housing Authority	920	20/ month	SERC	600/mo.
16	Krung Thai Bank	12,000		SEWFOT	4,800/yr.
17	Thailand Tobacco Monopoly	2,300	20/ month	SERC	900/ month
18	The Mass Communication Organization of Thailand	830	150/ yr.	SERC	600/ month
19	The Provincial Waterworks Authority	2,236	20/ month	SERC	900/ month
20	The Transport Company Ltd.		month	SERC	900/ month
				SEWFOT	400/ month
21	The State Railway of Thailand	15,000	Application fee=50 Monthly fee=150, yearly fee= 300 (in Baht)	SERC	1500/ month
22	The Thai Plywood Company Ltd	498	200/ปี	SERC	450/ month
23	Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research	380	25/ month	SERC	450/ month
24	Office of the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund)	658	50/ month	SERC	900/ month
25	The Government Lottery Office	850	20 month	SERC	600/ month
26	Thai Airways International Co.	13,648	150/ปี	สวส.	1500/ เดือน
27	The Tanning Organization	300		SERC (was dissolved)	
28	The Marketing Organization for Farmers	220	20/ month	SERC	450/ month

29	Tourism Authority of Thailand		month	SERC	600/ month
				SEWFOT	400/
30	The Forest Industry Organization	945	100/ yr.	SERC	600/ month
31	Rubber Estate Organization		yr.	SERC	600/ month
				SEWFOT	400/ month
32	Liquor Distillery Organization	100	60/ month	SERC	450/ month
33	Civil Aviation Training Center	115	30/เดือน	SERC	450/ month
34	Government Housing Bank		yr.	SERC	900/ month
				SEWFOT	4,800/ yr.
35	Sports Authority of Thailand	200	20/ month	SERC	450/ month
36	Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand	2,349	200/ yr.	SERC	900/ month
37	PTT Public Company Limited	1700	15/ month 180/ yr.	SERC	400/ month
38	The Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited	2,991	120/ yr.	SERC	1200/ month
39	The Battery Organization of Thailand	105		SERC (was dissolved)	
40	Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand	289	120/ yr.	SERC	450/ month
41	Public Pawnshop Office	220	360/ yr.	SERC	450/ month
42	The Communications Authority of Thailand		For those < 10,000 Bht.income/ mo., fee is 180 Bht/yr. For those in 10,000-30,000 bracket/mo. , fee is 240 Bht./yr.	SERC	1500/ month
				SEWFOT	4,800/ yr.
43	Thailand Post		yr.	SERC	1500/ month
				SEWFOT	4,800/ yr.

44	Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand	200	20/ month	SERC	450/ month
45	SME BANK [Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand]	1,200	Entry fee 200/yr.	Not affiliated with either	
Total		188,865			

Note : trade unions that are affiliate with both federations are:

- 1.) Thailand Post State Enterprise Labor Union
- 2.) CAT Telecom State Enterprise Labor Union
- 3.) Government Housing Bank State Enterprise Labor Union
- 4.) Rubber Plantation State Enterprise Labor Union
- 5.) Tourism Authority of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union.
- 6.) The Transport Company State Enterprise Labor Union
- 7.) Fish Marketing Organization State Enterprise Labor Union
- 8.) Dairy Farming Promotion Organization of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union
- 9.) TOT State Enterprise Labor Union

4.2 State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation

The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation is a coalition of state enterprise unions formed since 2 December 1979. It is an organization without legal underpinning, with an original name called "state enterprise relations group", which later on change its name to the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation (SERC)

At present the SERC is comprised of 40 members, down from the original 43, three unions having been dissolved due to a policy of privatization of the government at the time. The three were the Express Transportation Organization Trade Union, the Battery Organization Trade Union, and the Tanning Organization Trade Union. At present, the SERC has regional 10 branches in the country.

Within the confederation a unity of ideas about which direction the federation should take does not exist, with power struggles for administrative control within the confederation always going on, and at one point reaching the stage where a proposal to dismiss certain leaders from their positions was tabled. The lack of harmony was further made clear when a group of members left the confederation to set up a new union coalition called State Enterprise Workers' Federation of Thailand, which effectively ended the image of a unified state enterprise workers movement.

The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation was once a party to the setting up of and also became a member of the Thai Labour

Solidarity Committee, which is a labour movement operating nationally in policy matters. But the confederation afterwards withdrew from membership on 17 November 2008 because it was not happy with the Committee's decision not to join the People's Alliance for Democracy and fight side by side with the Alliance. Since 2007, the Confederation has been accepted as a member of the International Trade Union Council or ITUC.

Many members of the Confederation are also members of the Global Union Federation or GUF, thus making the Confederation the home to those trade unions that are members of the GUF.

4.3 State Enterprise Workers' Federation of Thailand

The State Enterprise Labour Relations Act has laid down a framework that says 10 or more state enterprise unions can form a federation of unions. The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation has been performing its function as a national body serving state enterprise workers since 1979 and has been widely respected, and thus has not been set up formally as a union federation in accordance with legal provisions. What then happened was a group of unions broke away from the confederation because of differences in policy direction, especially on the issue of whether or not to fight against government policy on privatization. So this group formed itself into a new State Enterprise Workers' Federation of Thailand, which currently has 12 union members; however, many unions who have become members of this new federation have not withdrawn its membership from the Confederation.

5. The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

The origins and evolution of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

The Committee was born in the midst of a situation where the Thai labour movement was weak, national labour organizations were divided, and a power struggle existed in the various tripartite labour bodies. Moreover, the work of the unions was without harmony and lacked a single voice to speak on behalf of labour, resulting in the state not paying attention to the demands and complaints of the worker. It was a state of affairs where an umbrella organization to do the job of campaigning to solve problems of labour did not exist. At the same time, Thailand faced an economic crisis in 1997 which resulted in the collapse of a section of Thai industry, many factories had to shut down, huge numbers of workers were laid off, and as a direct result, many trade unions was also dissolved, especially in the textile industry where many workers became suddenly without a job or was pushed out to become a informal economy worker. As a result of these events, the trade unions and the labour movement in general suffered from a loss of bargaining power. At the same time in the 1997 constitution was designed such that in the Thai political arena the executive branch would be very strong. Then, after the

Thai Rak Thai Party won the elections following the promulgation of the constitution and was able to merge other parties to it, resulting in a virtually complete majority, the result was that the bargaining power of labour fell to the lowest point ever.

This phenomena gave impetus to labour leaders from many sections of the economy who could see the implications of all these negative developments, to work closer together aiming to build up a force for efficient campaigning to solve labour problems, and thus in 2001 the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee was born.

The names of organizational members of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee:

1. Thailand Metal Workers' Federation
2. Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance Workers' Federation
3. Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand
4. Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand
5. Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Federation of Thailand
6. Federation of Thailand Automobile Workers' Union
7. Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand
8. Saraburi and nearby Labor Group
9. The Omnoi-Omyai Area Group of Unions (Industrial Area-Based Coalition)
10. The Phrapradaeng-Suksawas and Ratburana Area Group of Unions
11. Arom Pongpagan Foundation
12. Labor Co-ordinate Centre
13. Center for Labour Information Service and Training
14. Women Workers Unity Group
15. Thai Labour Campaign
16. The Council of Work and Environment Related Patent's Network of Thailand
17. Foundation for AIDS Rights
18. Foundation for Labor and Employment Promotion
19. Thai Labor Museum Foundation
20. Paisan Tawatchainon Foundation
21. Phuket Federation of Hotel and Service Labour
22. Thailand Food and Services Workers' Federation
23. Thai Regional Alliance in Hong Kong (Khun Bungorn Thammason)
24. Trade Union Group of Berla Industries
25. The Eastern Union Group
26. Friends of the People
27. Informal Workers' Network
28. Foundation for Learning on Ethnic Labour Groups

The names of allied organizations are as follows:

1. Friends of Women Foundation

2. Trade Union grouping in the Rangsit area and nearby (it withdrew from membership of the Committee in 2007 because of strong disagreement with the Committee's decision not to co-operate with the People's Alliance for Democracy in its struggle. However it sees itself as an ally of the Committee and will work with it in that status.)

3. The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation (withdrew from membership in 2008 because of strong disagreement with the Committee's decision not to co-operate with the People's Alliance for Democracy in its struggle). However, it still sees itself as an allied organization ready to continue working with the Committee.

The structure and workings of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee is an amalgamation in the form of a coordinating committee, working to bring labour issues that needs concerted campaigning to influence national policy. The idea being to come together to jointly determine strategy and guidelines for implementation that will benefit the cause of labour. Responsibilities are also clearly divided up among members i.e. for campaigning, for monitoring results, etc.

The way the work of the Committee is done is that all the organizational members would appoint their representatives to work together in the Committee. A general meeting is arranged annually and the agenda covers mainly: evaluation of work done in the various programmes that had been planned the year before; analysis of the nature of current problems; and setting the strategy and work plan for the subsequent year. Working groups are set up with responsibility to look into the various problematic issues raised, and responsibilities for tasks are apportioned among the member organizations. After the general meeting, each month representatives from the organizations will meet to follow up and assess the work done on each of the issues, exchange ideas, and analysis the current situation together.

The key characteristic of the Committee in terms of organization is one of looseness. A chairperson, 2 vice-chairpersons, and a secretary are elected. A group of individuals called "the directing division" is formed, acting as a sort of secretariat to co-ordinate with the working groups that look into the various problems previously selected as for attention, as well as to prepare the agendas for the monthly meetings.

A uniform membership fee of 1000 Baht is collected from each organizational member.

At present the Committee has 1 full time officer and 2 activists, their salary being supported by UNI-APRO; the Thai Labour Museum is used as place for co-ordination of its work.

The work of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

The Committee has set for itself the key task of campaigning to revise laws and national policy with regards to labour. Presently, the following issues are defined as requiring activity and campaigning:

- Proposing a new draft labour relations law.
- Proposing the setting up of an institute to protect the health of labour, one that will look after health and safety at all stages of the problem, that is, protection, medical treatment, rehabilitation, compensation payments, and such institute to be managed with participation by employers, employees, and the state.
- Demanding political reform and a revision of the constitution so that it will be democratic.
- Demanding that the state stop privatization of state enterprises.
- Proposing reform of the social security scheme, to make it more efficient, transparent, and with participation by workers.
- Demanding an end to contract employment. Also, that those who work in sub contracting and contract work are to receive the same and equitable level of protection as other types of worker.
- Demanding that informal sector workers receive legal rights and protection equal to formal sector workers.
- Demanding the establishment of pre-school child care centres and campaigning for equal rights for women.
- Demanding that the Thai state ratify ILO Conventions no. 87,98
- Campaigning for the establishment of more trade unions and rehabilitation of some of them.
- Demanding the adjustment of the minimum wage and utilizing the wage structure system in the civil service and state enterprise to apply to labour in the private sector.
- Demanding serious reform of the election and management system in the tripartite organizations.
- Campaigning for the protection of rights of foreign workers in Thailand.
- Campaigning to restructure the labour movement for more unity and strength.
- Campaigning to impart more knowledge on HIV to workers, both who are infected and those who are not.
- Oppose the government's policy of engaging in free trade agreements (FTA) without people's participation.
- Campaigning for the establishment of a political party which could act as the voice of labour.

Results of the work of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee

The fact of existence of a labour solidarity committee makes it possible for society to have an organization responsible for the systematic, continual follow up and monitoring of labour problems at the level of national policy.

This body then assigns sub-tasks to responsible organizations, so no work is duplicated and there is a degree of unity in the work. The result should be that demands and proposed solutions concerning problems are given attention by the state to a degree. Even though the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee is not a body established within the framework of the Labour Relations Act and thus is often viewed by the state as illegitimate, one that is outside the law, but because of its active and transparent work, the Committee has earned high status and legitimacy as a representative of working people in Thailand. Both informal and formal economy workers and migrant workers have accorded trust to the Committee to be their voice. Even the government has now given more acceptance than before to the Committee as a proper negotiating party with the state, viewing it as a representative organization of labour, and even has conceded to appoint it as a representative of labour in tripartite organizations. At the same time, the mass media in their reporting of the Committee's work and its campaigning also see it as a representative of labour. Moreover, various international organizations have willingly worked with the Committee.

As to the question has the Committee then achieved success? The answer is as follows:

Looking at superficially, the answer is yes, but with the qualifier "only to a certain extent". Because if one looks at it deeply, one would find many, many problems occurring in the Committee's work. For example, many issues that have been designated by the Committee as requiring campaigning and activity have not been practically responded to in general, or if responded to it has not achieved success.

What then are the problems faced by the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee?

In the past the Committee has tried consistently to find, especially during its annual general meeting, the reasons for failure in its campaigning and other work effort. The conclusions expressed tended to be that inability to achieve goals is because the assigned organizations do not do their work according to the plans. But actually, the most important reason is a lack of sufficient support and cooperation by the member organizations for implementation of the plans. There have been attempts to solve this by improving co-ordination and communication between the Committee and member organizations. But problems still remained, and it was surmised that changing the method of work would not be enough as it was not attacking the roots of the problem. So attempts have shifted to restructuring the organization of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, based on assessment that organizational defect is the root cause.

What is meant by organizational problems with respect the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee? As it stands, the Committee is a loose--probably too loose--coalition, such that is it does not invoke in members a sense of

oneness or unity. This loose structure has a negative impact in that a participatory process in decision-making has thus failed to arise, with the consequences that resolutions issued by Thai Labour Solidarity Committee do not engender support from the member organizations. In particular, individual workers who are members of organizations with a seat on the Committee do not know what is happening in the Committee. Information and news from the Committee does not filter down to the individual worker level.

Another point is that the membership fee collected from the member organizations is very low i.e. 1500 Baht per year, and many members do not pay the fees on a regular basis; the low total fees collected do not enable the Committee to perform its designated tasks with efficiency. Looking at the problem from the point of view of staffing, note the Committee has a huge responsibility but lacks sufficient people to oversee its work; only 1 full time staff works for the Committee and he/she has to coordinate and follow-up on so many issues. As to the representations of member organizations, they have so much regular work to do, and thus are unable to devote time to the tasks assigned to them by the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee. It was found that most give a higher priority to their own organization's work than that of the Committee, when in reality the work of the Committee is of greater importance because its work benefits labour as a whole, as well as being national-level work. But still the member organizations merely send one or two representatives to attend the monthly meetings (some member organizations do not even reach this minimum participation and absences are a regular feature, despite the great importance of such meetings to the work of the Committee).

The problem of organizational structure results in a big gap between the Committee, the leading body in campaigning for labour interests, and the ordinary individual worker. Already there is a certain gap of co-ordination, of linking up and of communication among member federations and the area based trade unions, which already have problems coordinating with their own members. The distancing becomes even more problematic on matters in which relations need to be developed more between the federations and the individual worker. Such a gap makes for, in the end, limited communication between Thai Labour Solidarity Committee and the mass of union members. That is, there is no direct co-ordination between the Committee and the workers "on the ground". The worker cannot access and are not aware of the big overarching issues defined by the Committee. Thus, efforts to draw out the masses into the Committee's campaigns have failed even though the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee consists of over 190 trade union members, which translates to over 200,000 workers or 40% of all workers in the country who are trade union members. So in sum, even though the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee on paper has a large number of members, but because of its loose organizational structure, it cannot credibly claim to be the representative of all workers.

Another problem with the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee is it still cannot link up with the work of expanding union membership and setting up new labour organizations, both of which are key challenges for the Thai labour movement. The agencies of the labour movement involved in organizing labour for the most part operate independently of the Committee and the latter has not been able to draw in such agencies and the new unions into its structure. Therefore, the setting up of new unions has not been followed by an automatic strengthening of the Committee itself or of the labour movement in general.

As for the international dimension, the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee still lacks direct and enduring linkages with the international labour movement. Even though some international labour organizations do have relations with the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, but it is still very limited. The international dimensions of labour problems are increasingly important in this day and age, and needs to be better understood. Working relations with the international labour movements needs to be strengthened.

Proposals for restructuring of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee.

In order for the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee to work with efficiency, proposals have been submitted to restructure it as follows:

1. Highlight the slogan "To change the organization to make it stronger is eventually to change the world".

2. Campaign for organizational members to actively participate in the current effort to restructure the Committee, by emphasizing it is a key mission that aims to radically return the labour movement to a state of unity and oneness, which would be in effect building a new page in history for Thai workers.

3. Upgrade the status of the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee from the traditional co-coordinating body with a loose management structure focusing on specific problems into a body with a serious and enduring administrative structure. The idea is to make it similar to the labour congress but without having to register. The aim being to bring about a more encompassing coverage of workers--more so than what is allowed in the 1975 Thai Labour Relations Act. The other aim is to promote flexibility and avoid control by the state.

4. A new name could be "Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation".

5. Members could be comprised of 2 types:

1. Ordinary members

- i. labour unions in the formal economy
- ii. labour organizations in the informal economy

2. Associate members, these are to include non-governmental organizations working in the labour field, and other people sector organizations.

6. Make available the opportunity for trade unions to become direct member of the Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation in order to close the current gap between this leading labour organization and the mass of workers. New membership should be open for trade unions.

7. Extend the service coverage of the new confederation to informal sector and state enterprise workers, as well as migrant workers, so the confederation will be truly representative of labour from every occupation and all parts of the economy. The new body should have the objective of organizing labour as an urgent priority, in order to strengthen the quality of the Thai labour movement.

8. The Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation should band together all workers into 12 groupings, the way it is done internationally. For each grouping, a group chairperson, group vice chairperson, and group executive committee should be established. These people should think about how to design an administrative structure for their group in a way that will enhance internal solidarity in order to facilitate their group's work efficiency the 12 "labour solidarity groups" as it could be called are to be as follows:

1. Solidarity group of steel workers (which will at the international level be members of IMF). This group will be comprised of the Auto Workers Federation of Thailand, Electrical Appliance Workers Federation, and the federation of metal workers.
2. Solidarity group of workers in the financial, banking, publishing, and service industry (which will at the international level be members of UNI). The group would be overseen by the UNI-TLC which consists of the federation of bank workers and the federation of workers in the paper industry.
3. Solidarity group of textile workers, which will be overseen by the federation of textile workers (which will at the international level be members of ITG)
4. Solidarity group for transport workers (at the international level, they would be members of the ITF). This group will be overseen by ITF Thailand, and the water transport workers union could be invited to join.
5. Solidarity workers group for hotel, food, and drink industry (at the international level, they would join IUF as members).

The group would be overseen by the federation of hotel workers and federation of food workers.

6. Solidarity workers group from the petroleum and energy industry (at the international level, they would join ICEM as members). The group would be overseen by the federation of petroleum workers.

7. Solidarity workers group from the public service sector (at the international level, they would join PSI as members). The group would be overseen by PSI Thailand.

8. Solidarity group of wood workers and construction workers (at the international level, they would join BWI as members). The group would be overseen by the federation of construction workers and state enterprise union of workers in woodwork.

9. Solidarity workers group of mass media journalists (at the international level, they would join IFJ as members). No labour federation exists for this group yet. Given that there are members, then, there needs to be set up a group executive committee in order to oversee the various media groups or bring them into the solidarity group structure, for example, the newspaper association, the association of radio and television journalists, and other media production associations such as those producing for the internet or producing movies.

10. Solidarity workers group for teachers and those working in education (at the international level, they would join EI as members). This group does not have a labour federation as yet. Given that there are members, then, there needs to be set up a group executive committee in order to oversee the various teacher's groups or bring them into the solidarity group structure.

11. Solidarity group for informal economy workers.

12. Solidarity group for workers in state enterprises, civil servants, and state employees.

9. There has to be efforts to conceive forms of labour organization for various segments of informal sector workers; each segment might require a different organizational format. How will the organization of informal sector workers-- for example cab and motorcycle taxi drivers, roadside hawkers and vendors-- be incorporated into the new structure? That is the big question of answer. Bringing in informal economy workers to be under the purview of the new solidarity confederation will make it truly representative of a

complete range of workers, thus making the federation stronger and more prominent.

10. Migrant labour brothers and sisters now would not have to form a separate labour group but can join as members of existing trade unions. The union general committee may have to set up a unit specifically to look after migrant labour here in Thailand and also Thai workers overseas.

11. As to membership fees:

1. Ordinary members. For workers in the formal economy, a newly set up labour union will collect fees on a percentage basis, that is, 1% of the monthly wage of members. And the union will use 25% of its income to pay its membership fees of the Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation. The confederation will allocate this 25% collected into 5 parts. The 1st part, comprising 50% will go to the federation unit that looks after the unions within the 12 labour solidarity groups. The 2nd part consisting of 20% will go to a central fund for the management of The Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation. The 3rd part at 15% will be sent to the industrial area-based trade unions for its general administration. The 4th part at 10% will be for international labour organization membership fees that each labour solidarity group is affiliated with. The 5th part at 5% will be sent as a contribution to the Thai Labour Museum which will work on cultural issues for the Thai labour movement.

2. Ordinary members who are labour organizations in the informal sector, the fee collected will be as appropriate to type of informal labour.

3. Associate members, will be comprised of non-governmental organizations.

12. Labour federations that were members of the original Thai Labour Solidarity Committee will perform the function of looking after new federation members of the Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation and will gradually transfer its member unions to become members of the new Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation, the speed of the transfer depending on the readiness of each union; in the transition period, the federations will still oversee both the old union members and the newly joined ones. That is, they will look after all workers in their industry, to compensate for the weakness of Thai unions that arose from their traditional role as being merely limited to operating at the enterprise level. The federations will give advice to such member unions and their workers on how to negotiate and bargain for a collective agreement, and act as representative for workers in their industry in negotiating sessions with employers and the state to determine the course of policy in their industry.

13. The industrial area-based unions will be transformed into a branch of The Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation in the various industrial zones,

with the task of assisting unions and workers located there. The important task being to build up a strong political base for workers, to build up bargaining power with the political parties, through the power of the workers' vote, so that the parties would pay more attention to solve problems that workers face. The parties would listen to workers grievances because these area based unions which have become branches of a strengthened Thai Labour Solidarity Confederation would be able to mobilize their worker members more effectively. That then is the plan.

6. Other labour organizations

6.1 Non-governmental development organizations (NGO) in the field of labour

NGOs working in labour problems have been at work in Thailand for a very long time, that is, from the first era of the development of the labour movement in Thailand prior to the change in regime from absolute monarchy to democracy in 1932. One is referring here to the work of the "the Committee" headed by Tawil Rithdejpanya, a progressive who worked closely with workers at the mass level, acting as a vocal spokesman for working people who suffered from exploitation by employers and the state. In fact, the history of the labour movement has been intertwined with the involvement and participation of non-governmental organizations, and it can be said the NGOs are a part of the labour movement.

The Thai labour movement is a small one with not many supporting personnel, mostly without full-time staff. The labour leaders themselves especially in the private sector have to work full time for their employers so they do not have the time to work fully for the labour cause. Moreover, they lack the knowledge base and resources to back up their activities. In this regard, the NGOs have stepped in to play a key role. Successful campaigns and activities in the past many times were due to the cooperation and support by the NGOs. But at times NGOs have been seen to be overstepping the boundaries of propriety in their work and have provoked the dissatisfaction of the labour movement, which accused them of harming the interests of labour. NGOs have been accused of using their generally advantageous position to expand their influence over the movement and use it to their own interests; the accusative term used is "earning a living by taking advantage of the suffering of workers".

There are not many NGOs working on labour issues. The ones playing a more salient role and have been in operation for a long time are the Arom Pongpangan Foundation, Friends of Women Foundation, Workers Unity Group, Committee of Thai Labour Campaign, Council of Work Illness Victims, people, and the Thai Labour Museum Foundation. Activities which the NGOs engage in are:

- Legal assistance and services. Some activities in this line are litigation and handling complaints on behalf of workers not receiving justice, supporting workers to organize into various suitable forms such as labour unions, health funds groups, labour relations development groups.
- Education and training work, such as sharing knowledge on health matters and safety at work, negotiation and bargaining with employers.
- Information and research work, such as imparting news and information to workers demanding of their rights, and at times to those wanting to set up labour unions.

6.2 Important activities done by the labour oriented NGOs in the past

1. Campaigning to support the Social Insurance Act of 1990. NGOs played a clear role by campaigning to open a forum to connect networks and individuals such as academics, mass media, and the general public. They acted as coordinators to communicate knowledge on the Act to the people, thus leading to broad based public campaigning.

2. Help for the workers in demanding for justice in labour issues. Work by the NGOs in this aspect was done in a loose network context. Forums were organized regularly, for example, on the following issues: demanding a fair wage or for a minimum wage to be paid, solving problems concerning rights of women, demanding the legal right for female workers to have a 90 day maternal leave, campaigning for the setting up of a pre-school child care centre.

3. Cooperated with the labour movement in a campaign to help workers harmed by the fire at the Kador doll factory at Nakorn Pathom Province, which evolved into a large-scale campaign to reform the health and safety system in the workplace.

4. NGOs play a key role in campaigning on the problem of worst forms of child labour. They have been very successful in this field of work.

5. Presently, the NGOs play a very important role in working with the Thai labour movement to help migrant labour in Thailand, who are exploited and who do not have access to their legitimate rights. The NGOs have stimulated the Thai movement to pay more serious attention to this problem. In fact, many NGOs are working on migrant labour, as it is a serious problem in Thailand, becoming an emotional issue as well. Thus, it generates substantial interest from foreign organizations, and as a result, much financial aid with specifically budgeted for this problem has flowed in, to the extent that many Thai based NGOs are duplicating their work in this area.

6.3 Problems to be considered by labour oriented NGOs at present:

1. A definition of their appropriate role and tasks is needed. For example, what needs to be avoided is competition for a leadership role and a repeat of work with that done by the labour movement.
2. Problems of competition and repeating of work done among the NGOs themselves.
3. The problem of finding sources of funding that will enable them to work with independence, and not have to compete for funds from international organizations or from labour organizations. Another problem is how to get the government to allocate more of its budget to support the NGOs in the context of declining financial support from abroad, of non-acceptance and negative attitude towards the work of NGOs within Thai society.
4. The NGOs have to participate in the strengthening the Thai labour movement, to make it unified, independent, and self-reliant.

6.2 International labour organizations

Cooperation between the Thai labour movement and the international labour movement has been going on since the end of the Second World War. In 1949, the Labourers' Association of Thailand which was an important national level labour organization at the time joined the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Then, later in the same year another international labour organization was set up called the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). After the military government came to power it ordered the dissolution of the Labourers' Association of Thailand and a new "Association of Thai Labour" was set up to take its place, and this Association joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Presently, the ICFTU has merged with the WFTU and changed its name to ITUC, with 4 Thai national-level labour organizations as members.

But cooperation with foreign labour organizations stopped suddenly after the military coup of 1958 because the military dictatorial government deemed that trade unions and strikes were illegal. Then in the 10 year period beginning in 1967, newly set up labour organizations abroad began to contact Thai labour organizations. In 1968, the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU) entered Thailand to do activities imparting knowledge on labour working with a labour activist, Mr. Sanan Wonsuthi. In 1970, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) set up an office here, followed by the Asian-American Free Labour Institute (AAFLI) which set up a branch office of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-ICO) in Thailand in 1975. Both the FES and the AAFLI worked together closely and consistently with the Thai labour movement. These 2 organizations are the only foreign organizations which have branch offices here hiring Thai staff, and have conducted activities here continuously.

From 1977 onwards, Thai labour unions have formed federations according to industry, in accordance with the Labour Relations Act. Since then the federations have co-ordinated with global union federations (GUF), applications for membership made, and joint activities conducted.

At present, the following international labour organizations are involved in activities with the Thai labour movement:

1. International Trade Union Federations or ITUC, formally named the ICFTU.



Four Thai organizations are its members:

1. The Labour Confederation of Thailand, which used to be a member of ICFTU
2. The Thai Trade Union Congress, which used to be a member of ICFTU
3. The Private Sector Industrial Trade Union Congress that used to be a member of BATU and
4. The State Enterprises Workers' Relation Confederation is the latest member


Activities in Thailand


In Thailand, the 4 organizations have come together to form a body along the lines of the ITUC TC. There is a rotation of co-coordinators among the four. Mr. Savit Keawan from the State Enterprises Workers' Relation Confederation was the first co-ordinator. A co-ordinator's term of office is 1 year.

In this year (2008), a few joint activities were conducted, that is, a seminar on job security and one on labour law.


Note that apart from working together in activities supported by the ITUC, the 4 member organizations normally do not work together because of divergent approaches to work, and the differences can be portrayed in terms of a triangle. The first two organizations compete with the third one for positions in the tripartite organizations. The State Enterprises Workers' Relation Confederation conduct activities with the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, the latter which is at another point in the triangle in terms of approach to work

2. Work in Thailand being done with the 10 global union federation (GUFs)


No.	Name of organization	Members and organizations co-operating
1 	International Metal Workers' Federation or IMF	1.Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance Workers' Federation 2.Federation of Thailand Automobile Workers' Union 3.Thailand Metal Workers' Federation
Office address	1/446 Moo 14 Old Sukumvit Rd. Soi Bang Saan 2, Tai Baan Subdistrict, Muang District, Samut Prakan Province 10280, tel. 027091792, fax 027078072	
Co-ordinator	Chalee Loysong is the chairman of IMF, with a Thai co-ordinator named Putthi Netiprawat to co-ordinate projects in Thailand. Putthi works with Solidarity Center and IMF at the same time, using the Center office as his working place. The latest development is that Mr. Putthi has moved to work full time with BWI.	
How members organize	Joined together to form the Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance and Automobile and Metals Workers' Federation or TEAM	
Note	IMF's work in Thailand has changed after the internal restructuring of IMF in Asia, especially after Auna Salam started work as co-ordinator. Since then, there has been revival of work with Thai members. The job of co-ordination was taken from old style labour leaders who had monopolized the position for a long time. Opportunity was given to new labour organizations to become members, especially seen in the coming together of 3 organizational members in Thailand. At the same time co-operation has been progressing well. But in the past 2 years, there occurred a hitch in co-operation due to lack of understanding between IMF and Thai members on the way to develop IMF. There was the expectation to see TEAM develop into a national union, which is difficult to achieve. And the Thai trade union side do not understand the real meaning of national union as it is a new concept and never has been realized in Thailand. The result is co-operation stopped temporarily, until 2008 when co-operation was revived, the nature of which is not so clear yet. In any case, a campaign was organized this year to oppose the idea of contract labour.	


No.	Name of organization	Members and organizations co-operating
2 	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation or ITGLWF	the Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand.

Office address	264/57-58 Soi Suksawasdi 13, 13e Ratburana Rd., Bangkok 10140
Co-ordinator	Mr. Promma Pumepun/ chairman
How members organize	The only member is the Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand. Originally, the federation was very strong. But in the past 10 years, even strong labour unions have had to shut down.
note	Received support to set up study groups, also support for a project to campaign against the use of child labour which has been running for many years now. The key problem in cooperation lies with communications and co-ordination because the Thai members cannot communicate directly with the ITGLWF, except through interpreters. The key co-ordinator is Ms. Ubol.


No.	Name of organization	Members and organizations co-operating
3 	International Transport Workers' Federation or ITF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aerothai State Enterprise Union 2. State Railway Worker's Union 3. Thai Airways State Enterprise Labor Union 4. Bangkok Mass Transit State Enterprise Union 5. The Transport Company State Enterprise Labor Union 6. Tourism Authority of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union 7. The Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited State Enterprise Labor Union 8. Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union 9. Transport Authority of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union
Office address	44 Nikom Rodfai km. 11 Jatujak District, Bangkok, tel. 02-936-2340, fax 025370256	
Co-ordinator	Mr. Sanan Boonngog is the chairman, and there is an officer to coordinate directly with international organizations.	
How members organize	The members joined together to form the International Transport Workers Federation-Thailand	
Note	All the members are trade unions in the state enterprise sector and are members of the The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation. Prior to the military coup on 23 February 1991, there used to be a transport workers federation of Thailand, whose members came from trade unions both in	


	the private and state enterprise sector. But after the coup, all state enterprise unions were banned, and a key labour leader of the federation, Mr. Tanong Poti-arn, was taken away by the military and has never been seen since. Since then, the labour unions became weakened. Even afterwards when state enterprise workers were allowed to form trade unions once more, the new law said they would be separate from private sector unions and cannot act together. In the end, the federation of transport workers was dissolved, and ITF-Thailand did not attempt to bring state enterprise and private sector unions to work together.
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No.	Name of organization	Members and co-operating organizations in Thailand
4	 International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions or ICEM	1. Electricity Generating Authority State Enterprise Labor Union of Thailand 2. Pharmaceutical Organization State Enterprise Labor Union 3. Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Federation of Thailand 4. Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand 5. Chemical Products Group of Unions
Office address	75/1 Rama VI Rd., Toong Phraya Subdistrict, Khet Rajathewi, Bangkok 10400, tel. 022038090, fax 023548853, E-mail: icemthai@gmail.com	
Co-ordinator	Mr. Rawai Pupaka is the secretary-general	
How members organize	ICEM-Thailand	
Note		

No.	Name of organization	Members and co-operating organizations in Thailand
5	 Building and Woodworkers International (BWI)	1. Office of the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund, State Enterprise Labor Union 2. Plywood State Enterprise Labour Union 3. Construction Industry Workers and Woodworkers' Federation of Thailand 4. Forest Industry Organization State Enterprise Labor Union.
Office address	Not clear, since it has just renewed its activities in Thailand, after a lapse of many years due to problems of working with the Construction Industry Workers and Woodworkers' Federation of Thailand	
Co-ordinator	Panithi Siriket, former trade unionist, is the temporary co-ordinator, and it is in the process of hiring Puthi Netiprawat, IMF co-ordinator, to be the Thailand coordinator.	
How members	is at the stage of developing the form of cooperation for the future	


organize	
Note	In the past, used to work closely with the Construction Industry Workers and Woodworkers' Federation of Thailand but cooperation has ceased for many years, for reasons related to lack of clarity and transparency in the implementation of projects in Thailand. At present, attempts are being made to revive relations with the Thai labour movement and to seek new labour organizations to work with, the trend being to work with several organizations rather than just one. A project recently started is to impart training and education on legal rights of labour and there is also another project on giving knowledge on occupational health to migrant labour; the latter is done by working with migrant rights development NGOs. Another project has to do with reviving a past project on the formation of new trade unions. This project has hired an organizational expert, Mr. Bunjong Jarernpol, former trade unionist with long experience to help out. Another joint project with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation is a study of basic information on the woodwork and construction industry including on the aspect of employment, to be used as a base for organization efforts and for planning activities for the future. In addition, a project on gender and membership in labour organizations is in process.


No.	Name of organization	Members and co-operating organizations in Thailand
6 	International Federation of Journalists or IFJ	There are no organizational members in Thailand, but cooperation at some levels exists with the Journalist Association of Thailand, the strongest professional association in the country.
Office address	No data available	
Co-ordinator	No data available	
How members organize	No data available	
Note	The coalescence of workers in the newspaper, radio, and television industry in Thailand in the form of a trade union is still very limited. Journalists and newspaper reporters in Thailand are not interested in forming trade unions, with only the <u>Bangkok Post</u> having a trade union. As for radio and television, there is only the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand State Enterprise Union. For other stations, attempts have been made to set up unions but they were not successful. In Thailand, the IFJ works with the Thai Journalist Association (TJA), a professional organization comprising mainly of newspaper reporters. The TJA is highly influential but does not perform the functions of a trade union.	

No.	Name of organization	Members and organizations cooperating
7 	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations or IUF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Hotel Workers' Federation of Thailand 2. Food and Drink Workers' Federation 3. Phuket Federation of Hotel and Service Labor 4. Serm-suk Labor Union
Office address	-	
Co-ordinator	Sunthorn Boonyod	
How members organize		
Note	Presently, there is a research and campaign project to impart knowledge of Avian flu to workers in the chicken industry. The Thai Labour Campaign, a labour NGO helps in the task of co-ordination in Thailand.	

8 	Public Services International or PSI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pharmaceutical Organization State Enterprise Labor Union 2. Metropolitan Water Supply State Enterprise Labor Union 3. Electricity Generating Authority State Enterprise Labor Union of Thailand 4. Metropolitan Electricity Authority State Enterprise Labor Union of Thailand 5. Paolo Memorial Hospital Employee Labor Union 6. Housing Authority State Enterprise Labor Union 7. Bangkok Mass Transit State Enterprise Labour Union 8. Regional Water Supply State Enterprise Labor Union 9. Regional Electricity Generating Authority State Enterprise Labor Union
Office address	Metropolitan Water Supply State Enterprise Labor Union 400 Pracha Chuen Rd. Toong Song Hong Subdistrict, Khet Laksi, Bangkok 10210 TEL. 02-5039935, 02-5040123 ext.701,702 FAX. 02-5039936	
Co-ordinator	Mr. Saneh Tuntisanoh is chairman, Mr. Chaiyawat Vorapibunpong is international co-ordinator	
How members	Members formed into a PSI THAI group	

organize	
Note	Most members are trade unions in state enterprises and are members of The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation

Rank	Name of organization	Members, organizations cooperating
9 	Education International	There are no members in Thailand; used to work with a teacher's organization, which is not a trade union.
Office address	-	
coordinator	-	
How the members organize		
note	-	

Rank	Name of organization	Members and organizations cooperating
10 	Union Network International or UNI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand 2. Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand 3. The state Enterprise Worker's Union of the Thailand Post Ltd. (SEWU-THP) 4. Communications Authority of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union 5. Telephone Organization of Thailand State Enterprise Labor Union 6. Tesco Lotus Labor Union
office address	Coordinating Office, 503/20 Nkom Rodfai Rd., Makksan, Ratchthewi, Bangkok 10400, tel. 0-2654-7688	
coordinator	Chaiyasith Suksomboon is the chairperson, and there is a coordinating officer to work directly with foreign organizations	
how the members organize	Through the UNI Thai Liaison Council : UNI-TLC	
note	Cooperation between the UNI and its members in Thailand aim to strengthen the labour movement as a whole. UNI is the first GUF to support projects that can be outside the industries under its responsibility; it has supported the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee which is the national body tasked with coordination among the key labour organizations in Thailand. The UNI has supported organizational officers and coordinators to work with the Thai Labour Coordinating Committee, and also supported people to work cross-industry, not just in the industry affiliated with UNI	

In addition, there are also many international solidarity support organizations that have come to work in Thailand, most important being the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the American Centre for International Labour, both having offices in Thailand and have worked in the country continuously for the longest time compared to other such organizations. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation emphasizes work in the political dimension and on national policies, with the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee being the key Thai organization cooperating with it, where as the American Centre for International Labour is interested more in basic level work, emphasizing training and education, organizing, but of late has turned more to policy level work.

Other international solidarity support organizations with activities in Thailand include SASK, Lo-Norway, and Jilaf.

7. Obstacles and the nature of problems faced by the Thai labour movement at present

7.1 General problems

Currently, the Thai labour movement is limited to involving itself with workers who are members of trade unions, which is a restriction imposed by the Labour Relations Act of 1975. Therefore, the movement is small in size, because workers outside the formal economy-- which as time goes by is increasing in numbers-- are excluded from the movement. The Thai labour movement thus is weak in terms of numbers and also quality. Workers who are trade union members comprise only about 1.3% of all labour. Most labour unions are small in size and are based in individual enterprises. These unions do not have many members, so their bargaining power is low. A proportion of the 1258 unions in the private sector was formed in order to act as a power base for candidates competing in elections to positions in various tripartite organizations, rather than to bargain on behalf of its mass of members.

Higher level organizations such as labour federations, trade union congresses, and area-based labour groupings have a small membership base and lack unity. Much dissension and duplication in member organizations exist, and little co-ordination and division of labour occur among labour organizations at various levels. Presently, 12 national labour organizations, or trade union congresses, are registered, but most do not play a national role in campaigning or demanding for changes in law or national level policies. Instead, they emphasize more on competing for positions, narrow sectional benefits, and for a larger share of the budget of the tripartite organizations, of the state (as shown in the case of organization for the annual labour day event), and of the international labour organizations, all which channel their

support via the national labour organizations. At the same time, there are 18 industrial labour federations registered, but many are not currently engaging in any activity. Only labour federations that are members of the global union federations and which receive their funding are still active and organize activities. These federations, however, do not do much bargaining, because such role is not specified in the Thai labour law.

In the past, although the Thai labour movement was weak in terms of numbers, that is, not many workers are affiliated with trade unions, but it was successful in campaigning and fighting to demand new laws and measures at the national level, such that the government had to oblige. Many new good laws were promulgated such as the Social Security Act, and the provision allowing female workers to take 90 day leave with full pay. Such successes were due to the ability to design appropriate strategies to craft public relations programmes that created understanding among the mass media and public, and to recruit allies and a network of academics who helped in coordinating and lobbying with high level politicians. And under the system of multiple political parties and coalition governments which means they had to seek support from various sections of society to bolster their power, the voice of labour was a force to be reckoned with; the weak and insecure political forces had to listen to labour.

But in the past 10 years, campaigning at the national level was done with difficulty. Many of labour's demands were rejected brusquely by the government especially when Thai politics was under the rule of the Thaksin regime, where the government gained complete control of parliament as had never occurred before. It was in the period of Thaksin's rule that the demands of Thai labour were clearly ignored. The government used the divisions within the labour movement as the reason to not to take into account any labour demands that the government did not favour. And even though many of Thaksin's ministers and government advisors used to be leftists who believed in socialism and actually participated with the labour movement 30 years ago, being part of the "Three Forces Movement" (meaning workers, farmers, and intellectuals-- translator) but such individuals have not made themselves useful to the cause of the labour movement at all.

7.2 Cultural and legal limitations on expanding the organization of labour

An important factor in making the Thai trade union movement weak is the cultural outlook, attitudes, and traditional beliefs of Thai society that accepts social inequality and sees it as the right thing. This makes for an attitude of resignation to the status quo, a lack of activism to fight for one's rights. In addition, the Thai state's attitude towards labour is coloured by the frame of mind of "national security" and the "cold war mentality" which leads to a sense of division and preference for suppression as a solution to issues, a desire for a legal framework and policy that emphasizes a promotion of investment, and a view that strong labour is a force destroying the

investment atmosphere. The state therefore throughout the years has built up obstacles to the idea of organized labour. On the political context, the on and off democracy or lack of its continuity that is the characteristic of Thai democracy is an obstacle to the development of the labour movement. Also, the curriculum and Thai educational system does not promote the idea of the rights of trade unions; students do not have any opportunity to become aware of trade unions, to receive knowledge on basic rights of labour from the Thai educational system. Moreover, the procedures involved in forming a trade union are complicated, having to register with a state agency and undergo complicated personal history checks. At the same time, individuals initiating a trade union run the risk of being fired easily, and in accordance with the law, and with little compensatory payment. All these factors make for the formation of new union a difficult and drawn out process. Other aggravating factors are: The issuance of dictatorial laws issued during the rule of the National Peace Keeping Council that sought to destroy the strength of the labour movement by separating state enterprise workers from private sector workers; the occurrence of the 1997 economic crisis and globalization which radically and comprehensively changed the pattern of employment, resulting in large-scale dismissals so that many formal sector workers were forced to seek out a living in the informal sector. Another consequence of globalization was the new trend in employment to more contract labour and sub-contracting, which lead to a shift in the balance of bargaining power to favour the employers; the workers then dared not to be involved in trade union activities for fear of raising the anger of employers that might lead their dismissal in the hard economic times.

7.3 A labour movement lacking an ideology

At the end of the 1970s, a crisis of confidence in the Thai progressive thinking and movement occurred, this having to do with disappointment with their experience in cooperation with the Communist Party of Thailand. The result was a void in the ideology in the Thai progressive ranks as they moved to a searching mode. This affected the labour movement, especially the trade union oriented wing of the labour movement which was the movement's vanguard, so to speak. These found it hard to pursue the next step, to think out the next stage of ideology after trade unionism. At the same time the context of this void was the collapse of communism globally, as exemplified in the tearing down of the Berlin wall, in the late 1980s, all which transformed the Thai labour movement into one that was shaken and lacking an ideology.

A situation where the movement did not have an ideological anchor, led to a labour movement without unity and controlling aim in its activities. The movement which once had a broad base comprised of workers from varied occupations now was no more, being delimited by the Labour Relations Act to maneuver only among employees in enterprises, resulting in a narrower room for action. As a consequence the movement contracted. A "socialist ideological fatigue" in Thai society also meant that labour issues became less and less prominent in society, eventually leading to a situation

where labour issues were no longer seen as public issues. Such weakness in the movement led to a section of labour leaders which did not have strong ties to the 14 October people's movement or to socialist ideology shifted their allegiance to the traditionally Thai patron-client relationship as they sought to survive and keep their leading position in the movement. This meant approaching potential patrons using various traditional strategies such as reaching out to politicians asking for their support for campaigns on specific issues relevant to the politicians, relying on certain academics, and being dependent on support from international organizations.

7.4 Divisions and lack of solidarity within the Thai labour movement

Actually, the dissension and disunity in the Thai labour movement is something of long standing in Thai history, because the state tended to intervene at key historical points either directly or indirectly to bring it about. At present, the state of discord in the trade union movement is clear for all to see. In the private sector, there are 12 organizations at the trade union congress level or which abroad is called "national centers". Many of these congresses do not perform any relevant activity, some act only as political base in the competition for elections in the tripartite organizations. Nevertheless, the state has not withdrawn their registration permits. Many congresses are dominated by fake labour leaders, who have achieved permanent control in order to further their own interests and to use their power in the tripartite organizations to bargain for economic and political benefits. But these kinds of abuses are not looked into and seriously rectified both by the state and the trade union community; as a consequence it is not too difficult for an ambitious labour leader to use the chairman position of the trade union congress to further his and his cronies' interests.

An important phenomenon in the Thai labour movement is the separation of state enterprise workers as a separate category, as specified in a law issued in 1991. Presently, state enterprise unions are separate from that in the private sector, and have not worked together closely as in the past. The state enterprise unions used to be an important pillar of the labour movement, with mass membership, strong bargaining power, and with staff that was able to work fulltime for the trade union cause. But at present, they have not been working with the private sector unions as one as before, which is a contributing factor explaining the weakness of the whole labour movement, especially the weakness at the level of trade union congress. Also, if we look at the downsizing, layoffs, and plant closures in the textile industry (which in Thailand had traditionally been an industry of intensive employment), it can be understood why the labour movement has been weakened, especially in terms of sustained campaigning on issues; Textile industry workers used to form the backbone of continuous labour campaigns, but nowadays, many have been laid off.

The fact of many restrictions and limitations in the process of setting up a trade union in Thailand, plus the fact that only a small number of

workers are its members, means that over 90% of workers are outside the coverage of the unions. Therefore, the national level labour organizations that work on policies and the promotion of needed laws are very important, because if they are successful in pushing for good policies and laws, this will benefit the majority of labour who are not covered by the unions. It is thus of critical importance to encourage the currently dispersed labour organizations to come together in a group or work together as one on national policies. But this direction has not been supported by the labour leaders, who do not seem to realize that unity and strength of the labour movement as a whole are conditions for its success. This lack of realization in turn leads to a lack of resoluteness, commitment, and sacrifice to build the unity and strength. The labour leaders individually still place importance on problems within their own organization rather than on problems of the movement as a whole, and looking back over three decades we have not seen serious attempts by them to make the movement strong and unified at all.

7.5 Lack of democracy in the labour movement

Elections in most Thai labour organizations are not transparent, especially in trade union congresses, which are often seen as a vehicle for upgrading the status of labour leaders and exploitation for personal gain. In several election episodes, it was found that members were pushed to come to vote, and the leaders who wanted to be elected would pay membership fees for the trade union members so they could vote for the leaders.

In many organizations, once an election is finished, members hardly participated in its management and decision-making. In some organizations hardly any management committee meetings are held. In many, committee members are like decorative flowers, i.e. they keep quiet and do not express any opinions. Many organizations looked as if they were the private property of labour leaders, the leaders having to find money to pay for operating expenses of the organization such as for water and electricity, for rent of office space and wages of staff.

7.6 The labour organizations' lack of independence and its inability to be self-reliant.

Most labour organizations are unable to collect enough membership fees, so are unable to support their desired activities efficiently. The fees collected tend to be at a fixed rate, not as a percentage of the income of members. The reason for such low membership fees is otherwise members would leave or workers would not join as new members, because in Thailand trade union bargaining results also apply to those workers who are not members. Thus, if you collect too high a fee this would be a disincentive for workers to join since any financial benefits gained by negotiation would apply to them anyway. In any case, the low fee collected does not generate sufficient revenue so the organizations are forced to seek other sources of

income such as from the state or international organizations, which in effect lead to a status of dependency and a lack of attention to members. Many organizations, if they did not have external support, would not be able to conduct any activities at all. And once the financial health of the organization does not depend on the membership fees, the sense of ownership of the organization by the members would be less, resulting in a lack of interest in its activities.

7.7 Lack of qualified people to work for the labour movement

Thailand does not have professional trade unionists working full time for labour organizations. The organizations do not have the money to hire full time staff, as these are small organizations (and herein lies the problem for house unions or unions operating at the enterprise level), and have low revenues from membership dues as the membership fees collected are at a low rate. Most unions are not able to negotiate with employers to allow some of the committee members to work full time for their unions. At the same time there is much rotation and turnover of the labour leadership. New labour leaders emerge and are without experience. Leaders with experience tend to devote themselves to earning a living after they have been laid off, and also not a few are promoted to executive staff and these are unable according to the Thai Labour Relations Act to engage in trade union activities.

The number of quality labour leaders who work with devotion, sacrifice, and sincerity are few, certainly not enough to compensate for the general quantitative weakness of the movement.

7.8 Isolation and lack of allies of the labour movement

In the past the labour movement used to have social allies who played a part in helping the movement work more efficiently. The movement used to cooperate closely with progressive politicians in the parliament, with farmers' movement, and with intellectuals and students, during the decade of the 1970s when socialist ideas were strongly influential in Thai society. But during the subsequent decade, such cooperation ended.

As for academics who used to work closely with the labour movement by forming think tanks and together with the labour movement plotted strategy, their numbers have dramatically dwindled, and no new academic fresh blood were injected in their place. The deaths of Professor Nikom Jantarawitton, former civil servant, and Professor Teerarat Kanjanaaksorn, from the Faculty of Economics at Chulalongkorn University, both who understood and gave strong backing to labour interests, who offered important ideas and provided effective co-ordination between the labor movement and the politicians, had a significant negative impact on the political work of the Thai labour movement.

7.9 Failure of public relations work of the labour movement

The Thai labour movement has failed to engineer effective co-ordination with the mass media. Information and policy ideas of the labour movement are not effectively communicated to the mass media efficiently and promptly. The Thai labour movement neither has an efficient mouthpiece of its own, nor a widely read magazine for communication with members of the movement and the public. The Thai labour movement is still unable to utilize advances in information technology for its own benefits, and does not have its own website to impart correct information to the workers and to provide a forum for broad exchanges of ideas and opinions internally within the movement. E Mail usage is very limited, and there is no public relations team to work pro-actively with the mass media. Posters which used to be a powerful communications tool of the labour movement after the 14 October 1973 period were rendered useless with the military coup of 6 October 1976.

7.10 Slow response to developing situations

Because national level labour organizations have not played its role as they should, so when problems surface, their reaction to the changed labour situation was slow and not up to date. The result was the Thai labour movement' response was reactive rather than pro-active. The only labour organization that campaigns on policy issues have the characteristic of impermanency; here we are referring to the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee. The Committee also is organized very loosely and amateurish in its approach to the work, rather than a professional body that can truly cope with big problems. Such a loose organization makes for a slow reaction to developing situations. Many organizations that come to be involved with the Committee have not expressed a clear viewpoint on the idea of working together. Many put more importance on tasks to further their own organization's interests than to tasks that aim to promote the general labour interests, which needs to be done through the mechanism of the "Thai Labour Solidarity Committee."

7.11 Attitudes of Thai society towards the labour movement

Organizations and institutions in Thai society have an extremely negative attitude towards trade unions. Trade unions have never been seriously accepted in Thailand. The idea of labour organizing itself is seen as something strange and divisive, not in harmony with Thai culture. Employers in Thailand see workers as employees who should be docile and accept orders rather than as a partner. Organizing is by employers seen as defiant and insubordinate towards them. Multinational companies investing in Thailand, although understanding of trade unions and have experience in working with them in their own countries, but choose not to accept the idea of workers having trade unions, because they expect to do business with them in control rather than face collective bargaining by trade unions. And if these multinationals hire Thai personnel managers who have a negative attitude

towards trade unions, the situation would be worse as it makes organizing by workers even more difficult.

For officials of the state, especially of the Ministry of Labour, they have not displayed a clear and unambiguous position on their task of promoting the rights of labour to organize and bargain. In situations of conflict between employers and labour in which the state has to be the middleman, the officials tend to choose to side with the employers rather than dispense justice, to the workers, this being due to the policy of promoting an atmosphere conducive to investment in the country. State officials have not been efficient, responsible, and strict enough in the task of enforcing the laws on employment. They have allowed regular violation of the laws by employers and very few employers in Thailand have been taken to court for violating labour laws.

Labour issues in Thailand has not received enough attention by the mass media. The various media have allocated little space for news and analysis on labour issues, despite the fact that workers are the largest group in Thai society. This means campaigning and struggle by the labour movement which requires understanding and support from the public to be successful is done with difficulty. One reason why labour issues are given so little prominence in the news in Thailand is low efficiency on the part of labour itself in communicating and enhancing understanding the issues, in conveying complete and also reliable information, because there is not enough staff in the labour movement to do the job. Another reason is the Thai labour movement is a small movement, with not many followers and members; it is also divided and lacks unity. Therefore, the movement is unable to convincingly claim to be the representative of workers. The media as a consequence does not pay much interest to campaigns and demands of labour, and to labour issues. Not enough media space is allocated.

7.12 Cooperation with and assistance by international organizations

Cooperation with and assistance by international organizations to the Thai labour movement has been going on for decades, but have not been very successful due to many limitations. Most important is the limitation in language, that is, the problem of communication and access to correct information, because in Thai labour circles, virtually all workers are unable to communicate in English. The result is international organizations that cooperate with the Thai labour movement are not being able to directly communicate with workers but instead have to rely on interpreters or coordinators. Moreover, the majority of information on labour is in the Thai language, and thus difficult for international organizations to deeply understand it all. In addition, there is the factor of cultural differences which makes for a considerable lack of mutual understanding between the international organizations and Thai labour leaders.

Because of these limitations, the cooperation has not reached the level of serious consultation and exchange of ideas between the Thai unions and international organizations, so as to enable them to jointly seek ways and means to progress the Thai unions to a more sustainable organization. Many international organizations are glad to work with Thai labour organizations, through the services of English- language- capable coordinators (but these are few in number and they service many international organizations at the same time), but the foreigners tend not to consider whether the nature of the cooperation fits in with the current Thai labour situation and real preferences of the Thai labour movement. The result tends to be that the coordinator or interpreter (some who work independently, some who are from NGOs) exert influence and plays a disproportionate role in the cooperation process. In many cases, this leads to these coordinators or interpreters seeking to turn the situation to their own interests or to provide support to bad labour leaders to enable them to grow their influence or pursue corrupt activities.

Thus, the support and cooperation given by many international organizations turned out to be important support for corrupt labour leaders.

The cooperation and projects supporting the Thai labour movement is done as separate packages, very few following the notion of the labour movement as an integrated whole. Assistance from the international organizations tends to be flow to those labour organizations that are their members. Hardly any attempt is made to support broader cooperation between these members and members of other international labour organizations. In sum, it is a situation of building separate empires, which in effect promotes division and disagreement in the movement, as each element would be more interested in its own members and industry. Apparently, there is no attempt to work together. And Thai labour organizations that received funding or project assistance hardly engage in union activities, but use their time mainly with the projects with they had received assistance. Some organizations even reject participation in collective activities.

7.13 The current political crisis and its effect on the Thai labour movement

The current political conflict in Thailand occurred after the political reform that led to Thailand having a new constitution in 1997, the result being that a new political environment emerged. which in effect defined a different political environment. The constitution aimed to create a condition of political stability, by designing a context whereby only a small number of large political parties operate in the arena; the idea being that this kind of system would result in more efficient rule. But such system had the effect of providing the opportunity for big capital to enter politics directly by using their financial advantage to set up their own political parties and in turn dominate other parties or get the existing parties to merge with them, in order to blunt the process of parliamentary scrutiny. Another aim of capital was to intervene in the workings of independent organizations that had been set up to scrutinize the government, so they would not be able to do their job.

Moreover, the capitalists also tried to buy certain parts of the mass media, to control its workings such that it undermined its independence to present news and information. By these means, capital was able to truly control the country and use their political power to further their economic interests. The result was accumulation of dissatisfaction until it became a movement of opposition against the government from various parties in the social spectrum. The conservatives saw the growth of the Thaksin regime as a challenge to royal power and to a system of democracy with the institution of monarchy at its apex. Also joining forces were several civil society groups. The key person who was instrumental in provoking widespread opposition to the government was Mr. Sonthi Limthongkul, a communications businessman who declared himself a monarchist.

A key turning point occurred in 2006, when Thaksin sold his shares in Shin Corporation to Temasek Holdings of Singapore after engineering the promulgation of a law in Thailand making the sale legal. This was seen as a new form of corruption—that is, using public policy to further one's own business interests on a huge scale. As a result, all the opposition groups got together and formed an anti-Thaksin coalition called "People's Alliance for Democracy" (or PAD), in which Mr. Somsak Kosaisuk, a senior labour leader, was one of the 5 core leaders. Some labour organizations resolved to join the alliance, including the important Thai Labour Solidarity Committee which had members from the trade unions, the area-based trade unions, private sector development organizations (or NGOs), and the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation.

Because the alliance was formed from many varied groups i.e. monarchists, believers in authoritarianism, and democrats, the strategy of opposition was not one of unity and moves in the same direction. But the conservative group within the alliance became quite influential, and thus the alliance's demands had a non-democratic quality, for example, when it made a demand that the king intervene in politics by appointing a prime minister in place of Thaksin who was opposed by many parties. Or when some of the alliance leaders demanded that the military stage a coup to put an end to political conflict. These demands made democratic forces within the alliance unhappy, and many such groups withdrew from the alliance. In the end, the military did stage a coup on 19 September 2006, and the PAD was accused of creating the right conditions for a coup. The fact that the alliance did not oppose the coup but ceased its street activity afterwards plus the fact that after the coup many key persons in the alliance were given important positions in various organizations, caused many people to view the PAD as a movement not truly committed to democracy.

After the coup, discord can be clearly seen in the labour movement. One side which did not approve of the coup and the PAD started to publicly criticize the labour leaders who had joined the Alliance. Division was clearly seen in the announcement of the positions adopted by the various labour groups during the international labour day event on 1 May 2007. It was on

this day that a labour group calling itself the "1550 Assembly" was born, comprised of labour groups from the federation of textile workers, Rangsit area trade union group, federation of food workers, federation of paper industry workers, and the central council of labour. The Assembly criticized the government as having originated from a coup d'état, and attacked labour leaders supporting it, particularly Mr. Somsak Kosaisuk a core PAD leader and past leader of the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation. A section of these groups were members of the Thai Solidarity Committee. Afterwards, the Rangsit area trade unions resolved to resign from the Committee, forcing the Committee to review its political position, in order to prevent political conflict from spilling over into the already divisive labour movement.

After the promulgation of a new constitution in 2007 and general elections at the end of the same year, the People's Power Party, generally seen as the nominee party of the Thai Rak Thai, won the election and was able to be a core player in forming the government. This enabled Thaksin Shinawatra who was in political asylum abroad to return to the country. The new government announced it was going to amend the constitution, which was seen as an attempt to whitewash and help Thaksin and his cronies. This led to a revival of the People's Alliance for Democracy, which now aimed to prevent the return to power of Thaksin and his clique.

But the reactivation of the PAD was not received with favour in all of the various movements in the people sector as was the case in early 2006, the reason being that many viewed the core leaders of the PAD as not really that ideologically committed to democracy. Within the labour movement, attitudes diverged. The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation was the first labour group that resolved to join the PAD in the fight in April 2007. It argued that it wanted to prevent the return of the Thaksin regime and wanted to use the struggle as a sort of forum to oppose privatization of state enterprise, as well as using the fight to campaign on labour problems. The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee brought these issues into its meeting to ask for a resolution on the position it should take. In the end, the Committee resolved not to officially join the PAD struggle this time because attitudes among its organizational members were so divergent. But it did resolve to allow members to independently decide which position to adopt. After the meeting, the federation of workers in the electrical appliance, vehicle, metal industry resolved to join the PAD struggle, and many of its worker members including from the area-based trade unions participated in the fight with the Alliance on an individual basis. Individual basis because the leaders did not want an internal split to occur in the their various organizations.

The position adopted by the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee made some of its members who had participated actively with the PAD unhappy and as a consequence decreased its level of cooperation with the Committee. For example, the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation since May had not sent any representative to attend the Committee's meetings for many

months. As for the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, this political crisis seriously affected its organizational restructuring plan, scheduled to be implemented in 2007. Moreover, 2008 was supposed to be the year of building harmony among members. But it turned out that these were the years of confusion and conflict—more so than in past years. In the end, the tension became a split on 17 November 2008, when the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation resolved to withdraw from membership in the Committee; and this happened 5 days prior to the summit meeting of the Committee on organizational restructuring. The withdrawal of the Confederation is significant in that move towards a sense of unity and cooperation between state enterprise labour organizations unions and private sector counterparts were thus stalled.

One point to be noted as regards the political conflict during the past 3 years, is that labour organizations at the level of trade union congress have not been affected much. Neither did it express a clear political attitude on the situation. Prior to the coup, all of the trade union congresses supported the Thaksin government, as seen by the fact that they once offered flowers to him as a gesture of moral support, and also cooperated with his government in the arrangements for international labour days activities on 1 May 2006. But after the 19 September coup that overthrew Thaksin, none of the trade union congresses opposed the coup vigorously, except one i.e. the Trade Union Congress and Labour Center of Thailand which joined up with the 155 Assembly. Nevertheless, the Congress's name did appear on the list of those who helped to organize activities celebrating international labour day in that year and received funding assistance from the government.

The 1997 economic crisis impacted on the strength and bargaining power of the unions. It also increased unemployment, and resulted in closure of many factories. These factors forced many unions to wither away. Employers whose policy is opposition to trade unions would tend to seize the opportunity of a crisis to dismiss workers and shut down operations where labour leaders work. Insecurity in the workplace will make it hard for the unions to work, for their bargaining power would decline. But at the same time a crisis could be seen as an opportunity for the unions to turn to each other and work towards solidarity and strength in order to increase leverage with the employers. Workers who face hardship and are insecure about their future might turn to seek help and work with the unions more.

7.14 The division into factions within the labour movement

Presently, the labour movement working at the national level is divided into 4 large groupings or factions as follows:

1. The Thai Labour Organization group, comprised of 7 trade union congresses led by Mr. Manas Kosol, Chairman of the Confederation

of Thai Labour. We are informed that the group consists of 386 trade union members, or 143,037 members who are workers.

2. The 5 Coalition Group, comprised of 5 trade union congresses, informing us that they have 355 unions as members or 193,049 worker members.

3. The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee, with membership being 9 labour federations, 5 industrial area trade union groupings, and 13 NGOS and informal economy worker groups. There are also 3 organizations that are not members but deemed as allies, working with the Committee. If we include the union members of the federation, they number 206 or 117,407 worker members. If we also include the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation which used to a member of the Committee but now with the status only of an ally, then the we can add more workers to the number above to reach 291,110 worker members.

4. A group that calls itself 1550 Labour Assembly is a special ad hoc group formed in response to the political situation at the time, with the aim of opposing the military coup d'etat. Organizational membership of this grouping overlaps with that of the Thai Labour Organization group and the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee. This grouping has 182 trade unions affiliated with it, comprising a total of 187,913 workers.

Note that the reporting of numbers of organizational members of trade union congresses often is not in accord with reality, the trend being to overstate. At present, no verification system exists to find the true number. The banding together of the 12 trade union congresses is in reality an ad hoc grouping of alike minded bodies, with the primary aim of winning the competition for positions within tripartite organizations.

Table 11: Thai Labour Organization

No.	Name of organization	No. trade unions	Number of members	Note
1	Confederation of Thai Labour.	149	60,000	
2	Labour Congress Center for Labour Union of Thailand	96	43,576	worked with Labour Assembly 1550
3	National Free Labour Union Congress(NFLUC)	40	22,000	

4	Trade Union Congress of Thai Labour Organization(TLO)	26	22,145	
5	National Labour Congress(NLC)	12	9,940	
6	Thailand Council Of Industrial Labour(TCIL)	28	10,000	Is a member of ITUC
7	Automobile Labour Congress Of Thailand (A.L.C.T)	23	22,779	
8	State Enterprise Labour Union (Bangkok) of Thailand	12	52,597	
Grand total		386	243,037	

Table 12: The 5 trade union congresses who are allies

No.	Name of organization	No. trade unions affiliated	No. of workers	note
1	Labour Congress Of Thailand (LCT)	87	123,000	Is a member of ITUC
2	National Congress Of Thai Labour(NCTL)	140	20,049	
3	Thai Trade Union Congress (TTUC)	98	30,000	Is a member of ITUC
4	National Labour Congress (NLC)	43	6,764	
5	Labour Congress Freedom of Thailand (LCFT)	30	20,000	
Grand total		355	193,049	

Table 13: Labour Assembly 1550 Group

No.	Name of organization	No. of trade unions	No. of members	Note
1	Labour Congress Center for Labour Union of Thailand	96	43,576	With the Thai Labour Organization Group
2	Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand	28	18,483	With the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee
3	Federation of Paper and Printing Workers of Thailand	16	6,003	With the Thai Labour Solidarity

				Committee
4	Federation of Food and Food Service Workers of Thailand	14	3,415	With the Thai Labour Solidarity Committee
5	The Rangsit Area and Vicinity Group of Unions	28	16,436	
6	United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, (a Marxist-Leninist group in Thailand)	-	-	Comprised of workers admiring Marxism-Leninism , academics, and students
Grand total		182	87,913	

Table 14: Thai Labour Solidarity Committee (TLSC)

No.	Name of organization	No. of trade unions	Number of members	Note
1	Federation of Bank and Financial Workers' Unions of Thailand	16	29,745	
2	Thailand Electronic and Electric Appliance Workers' Federation	21	27,417	Is also a member of the Thailand Council of Industrial Labour which sides with the Thai Labour Organization
3	Federation of Thailand Automobile Workers' Union	27	19,491	
4	Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation of Thailand	28	18,483	Also with the Assembly 1550
5	Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Federation of Thailand	22	7,894	
6	Paper and Printing Federation of Thailand	16	6,003	Also with the Assembly 1550
7	Phuket Federation of Hotel and Service Labour	16	3,455	
8	Food and Drink Workers' Federation	14	3,415	Also with the Assembly 1550
9	Thailand Metal Workers' Federation	3	1,504	

	<u>Total of members of federations only :</u>	206	117,407	
10	Saraburi and Nearby Labour Group	24	11,425	
11	The Omnoi-Omyai Area Group of Unions	13	4,207	
12	The Eastern Union Group	76	26,870	
13	Ayuthaya and nearby Labour Group	22	8,027	
14	Trade Union Group of Berla Industries	6	2,881	
	<u>Total of area-based trade union members only :</u>	141	53,410	
15	Informal Workers' Network	-	4,289	
16	Thai Regional Alliance in Hong Kong	-	2130	
17	The Council of Work and Environment Related Patent's Network of Thailand	-	3,000	
18	Women Workers Unity Group	-	-	
19	Labor Co-ordinate Centre	-	-	
20	Thai Labour Museum Foundation	-	-	
21	Foundation for Labor and Employment Promotion	-	-	
22	Foundation for Learning on Ethnic Labour Groups	-	-	
23	Paisal Tawatchainant Foundation	-	-	
24	Friends of the People	-	-	
25	Foundation for AIDS Rights	-	-	
26	Thai Labour Campaign	-	-	
27	Arom Pongpangan Foundation	-	-	
	<u>Total of other labour organizations and NGOs</u>	13	9,419	
Organizations having withdrawn from TLSC membership, but maintain status as allies pledging to work with the TLSC:				
1	The Rangsit Area and Vicinity Group of Unions	28	16,436	resolved to withdraw from membership of TLSC in 2007 because of dissatisfaction with TLSC decision to

				support People's Alliance for Democracy
2	The State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation	43	173,703	resolved recently to withdraw from membership of TLSC on 17.11.2008, because dissatisfied with TLSC's decision not to join struggle of PAD
Total of allies		71	190,139	

Table 15: comparing the number of trade unions and number of workers in 4 labour groupings

No.	Name of organization	No. of trade unions	No. of workers
1	Thai Labour Solidarity Committee (using data from labour federations and from the State Enterprise Worker's Relations Confederation)	206 (27.32)	291,110 (40.31)
2	Thai Labour Organization	386 (30.39)	243,037 (27.69)
3	The 5 congress allies (not including figures from 1 organization that did not reveal information)	355 (27.95)	193,049 (21.99)
4	1550 Labour Assembly	182 (14.34)	87,913 (10.01)
Total		1,270 (100)	877,938 (100)

Note: A problem of overlap among trade union membership in the national level labour organizations exists, that is one trade union being members of more than one federation, resulting in the numbers on trade unions and members appearing somewhat high.

Some organizations contain member groups from the state enterprises, from labour organizations of Thai workers abroad, and from certain labour groupings that have a policy of registering

membership from individual workers only i.e. no organizational members.

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