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Cremers, J.

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Note

from the editor

Jan Cremers,
clr@mjcpro.nl
30-06-2011

In this special issue of CLR-News we have tried to document the construction involved for different Olympic Games, the social and employment issues and problems raised and the longer-lasting effects. CLR-News has reported earlier on trade union cooperation on international building sites and on the use of posted workers. And it has to be said that the Olympic sites in Barcelona were an important starting point for the posting debate in Europe. Another interesting aspect of Barcelona from the perspective of urban planning was that the (socialist) mayor had planned to build the Olympic village, for the lodging of the participants, as a project for future social housing.

One of the most important trade Union activists in those days was Manuel Garnacho, general secretary of FEMCA-UGT, the Construction Workers' Union of the Spanish UGT. During the fascist dictatorship of Franco, Manuel was active as president of the Young Socialists and as secretary of the Socialist Party PSOE in exile (in France). He was a close friend of Felipe

González who became party leader and prime minister later on.

During visits on the Olympics sites in 1988 a delegation of the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) found out that workers were engaged on these sites through all kind of subcontracting chains for one day, one week, one month. The Olympic swimming pool was built for instance with 38 subcontractors.

At that time the Spanish building unions were fighting for the first collective agreement in the construction sector after the Franco period. And of course contract compliance by everyone to the site agreements became a serious issue. FEMCA had the lead though CC.OO backed up locally. They were inspired by the industry-wide approaches practiced in Belgium and the Netherlands. The Belgian socialist union especially had a strong influence through its chairman Juan Fernandez, a good friend of Manuel and an activist from the exile period too, who was also one of the leading persons in the EFBWW in the 1970s and early 1980s.



become a trade union member. In the late eighties the UK had no binding agreements and no minimum wages and therefore the unions did not show great interest in such rules. So basically, the backing came from Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain and France. However, only a few years later, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy joined the campaign. And in 1993 the European social partners could agree on a

In fact the main incentives for a campaign aiming for European Regulations in the field of subcontracting, free movement and posting came from that side. The German colleagues were not very interested at the beginning; they did not see the issue. And they had to fight at home with the IG-Metal that was fiercely against any generally binding wages because of the famous "Trittbrettfahrer" notion: also non-members would benefit and it would take away the motivation to

joint statement in favour of decent rules for the posting of workers based on the host country principle.

Linda Clarke sub-edited this issue and has collected a remarkable list of contributions.

Starting in Barcelona, the contributors take you along the main experiences till the actual site experience in London. I hope you will enjoy this issue.