

# Trade unions and Telework

A report for FIET by Andrew Bibby

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Comment [M1]:

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A. Teleworking: definitions and context</b>	<b>8</b>
Defining teleworking	8
Types of teleworking	9
Teleworking in context	11
Teleworking and the Information Age	12
<b>B. Home as the Workplace</b>	<b>14</b>
Different experiences of home working	14
The advantages and disadvantages of home working	15
Negotiating teleworking	17
Some key issues	18
a) Employment status	18
b) Partial home-working only	19
c) Voluntary teleworking and the right to return	19
d) Equipment and space	20
e) Remuneration of expenses	20
f) The right to a private life	21
g) Surveillance and inspection issues	21
h) Childcare	22
i) Isolation and career development	23
j) Freedom of association. Access to trade unions	23
Teleworking and the self-employed	24
ILO Convention on Homeworking	25
<b>C. Back offices and call centres</b>	<b>27</b>
Relocation of work	27
Outsourcing	28
Call centres	29
Some key issues	31
a) Work organisation and management	31
b) Staffing	32
c) Shift working	33

d) Career development	34
e) Future employment trends	34
<b>D. Relocation of work internationally</b>	<b>36</b>
The international migration of work	36
Data entry	37
Offshore information processing in the Caribbean	38
Staffing	39
Call centres	40
Software engineering	41
Future developments	42
Trade union representation	43
<b>E. Trade union responses to teleworking</b>	
<b>Suggestions for action</b>	<b>45</b>
a) Communicating with teleworkers	45
b) Union organisation	47
c) Recruitment of members	48
d) Widening the trade union agenda	51
e) Trade unions employees and teleworking	54
<b>Summary and conclusions</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>58</b>

## Introduction

The geography of work is changing.

New technological opportunities mean that businesses can reassess where jobs and work are to be located. Powerful economic factors (involving pressures to increase productivity and reduce costs) are influencing the way that businesses take these decisions.

As a result there are new challenges for trade unions to face and to meet.

This is the theme of this report. The central focus is on the possibility which now exists to develop forms of distance or remote working, away from an employer's traditional workplace, by taking advantage of computer technology and telecommunications. (These two technologies are increasingly coalescing into one, often referred to as 'information and communications technology' or ICT.) Once information is held in digital form, in other words converted into a string of electronic 'bits' and stored on a computer system, it is available for transferring almost effortlessly across great distances via telecommunications links.

The point is easily illustrated: if, for example, business documents or correspondence are stored in paper form in a conventional office filing cabinet, the workers responsible for processing that information must clearly work in the same room - or at least within close geographical reach - of the files they need.

When the same information is stored in digital form, by contrast, the data required can be extracted, worked on and eventually re-filed from a computer located hundreds or thousands of kilometres away. In theory (if not quite yet in practice), the workers can be based anywhere in the world.

This is what in this report will be meant by 'teleworking'.

There are a number of ways in which, already, different forms of teleworking are being introduced.

- Work is being relocated to other geographical areas within a country's boundary, for example to back offices in rural areas where overheads and labour costs may be cheaper
- Work is being relocated from conventional offices into the homes of workers
- Work is being relocated across national boundaries, to neighbouring countries where overheads and labour costs may be cheaper
- Work is being relocated internationally, sometimes to the other side of the world, for example from the developed to the developing world.

One of the themes of this report is that teleworking is closely linked to a growing internationalisation of the service sector industries. Whilst the world has grown used to the international division of labour in manufactured goods, many service-based sectors (particularly those serving the needs of the individual consumer) have up to now operated within the borders of a single country. This is likely to change.

Another theme is that the technology is changing the way in which white-collar work, especially office-based work, is organised. In some types of office work, most notably those which are telephone-based, staff are increasingly finding that the shape of their working day is dictated by technology. The quality of working life is under threat.

A third theme, however, is that teleworking can offer new possibilities not only for businesses but also for individual workers. As we shall see, there are both advantages and disadvantages of becoming a teleworker. But for some people - among them many individual trade union members - the new opportunity for a more flexible working life is warmly welcome.

Trade unions in many countries have recently been reviewing their policies and attitudes towards teleworking. From a position ten years ago when those union organisations which considered the subject generally took a uniformly critical position the response has changed to a more subtle one, well reflected in the motion passed at FIET's 1995 World Congress on the subject.

**Telework may be, on the one hand, a tool for employers to move work to geographical areas, where working conditions, salaries and collective bargaining rights are the poorest.**

**But on the other hand, telework, where regulated through a negotiated framework, may be an interesting alternative for employees in certain phases of their lives, eg as an attractive alternative to physical mobility due to structural changes.**

[Extract from Resolution 3, passed at FIET World Congress 1995]

This report has drawn heavily on the various policy statements and publications on telework produced by unions affiliated to FIET. It has also drawn on the now considerable body of collectively negotiated teleworking agreements with employers (mainly at present relating to home-based teleworking and mainly relating to European companies), which together reflect many of the key concerns and issues which trade unions are raising.

The responses received from affiliates to a telework questionnaire circulated early in 1996 by FIET have also proved very valuable and useful. In total, about 30 responses were received, from trade unions in every continent of the world. (Details, and a selective list of other useful publications, are included as an appendix).

This report begins by considering the different types of working situation covered by the telework term, and the position of telework within the wider context of the so-called 'information society' or 'information age'. The second section turns to consider in detail the implications and issues raised by home-based telework. In the third section, the focus moves on to consider collective forms of teleworking, such as remote back offices and call centres. The relocation of work internationally through teleworking, for example to offshore data processing centres, is the focus of the fourth section. Finally the report explores, in the fifth section, the way in which telework can impinge on trade union organisation itself. The report ends with a short conclusion.

Teleworking has been subject of discussion for over twenty years, and I am conscious of all the hard work has already been done within the trade union movement on the issue, which I have been able to draw on for this report. It would be hard to beat, as an overall statement of the theme of this report, the comment made almost ten years ago in 1987 to the FIET Technology Group by a member of the union working party in Sweden exploring the implications of distance working: "Our conclusions start from a position that we shall accept and encourage positive phenomena and by collective agreements eliminate the risks". [PG Svensson, Finansförbundet (Sweden), internal report to FIET Technology Group]

## A. Teleworking: definitions and context

### Defining teleworking

The problem in any report which includes 'teleworking' in its title is that the term is a slippery one, hard to pin down with a firm definition. Whilst this hasn't prevented a large number of research documents on the subject being produced in recent years, from international agencies, government bodies, academics, businesses and others, it has led to confusion especially when discussing the number of people currently engaged in teleworking and, more generally, the significance or otherwise of the issue.

Most attention has up to now been given to the phenomenon of relocated work from conventional offices to the home.

However, there is the beginnings of a consensus that telework needs a new, broader, definition. This report intends, for the sake of convenience, to use a definition recently drawn up for a study on teleworking undertaken for the European Commission:

"Telework is work performed by a person (employee, self-employed, homemaker) mainly or for an important part at (a) location(s) other than the traditional workplace for an employer or a client, involving the use of telecommunications and advanced information technologies as an essential and central feature of the work."

**\* In Italy, Telecom staff at seven directory enquiry service offices have been given the opportunity to work from home, equipped by the company with a computer, modem, fax machine and telephone.**

**\* In Germany, the pay-TV company Premiere has installed data lines to the homes of staff living close to its telephone call centre in Hamburg. These home-based staff can be called on as needed to answer calls at busy times.**

**\* In Sweden, calls from people wanting taxis who dial Taxi Stockholm are handled by a small team of workers based on the island of Ingmarsö, far out in the Stockholm archipelago.**

**\* In England in 1994, Digital Equipment closed down its regional office in Newmarket, replacing it with a very small 'telecentre' for secretarial staff only. The remaining 90+ staff have become 'flexible workers', working from home or whilst on the move.**



A more succinct way perhaps of putting this comes from the definition of teleworking used in a 1996 report of the Trades Union Congress (UK):

**\* In the Philippines, data entry workers have been inputting text and compiling the catalogue for the new National Library in Paris.**

"Teleworking [is] defined as distance working facilitated by information and communication technologies".

**\* In Barbados, staff (almost all women) handle insurance claims from policy-holders with the Canadian insurance company ManuLife (previously Confederation Life)**

### **Types of teleworking**

An impression of the wide variety of ways in which distance working using information and communication technologies is already occurring can be gained from the examples on this and the last page.

**\* In Ireland, staff at a hotel reservation agency in Cork take calls in seven European languages from about sixteen countries. Callers dial toll-free numbers in their own countries and their calls are automatically routed to Ireland.**

In order to have meaningful discussion on the issues involved, it is clearly appropriate to have some way of distinguishing between different types of teleworking. One useful attempt at categorisation has been carried out by the researcher Ursula Huws in work for a recent European Commission report, Teleworking and Gender. She identifies five types of teleworking:

- Multi-locational teleworking: partly based in the home, partly on employer's premises. Typically involving skilled and trusted professional/executive staff. Many covered by collective agreements.
- Telehomeworking. Based entirely in the home. Typically involving low-skilled repetitive work, paid by results. Workforce almost exclusively female.
- Freelance Teleworking. Wholly based in the home, but carried out on a freelance basis for multiple employers/clients. Extension of traditional forms of freelance work (eg translation, writing, editing, design, computer programming)
- Mobile teleworking. Extension using new technology of traditional forms of mobile work (eg sales representatives, inspectors, maintenance engineers).

- Relocated back offices. Work carried out at a distance, on the premises of an employer, subcontractor or telecottage.

Ursula Huws makes a further distinction between the first four categories, which she describes as 'individualised forms of teleworking' and the last, which involves a collective workplace.

The present report will follow this broad categorisation and will consider the implications of the individualised, primarily home-based, types of teleworking separately from the issues associated with relocated back offices and call centres.

In terms of existing trade union responses to teleworking, most attention has up to now been given to the first of these five categories. The majority of the negotiated collective agreements on teleworking, for example, refer to this way of teleworking. Workers in this situation are also more likely to have proper employee status, together with the protection this implies.

Concerns about teleworking as a form of exploitation are most relevant when looking at the second category, that of telehomeworking. Workers here are less likely to be unionised, and (even if working for one employer) are more likely not to have been given employee status with proper employment rights. They are more likely, too, to suffer from the types of problem (such as low pay and poor conditions of work) associated with traditional forms of homeworking, issues reflected in the 1996 ILO Convention on homeworking. They provide a particularly acute recruitment challenge for unions.

Some trade unions have traditionally viewed the self-employed - in effect, individuals who are running their own small businesses - as outside the scope of union movement. Nevertheless, there is considerable experience in some trade unions (for example, those recruiting in the theatre, media and creative industries) of having self-employed members. Since teleworking is associated among other things with a growth in self-employed sub-contracting and consultation, this experience may be of relevance to other trade unions. The issue will be considered later in this report.

The collective forms of teleworking, as typified by the remote back-office or call centre, might appear to offer fewest difficulties for trade unions. However the new work patterns and methods of management associated with these sort of centres can in practice prove a challenge to union recruitment and organisation. Again, we will return to this issue in some detail below.

### **Teleworking in context**

Teleworking is one part of an increasing trend towards more flexible forms of work.

As such, it offers a challenge to conventional concepts of how work is organised - the assumption, for example, that work naturally takes place in a 'normal' workplace during 'normal' working hours.

Teleworking puts this paradigm under scrutiny: it rewrites the idea of where work takes place, offering instead the possibility of work migrating from the large centralised establishments first created for workers in manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution and later re-created for white-collar staff in mass office complexes. Teleworkers at home or in a dispersed remote offices no longer experience this sort of collectivised work experience.

Teleworking also challenges the idea of the normal working week. Home-based teleworkers may well have more direct control over their working lives, choosing to work for example in the early mornings, during evenings or at weekends, in order to tailor their work lives more closely to their personal lives and family commitments. Teleworkers working in call centres also tend to work a wide variety of shifts, including many part-time or flexible shifts, often without premium payments for overtime or traditional anti-social hours.

Unions in their present form are primarily a creation of the industrial age, when large numbers of people worked together in close proximity to each other and when collective interests and the need for solidarity were easy to perceive. The power and influence of trade unions in the collective bargaining process is very much centred on the traditional work paradigm. Clearly, the development of telework and other forms of flexible working offers a challenge.

On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the paradigm of the 'normal' workplace and working week does not have worldwide relevance, excluding as it does the work experience of many people in the world, especially those outside the countries of the developed world. It also tends to reflect a traditional male approach to jobs and excludes, even within the developed world, the experience which many women have had of work in which temporary jobs, part-time and casual employment and unpaid labour has always played a much more important role.

So telework, by challenging some of the old certainties of work, may have the advantage of focusing attention on how the basic trade union principles of mutual self-help and solidarity can be developed into a new century.

### **Teleworking and the Information Age**

As already mentioned, teleworking is made possible by the digitisation of information.

An increasing number of jobs are, in the broadest sense, concerned with the manipulation of information. This is true not only of the service sector but also in manufacturing, where less and less of the value of goods and services comes from the material aspects of production.

**"Over 50 per cent of the market value of a car is related to its 'information' content - through research, design, production and retail management. Even for a packet of pasta, most of its retail value is information related. In terms of their market value, most products can be substantially dematerialized."**

[Sustainability in an information society: view from the European Commission; Robert Pestel and Peter Johnston, World Transport Policy & Practice 2/1,2]

The implications for the move from an industrial age to an information age are currently being widely debated. In the United States, this has been associated with the National Information Infrastructure initiative of President Clinton and Vice-President Gore. In the European context, the focus has been on the term 'Information Society', the theme of a series of high-level discussion paper. The Information Society was also the theme of the Group of 7 (G-7) ministerial conference held in 1995. A follow-up meeting to the G-7 conference held in South Africa in 1996 considered the implications of the Information Society for the needs of the developing world.

More popularly, the talk has been of developing 'information superhighways', of which the present Internet is an early (and compared with forthcoming technologies, very low-tech) precursor.

In much of the debate on the 'Information Society', the idea of teleworking has been given considerable importance, certainly more than the actual present-day examples

of telework in operation would merit. Telework is seen as a model of the sort of work organisation which the Information Society would bring about. This context therefore perhaps gives the themes of this report a wider relevance than would otherwise be the case.

## **B. Home as the Workplace**

### **Different experiences of home working**

The experience of working from home is not the same for everyone. Whether individuals generally perceive it to be positive or negative depends on a wide range of factors: the work being done, the status of the work, the way the work is paid, the employment status and conditions involved, the amount of space at home and the living conditions there, the personal circumstances of the home worker, and many more.

Generalisations that home teleworking is always to be opposed - or, alternatively, always to be supported - are clearly inappropriate, therefore.

It helps to distinguish between different types of home-based telework. In the previous chapter, a distinction was drawn between partial home-teleworking, where staff (usually professionals) also work for part of the working week on their employers' premises, and full-time telehomeworking involving low-status repetitive work paid by results.

Another way of approaching this is to make a distinction between off-line and on-line teleworking. The on-line teleworker is permanently connected to an employer's network, for example handling telephone calls routed in to the home via automated call distribution (ACD) technology. Their working life is much more controlled by technology, and they have much less flexibility in the way that they organise their working time.

Off-line teleworkers typically are much freer to set their own working rhythms, undertaking work on their home PCs and connecting to company computer networks as and when necessary to download or upload files or check e-mail. This is likely to be the experience, for example, of software developers, researchers, teleworking executives, etc.

The image of teleworking from a pleasant country cottage or summer house away from the pressures of urban life (and the problems of commuting to work) is a seductive one. However, it presupposes that everyone can afford this sort of lifestyle. In practice, the issue is likely to be whether the teleworker has adequate space at home to be able to telework without serious detrimental effect on their private life. In particular, the key question is often whether there is space for a

separate teleworking office, where work equipment (and appropriate furniture) can be properly installed. Among other things, this raises questions of class.

The variety of types of home-teleworking needs to be borne in mind when considering the points raised in the rest of this chapter. Currently, most of the experience of negotiating home-based telework agreements is European-based, and in general relates to higher-status workers.

**\* Siemens Nixdorf Informationssysteme in Stockholm introduced a home-based teleworking programme in 1995 at the same time as it relocated to a new, less central, site 30 kms north of the city. Currently about 150 of the 200+ workforce have the option to telework, between 2-4 days a week.**

**\* Digital Italy introduced a voluntary telework programme for ten software engineers in 1996, by agreement with the works council.**

### **The advantages and disadvantages of home working**

Many individual workers currently working in conventional workplaces find the idea of working from home enormously attractive. Trade unions which seek to have a blanket ban against telework risk losing the support and goodwill of their members or potential members.

However, unions also have the task of pointing out the disadvantages as well as the advantages of taking work home. Sometimes the disadvantages are not immediately apparent. There may also be longer-term implications which need to be identified: for example, short-term satisfactions of home-working can fade as workers find themselves cut off from their colleagues and from the possibilities of career advancement and further training.

**“What sounds good at first can soon turn out to be problematic. Unfortunately, there are still many dangers which are not evident at first glance.**

**“Three years ago I took part in an HBV working group on the topic of telework. We, too, had the initial impression that the pros outweighed the cons. Only a closer examination of the facts made it apparent that telework has enormous drawbacks.”**

[Gabi Seum, full-time works council member at Commerzbank head office, speech to HBV national assembly Feb 29, 1996]

One union which has tried dispassionately to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages is the HBV (Germany). It has produced the following table:

*Pros and cons - what positive and negative effects does telework at home have on employees?*

Positive effects	Dangers Negative effects
Free choice of working times	Danger of overwork (self-exploitation) Loss of premiums for nights/Sundays/holidays
Undisturbed work	Work postponed during illness or employee works despite illness Unclarity as to identity of replacement in case of illness Less use made of right to take leave when children are ill Impossible to ignore family disturbances
Fewer conflicts with colleagues/supervisors	Loss of communications with colleagues
Conduct cannot be supervised or monitored	Loss of evaluation of work and performance/recognition
Reduced travel costs and time	Workplace standards not guaranteed Ability of works council and safety inspectors to inspect workplaces limited. Damage to hard/software, loss of data, unauthorised access to data
Greater ease in combining work and family responsibilities	Invasion of the private sphere
Child care easier (or only alternative to giving up work entirely)	Employee loses sight of developments within company. Less chance of promotion, etc No participation in life of the company/everyday life Two classes of employees: - those with suitable jobs for telework - those with suitable rooms Once a teleworker, always a teleworker. Participation in activities connected with



	representation of employee interests (works council, trade union)
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[Telearbeit: Chance oder Risiko?, Diskussionsmaterial der Gewerkschaft Handel, Banken und Versicherungen, 1995]

**“The best advice for those work places which are in the process of introducing teleworking from home is: Think it over beforehand!..  
Do I have room for an office space which fulfils the requirements for a reasonable working environment? Will I be able to work without interruptions? How will my work influence the rest of the family? How will things work out when the children get home from school - will I be able to plan my work in such a way that I might take a few hours off at that point? It might be almost as important to have an agreement with the other family members, as with the employer, on how the whole thing should work.”**

[Med Jobbet På Distans, TCO (Sweden) 1996]

### **Negotiating teleworking**

Separately, different trade unions have identified many of the same issues for negotiation when home-based teleworking is under discussion.

The British white collar union MSF's Telework Guidelines are a useful summary of many of the key points:

- \* Teleworkers should be employees of an enterprise, not deemed self-employed.
- \* To avoid isolation, contracts of employment should require home workers to attend the office periodically.
- \* There should be a separate room available at home for teleworking, a separate telephone, and employers should pay for additional costs.
- \* There should be regular meetings between teleworkers, and the provision of e-mail and telephone links with other teleworkers, all provided at the employer's expense
- \* There should be regular weekly liaison discussions between teleworkers and their supervisor/manager.
- \* Teleworkers should enjoy the same rates of pay and employment benefits as office-based workers, including childcare provision and family leave. There should be a defined number of working hours and teleworkers should be included in career development and appraisal schemes including training opportunities.
- \* All computer equipment should be provided, paid for and serviced by the employer who will be responsible for installation, maintenance, insurance and compliance with

health and safety requirements. The employer should also accept legal responsibility for any accident or injury.

\* Teleworkers should have access to trade union representation and be able to attend meetings within working hours. Health and safety advisers and trade union representatives should be able to visit teleworkers.

\* Teleworking should be voluntary and workers should have the right to return to working from the office.

## **Some key issues**

### **a) Employment status**

Principle: Teleworking should not be an excuse for weakening of the employment conditions. Employee status must be maintained.

Issues: There is perhaps a risk that companies who decide to go as far as contemplating flexible teleworking arrangements will be tempted to go one step further, and review also the contractual relationship with individual teleworker - in other words, to replace employees and outsource work to independent consultants. This was the case in the early 1980s with a pilot telework scheme run by the United Kingdom firm Rank Xerox. It was also an issue with another early telework programme, in California (see box)

**In 1982, California Western States Life Insurance Company offered some of its insurance-claims processors the opportunity to do their work at home instead of in the office. They would become contractors, paid by a piece rate and given no benefits. On December 1, 1985, eight of the women quit their jobs and filed a suit against the company, claiming that the independent contracting arrangement was simply a subterfuge to avoid paying them benefits. The case was settled by the company in 1988 out of court, for an undisclosed sum. The telework programme was terminated.**

[Source: Across the Board, April 1987]

'Pseudo' self-employment has been a problem in some countries with traditional sweatshop-type homeworking. In many countries, companies save on social security and other costs if workers can be claimed to be self-employed.

For a discussion on the position of legitimately self-employed teleworkers, see below.

### **b) Partial home-working only**

Principle: home teleworkers should also work part of their time from a conventional office.

**"Human abilities and professional skills develop through social relations. An isolated work environment cannot be compensated for by intensifying family contacts... For these reasons and because social benefits are lacking, only doing telehomeworking is to be rejected."**

[Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung, GPA (Austria), 1996]

Issues: In general, the requirements of good management suggests that this principle is in employers' interests too. It is a feature of most existing collective agreements on teleworking.

However, in the longer term moves by companies to save on property costs may mean that teleworkers' desk space disappears, to be replaced by arrangements such as 'hot desking'. Companies are less likely to need regular office attendance from lower-status teleworkers performing routine work (such as telesales or telemarketing).

### **c) Voluntary teleworking and the right to return**

Principle: teleworking must be the voluntary choice of the employee. Teleworkers must have the right to return to the conventional workplace.

Issues: This principle could be under threat in the longer term by moves by companies to close offices (see, for example, the case of Digital UK and its Newmarket office - previous section). The situation will also change as and when companies begin direct recruitment of new teleworking employees, rather than simply inviting existing employees to work from home.

The 'right to return' is important not only for employees who find that homeworking does not work out for them but also for those who face the loss of their home through personal changes (separation, divorce etc).

Employers who have incurred capital costs, such as from the installation of ISDN or data lines to houses, may be less inclined to allow workers to return to the former workplace.

### **d) Equipment and space**

Principle: employers should provide teleworkers with necessary work equipment, meeting full health and safety requirements.

**“The teleworker's equipment at home should be equivalent to that used at the principal place of work. The employer should pay for office furniture and the electronic equipment needed by the teleworker for his/her home-based job. He/she should also ensure that the home-based workplace is properly organised for the technical equipment (electric earth connection, telephone, etc).”**

[Med Jobbet På Distans, TCO (Sweden) 1996]

**"Another critical point is the question of liability for equipment in the home... The invasion of the home by work can be an expensive matter if children try to find out if computers like cocoa."**

[Gabi Seum, speech to HBV national assembly Feb 29, 1996]

Issues:

There is a risk that home-based workers will make do with inappropriate home furniture - kitchen chairs, tables, etc - rather than using proper ergonomically designed office furniture. This can considerably increase the risk of muscular-skeletal disorders, such as upper limb disorders/repetitive stress injuries.

There is a danger that employers will feel that they can cast off outdated computer equipment or office equipment on to home workers.

#### **e) Remuneration of expenses**

Principle: The employer should meet the additional costs faced by home-based teleworkers.

Issues: Existing teleworking agreements show wide variation in this area. On the one hand, for example, Digital Italy has agreed to pay a one-off amount of 2.1m lira as an expenses refund. On the other, some employers offer no compensation for employees' additional expenses, sometimes claiming spuriously that teleworkers are able to benefit from savings on commuting costs.

The use of part of one's home for work for an employer involves not just the obvious additional costs (heating and lighting bills, wear and tear, etc), but also the less easily quantifiable 'opportunity cost' - in other words, the fact that by using space for work it is not available for other uses.

#### **f) The right to a private life**

Principle: Teleworkers should be able to make a clear break between their work and private lives.

Issues: One of the problems with home-based working is that of workaholism. Employees may undertake company work in their own time 'just to get it finished'.

There is a separate issue facing home-based workers who are 'on call', or who are called upon by employers to help meet peak workload problems. Clearly the danger here is that the worker on stand-by is unable to carry on with their ordinary lives but will not necessarily be recompensed adequately if they are not, in fact, required.

The flexibility associated with teleworking may encourage a tendency towards the increasing segmentation of the working day, with individuals expected to work for a series of shorter periods interspersed throughout the day, perhaps to meet peak demand times. Clearly this sort of segmentation is generally a very unsatisfactory alternative to a clear work/non-work division of time.

**“Teleservices may in certain circumstances be provided around the clock, as is the case for telesurveillance. If the number of calls received is low, staff will not be required to spend nights or weekends on the premises; instead, calls will automatically be re-routed to the home of the employee who is on duty. Any rostering system of this kind which requires somebody to remain on duty in their homes has to be specified in the contract of employment and must be the subject of negotiations.”**

[Le Télétravail, UCC-CFDT, April 1996]

#### **g) Surveillance and inspection issues**

Principle: The need for inspection of working conditions by trade union representatives and health and safety inspectors should not conflict with teleworkers' right to privacy.

Issues: This area needs careful consideration. Most negotiated home-teleworking agreements accept that, if employers are to meet their obligations to ensure a safe working environment for their staff, they must also have the right to access to the home workplace. Most trade unions have also insisted on writing in the right of union or works council representatives and of labour/health and safety inspectors to visit the home. However, arrangements should be made in conjunction with the individual concerned rather than being imposed on them.

Employers potentially have access to a range of electronic surveillance methods which enable them to monitor employees' performance at a distance. These include key-stroke monitoring, telephone call accounting and recording and also - at least

potentially - video surveillance of staff whilst at work. In each case, this information can be stored in digital form.

When carried out on employers' premises, these methods raise legitimate concerns for workers' privacy. When the worker is based in their own home, such concerns are even more relevant.

The issue was the subject of an International Labour Office report, Workers Privacy (Conditions of Work Digest, vol 12, 1/1993). FIET was instrumental in organising an international conference in 1985, which established trade union guidelines on personnel data collection and processing systems.

**"Workers' rights to privacy should be treated as a fundamental human rights issue."**

[Concluding remarks, ILO: Workers Privacy, Conditions of Work Digest vol 12, 1/1993]

#### **h) Childcare**

Principle: Home teleworking cannot be carried out at the same time as childcare

Issues: Parents and carers may benefit from teleworking, provided they are given greater flexibility in establishing their working hours (eg, to tie in with children's hours in school). This is more likely when teleworkers are higher-status and able to work off-line, rather than undertaking lower-status work permanently on-line.

Teleworking does not eliminate the need for proper childcare arrangements to be organised.

**"The parties agree that teleworking is not a substitute for childcare or any other form of dependant care. Telstra's policy on childcare provisions continues to apply. Employees are responsible for ensuring that appropriate childcare or dependant care arrangements are in place whilst engaged in teleworking."**

[clause in the collective telework agreement between Telstra Corporation Ltd and the Communication Workers' Union of Australia, 1994]

This is considered further below, in the context of equal opportunities issues.

#### **i) Isolation and career development**

Principle: Procedures must be instituted to protect teleworkers from the dangers of isolation and depression. This is a health and safety issue. Teleworkers must be given opportunities to progress their careers.

Issues: There is some evidence that isolation can begin to be a problem in the longer-term (after a number of years), after the initial 'honeymoon' period of teleworking is over.

Practical arrangements for providing training for home-based teleworkers need to be spelled out in telework agreements. Teleworkers miss out on the peer education and informal mentoring which goes on in conventional workplaces.

**"The teleworker no longer has access to the kind of informal training that people acquire in contact and discussion with their colleagues at work, and it is therefore vital that they maintain their skills, given that the tools of their trade (hardware and software) change very quickly."**

[Le Télétravail, UCC-CFDT, April 1996]

#### **j) Freedom of association. Access to trade unions**

Principle: Teleworkers should continue to have access to trade unions.

Issues: Trade unions/works councils should ensure that they are given details of each teleworking employee, with address. Unions should have the right to communicate directly with employees through the company's e-mail and electronic communications systems.

Teleworkers should have the opportunity to stand for union positions, and to undertake duties as union representatives.

**"To work at home and also be a union representative ought not to create any problems as long as the home-based work is not full time"**

[Med Jobbet På Distans, TCO (Sweden) 1996]

#### **Guidelines for Telecommuting Trials [extract from]**

- \* union's right to inspect home workstations for safety and ergonomics**
- \* telecommuters to be advised routinely of job openings and advancement opportunities**
- \* a message from the union to telecommuters when they enter the system, and assurance that telecommuters will be given time regularly to consult with union stewards**

## **Teleworking and the self-employed**

Detailed guidelines and codes of practice for teleworking which cover the above issues are of little or no value if the person undertaking the telework is not in an employee relationship with an employer. It is clear from research carried out that considerable numbers of home-based teleworkers are self-employed. The growing number of self-employed people in many countries of the developed world can be seen as another manifestation of the development of new flexible working practices.

We have looked already at the problems of pseudo self-employment, where employers attempt to shed their employment responsibilities. As the GPA (Austria) puts it, "There is no direct protection of economically independent suppliers of telework. However 'independence' often exists only on paper. Frequently, there is no real entrepreneurial freedom or realistic chance of earning profits." [Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung, GPA (Austria), 1996].

Whilst pseudo self-employment particularly threatens the interests of low-paid, low-status workers, self-employed teleworking by itself, however, need not be undesirable. This is the case particularly for higher-status workers who have the skills to manage their own business affairs.

Teleworking is in many respects simply a new name for what has traditionally been the way of working practised, for example, by self-employed writers and authors, translators, graphic designers, journalists etc. Whilst the technology may have changed (eg from typewriters and envelopes to PCs and fax machines), the method of working has not.

But the numbers of home-based self-employed people is increasing. Some professional workers who may have chosen, or found themselves obliged, to take redundancy or early retirement are now using their existing skills and contacts to develop their own freelance businesses on a consultancy basis.

In some industries (for example, the theatre and the media), there is a tradition of these self-employed workers being unionised. There are cases of their unions fighting on their behalf to ensure that their self-employed status was maintained, in the face on attempts by tax authorities to reclassify them as employees.



**Two examples from Britain:**

\* **The National Union of Journalists helped a self-employed member Margaret Leslie defend her right for casual shifts in newspaper offices to be treated as self-employed work**

\* **Equity successfully backed two stage actors in a 1993 test case after the British tax authorities attempted to treat them as employees.**

Even where the self-employed flourish by their own hard work or entrepreneurial skills, however, they will still be unable at a fundamental level to control their rates of remuneration and profit. Whatever the theoretical models of competition given in economics textbooks, individuals and very small businesses have in practice little power to control the markets they are in. Like employees, they too have a need for collective action to defend their interests.

Trade unions should consider ways of recruiting and supporting the growing number of self-employed teleworkers.

**ILO Convention on Homeworking**

The working conditions of homeworkers, including homeworkers using new technology, are now the subject of an ILO Convention, passed (despite considerable opposition from employers' representatives) at the 1996 International Labour Conference.

The Convention, and an associated set of recommendations on home work, covers employees and the pseudo self-employed, but not the genuinely self-employed (what the Convention describes as a person with 'the degree of autonomy and of economic independence to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions').

Whilst the Convention is of relevance to the theme of this report, its areas of concern do not exactly coincide with teleworking: not every homeworker is a teleworker, neither is every teleworker a homeworker.

Member states which ratify the Convention are obliged to set up national policies on home work. Under Article 4 of the Convention, such a policy 'shall promote, as far

as possible, equality of treatment between homeworkers and other wage earners'.

The Article specifies the following areas:

- the homeworkers' right to establish or join organisations of their own choosing and to participate in the activities of such organisations
- protection against discrimination in employment and occupation
- protection in the field of occupational safety and health
- remuneration
- statutory social security protection
- access to training
- minimum age for admission to employment or work; and
- maternity protection.

## **C. Back offices and call centres**

### **Relocation of work**

Teleworking, as defined in this report has two attributes: the idea of distance working, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). It is important, therefore, to look wider than simply the models of home-based teleworking. Indeed, there is a strong argument that the use of teleworking from back offices and call centres is much more important as an issue than the perhaps limited development of home-telework.

Clearly, since much traditional clerical and administrative officework may make use of ICT, there can be difficulty in deciding just where to draw the line on what constitutes teleworking. Our focus in this section will be on the relocation of work brought about by the use of ICT.

That relocation may be to centralised offices within urban areas (for example, the removal of banks' administrative functions from shopping areas to specialist centres elsewhere in the same city). It may involve the establishment of larger back offices, servicing several cities or regions. It can alternatively involve the deliberate decision to relocate to much more remote parts of the country, for example to rural areas where overheads and labour costs may be cheaper.

**\* Hertz handles car rental enquiries in Sweden from a centre in Arvidsjaur, a small inland town 900 kms north of Stockholm**

**\* Citycorp in Germany runs its credit card operation from Nordhorn, a small town close to the Dutch border, where salaries are reportedly 20% lower than Frankfurt**

**\* In Spain, many banks and savings banks have based their telemarketing and data processing operations in Madrid, because employment conditions and costs are lower there than in other areas of the country. The banking union FEBA-CC.OO. reports that as a consequence there are attempts to persuade Madrid workers to learn Basque and Catalan, in order to deal with Basque and Catalan speakers calling from their own areas of the country.**

Many of the examples in this section will be drawn from the banking and financial services sectors, where the effects of these developments are already being widely felt. But the same trends can also be detected in other sectors.

**“We have encountered the transfer of work from small outlying bank branches to the main/central office, eg the processing of loans that were previously done by individual branches are now centralised in the main office. This has resulted in the drastic cut in the number of staff in the smaller branches.”**

[Sabah Banking Employees' Union (Malaysia), response to FIET telework questionnaire, 1996]

This process of relocation is not necessarily a new phenomenon. For example, the banking industry in the United States went through a major process of change in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw much clerical and data processing tasks removed from metropolitan headquarters to areas with lower land and labour costs. American Express, for instance, located its travellers cheques division in Salt Lake City; Citycorp's credit card operation went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Other companies had policies of 'suburbanisation' - ie, moving to the outskirts of large cities - often linked to a deliberate attempt to avoid trade union organisation by workers.

Developments over the past few years, however, take this process further. Technology now makes it easier not only for back office administration but also for interaction with the customer or end-user to be carried out at a distance. In particular, we are seeing the growth in the use of specialist telephone call handling operations, known as 'call centres' (see below).

## **Outsourcing**

A corporate decision to relocate work functions may be accompanied at the same time by a decision to outsource this work to external contractor(s).

Outsourcing of IT services has been a familiar feature in the past. More recently, however, outsourcing has been extended to include other work processes, such as data centre operations and back office processing. The theory is that companies should specialise in their own core business areas, keeping control of their decision-making and strategic areas, but passing out other functions to firms for whom this work is *their* core activity. This could mean a company divesting itself not just of IT technical support and networks operations but also such things as correspondence, telephone calls and company mailings.

As MSF (UK) has pointed out, "The latest stage of development is described as the move from tactical to strategic outsourcing, in which the provider is required to manage the client organisation's business.. This is sometimes referred to as business process management or co-sourcing." [The Outsourcing of IT Services: Leading Edge or Bleeding Edge?, MSF (UK) 1996]

Outsourcing has been a feature of the reorganisation of the banking industry in Spain, especially in the provision of telemarketing, telemanagement and telesales and also in electronic data processing. The banking union FEBA (CC.OO.) has criticised the working conditions found in outsourcing centres, and the anti-union attitudes of employers: "The absence of any State Agreement for this type of activity, the unfair competition as the result of deregulation, the low costs and the job insecurity are entirely at the expense of the workers in this sector, subjected to abominable working conditions (poor health and safety), low salaries and wages and job insecurity." [FEBA (CC.OO) response to FIET telework questionnaire, 1996]

The union adds that it faces a difficult challenge in reconciling the interests of its members in traditional banking institutions with members who are working in subcontracting firms: "There exist strong contradictions between the majority of our members, who work in the large banking institutions, have steady jobs and many years of seniority on the one hand, and the tiny group of members who work for enterprises at the periphery on the other. The former see their jobs threatened by the latter."

**"The lessons of MSF experience with outsourcing are simple: where trade union organisation is strong, employment conditions can be protected... MSF has identified the following key strategic objectives to pursue:**

- maintenance of the highest possible levels of skills intensive employment
- maintenance of the original employing organisation's control over strategic technologies and any R&D capacity
- maintenance of existing terms and conditions of employment
- maintenance of an occupational pension to which the employer contributes
- maintenance of any recognition agreement with MSF"

[The Outsourcing of IT Services: Leading Edge or Bleeding Edge?, MSF (UK) 1996]

## **Call centres**

The development of call centres (the term has already entered both the French and German languages, and looks set to become universal) represents a major change

in the way in which some white-collar office-based jobs are structured and undertaken.

Call centres are made possible by automated call distribution (ACD) technology, which automatically feeds incoming telephone calls to available staff. Unlike a conventional office, a typical call centre sees staff spending their days seated at consoles, receiving calls through headsets and inputting information on to PCs or terminals in front of them. Increasingly, call centres are also making use of new technological developments in computer-telephony integration (CTI). Although structured around the telephone, the one thing never heard at a call centre is the sound of a phone ringing.

Call centres can be used for a wide range of telemarketing, telesales and teleservice functions, including central reservation handling (eg for hotels), customer support, computer technical support, market research and even telephone fundraising for charities. One industry source suggests that there are currently about 6,000 call centres in western Europe alone.

Call centres have been a central feature in the development of telephone-based banking services and insurance for consumers, the so-called 'direct' operations which are transforming these sectors.

**"There is an all out struggle to compete in offering financial services to customers by telephone. This has meant that customers are being encouraged to telephone the workplace, rather than turn up in person, and the call is answered at a remote location. So far, these locations have been in the major centres. Sometimes the customers know that they are calling a phone centre, sometimes they believe they are phoning the branch where they believe their records are held... There has been job loss attached to this and now we are faced with a considerable number of bank branches closing with the stated reason being "electronic banking has replaced this service"."**

[Finsec, the Finance Sector Union (New Zealand), response to FIET telework questionnaire, 1996]

One pioneer of telephone banking was First Direct, set up in the United Kingdom in 1989. As the Trades Union Congress (UK) recently pointed out, "First Direct handles over half a million customers with around 1,000 equivalent full-time workers, whereas its parent Midland Bank services four million customers using 36,000 staff." First Direct is based in two units on industrial estates in Leeds, a city in northern England well away from the traditional banking centre of the City of London.

Similarly in Germany, Commerzbank AG has based its direct banking subsidiary in a utilitarian unit beside a motorway exit in the small town of Quickborn north of Hamburg. A recent press report described the premises as being located between a trucking company and a factory, and commented on the contrast with traditional bank head offices in Frankfurt: "Instead of a broad marble staircase there is a narrow, tiled entrance. No doorman, no canteen."

## **Some key issues**

### **a) Work organisation and management**

Moves by employers to establish relocated back offices have not, in themselves, necessarily led to changes in the way that the work is actually undertaken. They may, however, have consequences for staff affected, particularly those asked to move to a new area. Women may be less able than men to move with their jobs.

The UK banking union BIFU, commenting on the introduction by the Midland Bank of 'customer service centres', identifies some issues:

"There is difficulty in getting people to transfer [to the new centres] because of:

- downgrading of the work
- travelling distance
- working conditions..

As a result a number of people have accepted a redundancy package while at the same time Midland is recruiting up to 30 people a month.. This is obviously a ridiculous situation.." [letter from Jo Seery, BIFU, March 1996]

The use of call centres generally involves much more considerable changes in work organisation and management.

Call centre staff are under the control of technology in a way which is normally unfamiliar in white-collar working. The similarity rather is with Fordism, the assembly-line method of working which has long existed in manufacturing.

Automated call distribution (ACD) technology enables employers to automatically monitor employees' work performance, such as the time taken in dealing with callers. In many countries, a feature of call centre life is the random secret monitoring of calls for supervisory purposes. (The legal rights of employers to undertake this vary between countries, a topic investigated in the ILO report on Workers' Privacy, Conditions of Work Digest vol 12 1/1993). There is no technical reason why these

employers cannot record all conversations as digital files on computer, though this may produce problems with the sheer quantity of information accumulated.

Nevertheless, the problem of motivating staff in a potentially tedious work environment has tended to encourage employers not to rely on electronic supervision and other forms of overt policing of employees, but instead to make use of 'modern', more participative and informal management styles. Many call centres give the impression of being much more informal working environments, with an absence of traditional signs of staff hierarchies. Many companies encourage team working, with competitions between teams and incentives for sales or performance targets met.

## **b) Staffing**

Because the organisational culture of call centres is different from traditional office working, trade unions may find that they need to work harder and in different ways to recruit members. Traditional collective bargaining agreements may not apply: both Citycorp's Nordhorn operation and Commerzbank's Comdirect-Bank, for example, are run outside the collective agreements for the banking industry, and normal employment conditions (such as premium pay rates) do not apply.

Call centres tend to have a high percentage of young workers, including those in their first jobs. (In some countries, students may also be employed part-time whilst undertaking their courses.) With some exceptions (eg the computer support industry) call centres also tend to have a high level of staffing by women, often working part-time shifts.

**"Our employees are young, all in their early 30s and they slave away like they're building up the East," enthuses the managing director [of Comdirect-Bank] of his 125-strong staff culled from a deep pool of applicants."**

[Bankenbranche wächst vor allem in der Provinz, article by Thomas Franke, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 15 Oct 1995]

**"A further problem compounding the situation is the number of such centres which are run with casual labour. There is an extremely high turnover of staff in some of these centres. In New Zealand any negotiated employment agreement does not apply to new recruits, so there is the constant opportunity for the employer with a high staff turnover to undermine the agreement. It is also equally difficult to unionise a place with a high turnover. The only call**



**centres which are unionised are those with a relatively stable work force and where the employer wants to provide a high skill quality service."**

[Finsec, the Finance Sector Union (New Zealand), response to FIET telework questionnaire, 1996]

### **c) Shift working**

Shift working is a feature of many call centres, especially those dealing direct with the public.

When First Direct, for example, was launched in Britain, part of its selling point was that staff would be available for handling banking transactions by phone, 24 hours a day and every day of the year. Internally, bank policy was that each hour of the working day would be paid at exactly the same rate, with no premia for night or weekend working. (Limited overtime rates are now in force, partly as a result of pressure from the banking union BIFU.)

In France, the Banque Directe service of Compagnie Bancaire (a subsidiary of the Paribas Group) also operates 24 hours a day. This is contrary to a banking hours decree of 1937 which restricts the opening hours of most French banks, and was subject to a legal challenge in 1994 by French banking unions. The FO, CGT and CFDT union federations subsequently engaged in negotiations which led to an agreement with the bank, signed early in 1995. Significantly, Compagnie Bancaire pledged not to reduce the number of full-time employees or equivalent during the thirty months of the agreement. Shift patterns and pay were agreed, so that an effective premium was payable for less sociable hours of working.

**"Staff affected by this work emphasise that staggered hours of work can lead to difficulties in family life and in particular to problems of getting to and from work."**

[Services Bancaires à distance: la Position de Force Ouvriere]

Computer software programmes are now extremely sophisticated in predicting the level of incoming telephone calls likely to be received over the course of a period of time, allowing employers to roster exactly the number of staff needed at the right times to handle these calls. The process of handling outgoing calls is also increasingly controlled by software, known as predictive dialling.

This could, potentially at least, lead to the increasing segmentation of working hours or even to employment practices where staff are temporarily laid off during the slack

times of the working day (a process already tried by a British fast-food outlet, where staff were not paid for these periods).

The location of call centres, often in industrial areas away from public transport, raises issues of safety, particularly for staff working twilight or night shifts and particularly for women workers.

#### **d) Career development**

One implication of the flat management structures and lack of traditional hierarchies in many call centres is that career progression for staff is often very limited. This, combined with the tedium of the work, tends to encourage a high turnover of staff.

Clearly moves in sectors such as banking towards greater use of call centres in their operations will challenge the traditional idea that employees can make a career for life with a particular company or industry. This may have implications in terms of social benefits, pension provision, etc, traditionally provided by employers. This also poses a challenge to trade unions seeking to organise the workforce.

#### **e) Future employment trends**

Whilst currently call centres are expanding fast, in the medium term some threat to employment can be identified from technological innovations. Interactive voice response technology using touchtone phones permits customers to bypass the need to talk to call centre staff to obtain information or undertake transactions. Already, for example, some direct banking services allow interaction by the public with the banks' computer systems in this way, enabling customers to obtain statements, transfer funds or pay bills.

The development of PC-linked banking, using the Internet or proprietary on-line services, is a further development. However, there are reasons why the replacement of humans by technology may be limited. This is not primarily because many people prefer to deal with other humans. More significantly, call centre operators are trained to look for selling opportunities in dealings with customers, adding value to the services already being provided.

## **D. Relocation of work internationally**

### **The international migration of work**

The previous section of this report looked at the relocation of white-collar 'information' work within the borders of individual countries. This section takes this idea further, to look at the transfer of work internationally.

This phenomenon is sometimes described as 'offshore' information processing. It is not something new. However, the possibilities for offshore working are enormously increased with the digitisation of data and by the use of sophisticated international telecommunications links.

Another term which has been coined to describe some aspects of this international trade in service jobs is 'social dumping', the implication being that jobs can be exported away from countries where workers enjoy a high level of social protection and good working conditions to those where wages, controls and employment benefits are low.

#### **Some examples of the internationalisation of white-collar work:**

**\* Singapore newspapers, including the Straits Times, are partly sub-edited and designed in satellite offices in Sydney (Australia) and Manila (Philippines). Copy and artwork is sent electronically between these offices. The parent company, Singapore Press Holdings, has adopted this policy to cope with a shortage of journalists within Singapore itself.**

**\* About 120 staff in Loughrea, Republic of Ireland, process about 4,000 medical insurance claims each day for the US financial services firm Cigna. Staff in Loughrea have access to the company's central databases through two fibre optic data lines to Connecticut and process and authorise claims on-line.**

**\* SwissAir's ticket accounting, computer entry queries and discount scheme is now centralised in a single office in Bombay, where 370 staff work. The airline also undertakes ticketing for Austrian Airlines.**

#### **Data entry**

Offshore working can mean many things, and it is appropriate to distinguish between low-status, relatively mechanical work and higher-status information processing where more skills and experience are required.

Data entry (inputting of text or data via keyboards) falls into the former category. The work is by definition often repetitive and boring. One Brazilian study described a workplace where staff were electronically monitored, were not permitted to talk at work and where several workers complained of tenosynovitis. "We are in the slavery age, working as a slave and being whipped, not in our bodies but in our minds," one data entry clerk told the researcher. [The Hard Life of the Unskilled Workers in New Technologies: Data-Entry Clerks in Brazil; A Soares; in Human Aspects in Computing ed H-J Bullinger, 1991]

Conditions need not be as inhuman as this to give rise to concerns. A report in the French telework magazine *Télétravail* [June/July 1996] described recent moves by French publishing companies to use typesetting companies in (among other countries) Mauritius, Morocco and Madagascar. Increased global competition has led to typesetting costs falling over a 7-8 year period by two-thirds, with wage levels in France driven down in consequence.

According to a 1992 study funded by the World Bank, the Philippines is ranked first in the market for remote data entry. The study commented: "Presently there are 2000 keystations in the country producing over 100 billion keystrokes per year... The country's major edge lies in its relatively lower manpower cost (data entry clerks in the US charge \$65 for 10,000 keystrokes, while the going rate in the Philippines is between \$4 to \$6 for the same number of keystrokes) and high accuracy rate (99.7%)." [International Software Studies: India's Software and Services Export Potential and Strategies, by InfoTech Consulting Inc (Maxi/Micro Inc), 1992]

Other countries which compete for remote data entry work include Jamaica, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Malta and Cyprus.

Mechanical data entry work is threatened by developments in optical character recognition and scanning technology. Countries with data entry industries have the task of attempting to attract higher value added information processing work less likely to be overtaken by technology.

### **Offshore information processing in the Caribbean**

The English-speaking islands of the Caribbean are close geographically to the United States, share the same language but also have much lower wage levels. The offshore information processing industry is associated particularly with Barbados and Jamaica, and has existed for at least 25 years. More recently other countries including St Lucia, St Kitts/Nevis, St Vincent, Grenada and the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic have seen data processing facilities opened.

In the early days, the raw data to be processed was sent offshore by ship cargo. Later this was generally replaced by air freight arrangements, still in use by some companies today. In both Jamaica and Barbados, however, the telecommunications infrastructure has been developed to provide on-line alternative means of sending data. The 1988 Jamaica Digiport International free zone development at Montego Bay, for example, included a satellite earth station and digital switcher for companies located in this area of the island.

The Caribbean information processing industry was the subject of a detailed FIET report by Dennis Pantin of the University of the West Indies, published in 1995. This report explores the current scale of the industry, the working conditions encountered and likely future trends.

**"The most common characteristic found among firms surveyed across the Caribbean was a sensitivity if not hostility to requests for information about working conditions as well as marketing issues. The latter can be explained as fear of 'industrial espionage'. However the former suggests that firms are aware that their working conditions leave something, if not much, to be desired."**

[Export Based Information Processing in the Caribbean, with Particular Respect to Offshore Data Processing, FIET 1995]

Dennis Pantin estimates that about 2,300 workers are employed in offshore processing in Barbados, about 3,500 in Jamaica, 1,000 in the Dominican Republic and about 500+ in other Caribbean countries. Hourly wage rates for data entry work are given as \$0.80-\$1.00 in Jamaica, \$2.00-\$2.88 in Barbados and \$7.00-\$8.00 in the USA.

According to Dennis Pantin, the bulk of offshore work undertaken in both Barbados and Jamaica is data entry (88% and 76% respectively). In Barbados, Caribbean Data Services is the major employer with about 1100 staff. Established by American Airlines in 1983-4, Caribbean Data Services has since diversified from its initial role

of processing airline ticket stubs into a profit centre for its parent company, offering insurance claim processing and other general processing work for other clients.

## Staffing

**"Our evidence suggests that the women workers in offshore offices are being used only as a low-wage labour force, acquiring little valuable training or skills."**

[The Internationalisation of Clerical Work: A Study of Offshore Work Services in the Caribbean, by Annie Posthuma, SPRU 1987]

The vast majority of workers in the data entry and information processing industries in the Caribbean are women (90% in Jamaica and over 80% in Barbados, according to Dennis Pantin, but as high as 98% in some companies according to other studies). Shift working is the norm, with many companies operating three shifts (including night working).

Most workers also tend to be young, in the 17-29 age range. An academic writer Ruth Pearson suggests that, in Jamaica at least, most data entry workers are recruited from high school with no previous job experience. She adds, "Most keyboard operators tend not to stay in the job for more than two or three years, largely because of the absence of promotion opportunities for all but a very small minority. Although there is no documented evidence in Jamaica, it is believed that eye strain, back injuries and repetitive strain syndrome are major health hazards for women working under the relentless pace and conditions required of keyboard operators in Jamaica." [Gender and New Technology in the Caribbean by Ruth Pearson, in Women and Change in the Caribbean, ed Janet Momsen, 1993]

However, Ruth Pearson challenges the idea that the information processing industry is necessarily simply a repeat of the sweatshops of the textile industry. She argues that the skills learned by the women could help to create a more highly skilled information services sector in the Caribbean, though she admits that this has yet to happen.

## Call centres

**"BA [British Airways] has used [Automated Call Distribution] technology to take advantage of different time zones. Centres in the US and UK take each other's calls outside their respective office hours. This has now been extended so that calls are automatically passed from one country to the other if lines are busy, and around 15% of calls generated in the US are answered in the UK, which also handles calls from Sweden and Zurich out of hours."**

[New Technologies at Work - Consultation Document, Trades Union Congress (UK), 1996]

Call centres are increasingly operating across national borders. The phenomenon has become most marked in western Europe, where a number of companies have chosen to establish a single call centre to handle telesales or teleservice enquiries from across most or all of the countries participating in the European single market.

This means that customers in, say, France, Germany or Britain who ring local numbers in their own countries may unknowingly have their calls answered by staff speaking their own languages but based at a call centre in another country. This is what happens, for example, for hotel reservation enquiries for a number of large international chains (including Best Western, Sheraton, Ramada/Renaissance and Radisson), where the European call centre for each chain has been located in the Republic of Ireland. Ireland also hosts a number of computer sales and technical support call centres (such as Dell and Gateway 2000) which service customers from other western European countries.

Over the past five years, the Irish government has made a particular effort to target US companies planning to establish call centres for the European market. This follows an earlier Irish strategy which saw a number of US financial services companies encouraged to set up back offices, typically handling insurance claims, in relatively remote areas of western Ireland.

**"Ireland: the Call Centre of Europe.**

**Many large European and American companies have recognised the value of setting up a pan-European call centre to serve each of their international markets...**

**Ireland can.. offer a well educated, multilingual and flexible workforce at a lower cost. Add in a substantial tax benefit and you have the most effective Call Centre in Europe."**

[Advertising copy for the Industrial Development Agency, Ireland, 1995]

Ireland is facing competition from other areas of Europe, including Scotland. Digital recently centralised its European technical support call centre operation to Scotland. This move affected Digital staff from other European countries. In Italy, for example, some staff were invited by the company to emigrate, following their jobs to Scotland.

International telemarketing to the north American market is also being undertaken to a limited extent from Caribbean centres.

### **Software engineering**

One of the best known examples of globalisation in service provision is that of the burgeoning software industry in India, focused in particular in the cities of Bombay and Bangalore. One estimate is that Indian software exports could within a few years be worth \$1 bn.

According to the Delhi-based National Association of Software and Service Companies, around 330 companies are involved in software exports from India, employing between them about 14,000 technical people. The largest company, Tata Consultancy Services, currently has about 20% of the market. Its recent contracts include a multi-million dollar securities clearing system for a Swiss client and a project for a major United Kingdom insurance company. Whilst Tata Consultancy is an Indian owned company, others in this market are jointly owned ventures with western companies.

One such joint venture is BAeHAL Software. A report in the Financial Times newspaper in 1995 described how BaEHAL uses telecommunications links to undertake software programming for a British client:

"At BAeHAL Software's offices in Bangalore, in southern India, a computer programmer keys in a change to a programme he is writing for a UK client. The computer he is using, via a satellite link, is at the client's site in Bristol. Because it is morning in Bangalore but still night in England, there are few users and the computer responds faster to him than it would to a user on the client's site, during the working day there. By the time the client comes to work, the changes will have been completed and tested." [Wired to the rest of the World', by S.K.Juggy Pandit, FT, 10.1.95]

### **Future developments**

The assumption must be that the next few years will see a marked increase in the globalisation of clerical and white-collar work, particularly with improvements in the ease with which data can be transmitted electronically between continents. Whole



new industries may be able to develop, taking advantage of cheap labour costs and overheads outside the developed world.

**"Once it becomes possible to transmit and switch video signals without overloading networks, a whole new range of opportunities open up for developing countries. The World Bank, for example, has trailed the idea of security cameras in American shopping malls being monitored by people in Africa. "There is potential for African countries to come into the global economy through these types of technologies," a spokesman said."**

[The Guardian (London), 15 Oct 1994]

It is possible to identify some of the factors which will affect the degree to which this process takes place. They include:

- the cost of telecommunications
- technological constraints and limitations
- labour costs
- other cost considerations
- language/ cultural considerations
- protectionism
- taxation/grants to businesses
- quality of workforce
- corporate inertia

We can note that the trend is for both the cost of international telecommunications and the technological constraints to be reduced. Trade barriers, which may be applied to defend internal markets for manufactured goods, are hard if not impossible to impose in the service sector, especially where services are delivered virtually. Commentators increasingly argue that lower-status information processing work will gravitate almost inevitably to low-waged areas of the world, whilst the developed world attempts to maintain its share of higher-value work through a strategy of workforce training.

### **Trade union representation**

The developments outlined in this chapter pose considerable challenges to trade unions, in countries at both ends of the process of international migration of work.

At present, it would appear that the majority of workers engaged in offshore information processing work are not unionised. A report for the ILO commented that:

"The situation regarding data entry employees' rights to organize in labour unions is.. unclear. In many situations, employment in free trade zones precludes the right to organize, although this has not been the case in the manufacturing sectors of Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines, it has been the case in Malaysia and the Republic of Korea." [Global Information Processing: the Emergence of Software Services and Data Entry Jobs in Selected Developing Countries, by Swasti Mitter and Ruth Pearson, ILO, 1992]

In both Jamaica and Barbados, trade unions have made efforts to recruit inside the data processing centres. As early as 1984, for example, workers at one Barbados establishment tried to organise, but were threatened with dismissal after the company concerned threatened to relocate. Dennis Pantin in his report for FIET summarises the current situation in both countries as follows:

"The union representatives indicated that workers in this industry in Jamaica were not unionised. However, they also reported that there had been one successful attempt to organise some 200 workers in one data-entry firm which has been operating in Kingston for the past 15 years. In the first instance, workers at this Kingston-based firm had staged a strike in 1994 while seeking unionisation.. Official recognition was given in April 1995... However on 5 June, the workers were served letters on arrival at work indicating that 'due to financial problems' the company was closed until further notice...

"The trade union representatives in Barbados, in particular at the BWU, indicated that they had made several attempts to organise workers in the data-entry industry including those at the largest company [Caribbean Data Services] and in fact did have a few union members at this company. Most of the workers, according to the BWU, did not seem to consider themselves as factory workers... The inference being that, in this particular case, the difficulty in organising workers came from their own perception rather than company resistance."

Interestingly, this suggests that a parallel with the situation in European call centres (see previous section), where a predominantly young (and predominantly female) workforce tends not to be unionised or to identify particularly with the traditional union movement.

The next section of this report will consider possible union responses to teleworking in all its manifestations.

## **E. Trade union responses to teleworking. Suggestions for action.**

Teleworking in all its various forms clearly offers a challenge to the trade union movement. It is, however, a challenge which can be met.

Previous sections have looked at some of the issues which trade unions need to address to defend members' interest when responding to moves towards teleworking by employers. This section explores some of the ways in which teleworking impinges on trade union organisation itself. It looks at steps which individual trade unions have been taking already, and offers some suggestions for good practice.

### **a) Communicating with teleworkers**

So much of traditional trade union practice is built around the fact that members work together in a centralised workplace. Remove that factor, and new ways must be found for unions to communicate with their members and for members to talk to each other.

**"Fight fire with fire: Works Councils and the GPA must set up their own networks through which they can maintain contact with employees and trade union members."**

[Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung, GPA (Austria) 1996]

#### **- Know how to reach members**

On a basic administrative level, it is clearly sensible for unions to ensure that they have ways of reaching their members independent of the workplace. In particular, members' home addresses need to be adequately recorded. It may be appropriate to change methods of communication away from a reliance on mass workplace bulletins, and to develop instead more direct mailings to members' homes. Methods of 'relationship marketing' increasingly used by companies in communicating with customers may be adaptable to the trade union context.

Trade unions may be able to make use of employers' channels of communication with teleworking employees. One suggestion for negotiation is for union information to be included with payslips.

#### **- Use e-mail**

One obvious way to reach teleworkers is through e-mail.

The right of trade unions to have access to corporate e-mail services run by employers is an issue which is currently under negotiation in several countries. It is an important demand.

**"The GMB has negotiated with British Gas Services to allow shop stewards to communicate with each other and with members via the British Gas Service network. The GMB national office also has a link to the network, and can therefore contact the shop stewards nearly as easily as before..  
Access to a company's e-mail system should be a key negotiating demand for trade unions. This will help to recruit and organise members, even if those members and potential members are working remotely or in a variety of locations."**

[New Technologies at Work - Consultative Document, Trades Union Congress (UK), 1996]

**"The works council shall receive a current list of all employees who are working at external working locations. The works council has the right to use the electronic communication facilities."**

[Clause in model teleworking agreement, in Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung, GPA (Austria) 1996]

As mentioned above, the Communication Workers of America has proposed that the union negotiate the right to present a welcome message to teleworkers when they log on to their company's system.

#### **- Offer on-line bulletin board facilities for members**

The traditional union noticeboard in a workplace has a direct electronic equivalent, the on-line bulletin board. Bulletin boards (such as those based on FirstClass) offer a forum for information exchange and discussion. As with all on-line services, geographical distance and international boundaries can be eradicated.

Access to on-line bulletin boards can where appropriate be restricted to union members.

**"In 1995, MSF set up a new section for workers in the information technology industries, [the] Information Technology Professionals Association... ITPA members can join the ITPA Bulletin Board, set up to enable the discussion of ideas, views, and problems that relate to the IT profession. Members can also join the ITPA Poptel Online Network, which provides access to the Internet, e-mail facilities that allow members to communicate with each other and with the union, and access to databases and software."**

[New Technologies at Work - Consultative Document, Trades Union Congress (UK), 1996]

### **- Use the Internet**

The development of the Internet internationally offers powerful new opportunities for unions to reach members and potential members with access to new technology.

Hypertext links provide an easy way for Internet users to find areas of interest. However, union organisations should remember that, to be useful, World Wide Web sites need constant updating and revision.

**FIOM-CGIL (Italy) has opened a telework (telelavoro) site on the World Wide Web. This includes detailed information on the telework agreements negotiated in recent months with six Italian employers (Telecom, Dun & Bradstreet, Seat, Italtel, Saritel and Digital Equipment).**

**The address is: <http://www.cgil.it/fiom/telelav/index.htm>**

### **b) Union organisation**

Union internal organisation has also traditionally been based around the centralised workplace. Union democracy is focused on the coming-together of members in person, in workplace or branch meetings or at conferences.

Teleworkers working away from workplaces, perhaps in geographically remote areas, may not be well served by this structure.

Traditional methods of union organisation will also fail to fit the needs of people who find themselves working in 'virtual companies': this is the term used to describe the method of computer-assisted co-operative working, where teams of workers participate together on commercial projects but where the company itself does not operate from a physical headquarters. Virtual companies can bring together workers across national boundaries.

Ultimately, unions may wish to respond to these changes by developing their own 'virtual' union branch or workplace group structures, where members will be able to communicate with each other and take decisions electronically. The practical issues of ensuring that democracy would be adequately practised clearly require some further discussion.

Nevertheless, and perhaps paradoxically, on-line communication through the Internet (for example through e-mail, newsgroups and discussion lists) is intensely participative and democratic, although admittedly only for those with access to the

medium. It is also worth noting that the on-line world is an international one, where national barriers are almost irrelevant. In the world of e-mail and bulletin boards, the gender, racial origin, age and disability or otherwise of participants becomes of little relevance.

To summarise, by using methods of electronic communication there is an opportunity to increase the amount of democratic involvement ordinary members (and especially teleworking members) are able to have in their union.

**"The Labortech conference 'Communication Tools for the '90s' held in California in May 1990 was the first attempt to pool US labour movement experience in new communications technology, with participants from trade unions and labour service centres. Don Skiados, Director of Communications for the airline pilots' ALPA told the conference, "You think Texas Air doesn't communicate in real time? You think Greyhound doesn't? They all do. If you want to compete with them you've got to do it too.."**

[Trade Unions On-Line, by C Mather & B Lowe, 1990]

An international Labour Telematics conference (Information Technology, Electronic Communications and the Labour Movement) sponsored by the ICEF, Worknet (South Africa) and Transnational Information Exchange (Netherlands) was held in Manchester, UK, in 1992 to discuss trade union uses of on-line services in member communication and collective bargaining. The organisers, the Labour Telematics Centre (UK/Brussels), plan a second conference in 1997.

### **c) Recruitment of members**

#### **- The recruitment challenge**

This report has already drawn attention to the challenge telework poses to concepts of the 'normal' workplace and the 'normal' working day.

Teleworking is associated with flexible patterns of work, including part-time working. It is also, as we have seen, often associated with work undertaken by women, and by young people. Indirectly, therefore, telework challenges unions to develop their recruitment strategies beyond a reliance on the (often male) full-time worker engaged on a permanent contract in the traditional workplace.

**"Trade unions must change their policy and examine new pre-occupations, new patterns of work, and a much more heterogeneous nature of work and worker, including the self-employed."**

At a time when unions internationally have been fighting hard to save the jobs of their members under threat from corporate restructuring, it may seem a luxury to divert resources towards the needs of part-time or casualised workers. However, the strength of unions in the next century may depend on how relevant they are able to appear to people who find themselves working in these ways.

#### **- Responding to changes in management practice**

As this report considered above in the context of call centres, management techniques and corporate cultures are changing. Trade unions may need to understand and acknowledge these changes when considering recruitment techniques.

The UK banking union BIFU, for example, has described how it adapted its recruitment strategy to attract recruits in the direct banking operation First Direct. BIFU was initially not recognised by the company when it started in 1989 and the union established itself as a representative body by building up membership, initially in a covert manner.

**"The upside of First Direct's culture of constant development is that our representatives often come up with new ideas about how BIFU should organise in the workplace. An important example is the use of what they call 'Roadshows' as a recruitment vehicle.**

**It is a norm of First Direct that when a department formulates a new product or campaign, it holds a 'Roadshow' to explain it to the rest of First Direct's staff. To do this they set up a conference room with posters, games, competitions, videos, literature and even balloons..**

**So that's what we did: we set up a conference room with a video, info on the Union, a quiz, free gifts - biros, balloons, rulers etc - and a group of talkative Union representatives."**

[Leif Mills, BIFU, speech notes 1995]

#### **- Remembering the casualised worker**

As the researchers Ursula Huws and Sarah Podro have pointed out in a recent report for the ILO, there is nothing necessarily unusual about trade unions recruiting casualised workers and finding ways to service their needs. They write:

"Many industries, both in developed and developing countries, have long traditions of casual working and, over the years, trade unions have developed a variety of means

for representing casual workers, negotiating improvements in their wages and conditions of employment, and participating in schemes designed to introduce regulation. Such groups include construction workers, seasonal agricultural workers, dockers, domestic servants, actors, musicians, film technicians, freelance journalists and a variety of different manufacturing trades." [Employment of homeworkers: Examples of good practice, by U Huws and S Podro, ILO, 1995]

The authors of this very useful report offer, in the context of a study of home-working, several examples of good practice in the collective organising of these workers.

#### **- Recruiting the self employed**

**"It is up to the teleworkers themselves, to the salaried employees and the self-employed to get organised. The trade unions have to target these groups and to get them to join the unions."**

[Le Télétravail, UCC-CFDT, 1996]

**"The challenge for the trade unions in the future is a situation where you have to go out and engage also those who are no longer employed in the traditional sense. So far the white-collar unions have not wanted to organise the self-employed even though their professional work well fits in under a union branch area. I believe that it will be necessary to change this view if the trade unions want to continue to play a role in the working and community life."**

[PG Svensson (Finansförbundet, Sweden), quoted in Twenty Seconds to Work, by L Forsebäck, Teldok 1995]

Trade unions have been correctly concerned to ensure that the development of home teleworking is not accompanied by a rise in bogus pseudo self-employment. However, it is also necessary to relate to those who are genuinely self-employed, running their own small businesses.

Teleworkers in this situation have a need to come together, to network, to exchange information and ideas, to obtain professional services and to defend their common interests. These needs could be met by commercial providers or by teleworkers' own associations and organisations, but it is also possible to see that there is a role here for the trade unions to play.

As we have seen above, some unions already have considerable experience in recruiting self-employed members. Other unions are beginning to realise that the



professional expertise and organisational skills which they hold can be made attractive to the self-employed.

**"The issue is [one] of organising people who have no contracts of employment, who are self-employed and are in fact running their own small businesses. The first thing unions have to do is to change their attitude towards these people and not turn their backs on them. They need all kinds of help: for example, they need advice on contractual arrangements and on their relationships with the people who provide them with services. They need legal support, insurance, tax advice, pensions, health and safety advice and information. They may want trade unions, as large organisations with bulk purchasing power, to help them obtain equipment, training and technical support..**

**The trade unions are already engaged in most of all of these activities.. They now need to expand these services to other groups of people."**

[Bill Walsh, MSF (UK),quoted in Working on the Infobahn, Teleworking and the Labour Movement, report of conference, 1995]

#### **d) Widening the trade union agenda.**

##### **- Gender and equal opportunities**

Telework, in its home-based form, breaks down the traditional boundaries between work life and personal life. Unions have tended to be concerned exclusively with the first of these areas, sometimes at the expense of ignoring concerns and issues (such as problems of combining working with childcare and family responsibilities) which are of considerable interest to large numbers of members.

Teleworking indirectly, therefore, challenges trade unions to consider again equal opportunities and gender issues.

##### **Women and telework: children, kitchen, computer?**

**"The blurring of boundaries between work, housework and parenting, typical of telework, is our cue once again to raise the issue of traditional gender roles. Telework could also be an opportunity to involve more men in housework and family life, at the same time allowing the improvement of women's chances of vocational development.**

**Demand: Link forms of telework to measures for the advancement of women."**

[Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung, GPA (Austria) 1996]

It is worth bearing in mind that, in societies where women have traditionally undertaken low-status housework and family care at home without financial recompense, the idea of teleworking from home may have a very different resonance for women than for men. Where the world of work is associated with an external workplace away from the home, women may have legitimate fears that telehomeworking will return them to a way of working which does not receive proper societal recognition. Women may find it harder than men to resist housework and family distractions, or visits from unthinking neighbours, whilst trying to work from home.

As stated in a previous section, teleworking does not eliminate the need for proper childcare arrangements to be organised. However, teleworking is one of a number of more flexible ways of working which can benefit those with childcare or family responsibilities.

#### **- Health and safety issues**

Teleworkers are, by definition, working with IT equipment, and face all the same problems as those who work with IT in centralised workplaces. These include a worrying growth in the number of workers complaining of Repetitive Strain Injuries/Upper Limb Disorders.

The Trades Union Congress (UK) in a recent report identified the following additional health and safety risks facing teleworkers:

- they are less likely to have the correct work equipment - commonly, teleworkers use domestic tables and chairs rather than adjustable furniture
- they are subject to the commonest domestic hazards - faulty wiring leading to electrocution or fires, inadequate fire prevention or escape facilities, badly carpeted stairs, and so on
- they are often distracted from the hazards they are facing by the domestic surroundings - and sometimes by dependent children whose safety they are likely to put above their own
- they are likely to be isolated from fellow workers, which can be stressful and make it more difficult to resist unsafe working arrangements.

The TUC goes on to propose the development of 'Cyberspace safety reps':

**"Teleworkers may be geographically isolated, but they are very easy to communicate with, through the computer technology they are employed on. This opens up the prospect for unions to offer teleworkers cyberspace Safety Reps."**

**These Safety Reps, who could be based at head offices, or indeed could be a network of union safety activists, could provide answers to information requests about safety; advise on safety rights and responsibilities; share details of and develop policies on risk assessments."**

[New Technologies at Work - Consultative Document, Trades Union Congress (UK), 1996]

The Swedish white collar union federation TCO has developed over a number of years a major initiative to promote the use of safer personal computers to the general public. Its TCO92 labelling scheme identified computer display monitors which met strict requirements for electrical and magnetic field emissions, energy efficiency and electrical and fire safety. TCO92 has been followed by the TC095 PC certification scheme, which covers the complete PC including keyboard and processing unit. TCO95 takes into account, among other things, ergonomic and environmental issues.

**"TCO95 is the first environmental labelling scheme that is global. It is based on the premise that users should have better working conditions. TCO95 also covers a wide area in respect of environmentally harmful substances such as CFCs and heavy metals."**

[TCO (Sweden) leaflet, Questions and Answers about TCO Environmental Labelling of Personal Computers]

#### **e) Trade union employees and teleworking**

Finally, it is appropriate to add that the work of many trade union officials and staff may itself be suitable for teleworking. Trade unions should consider carefully whether teleworking arrangements (such as partial home-based working and mobile working) may enable officials to make better use of their time.

Those officials who are frequently involved in travel in order to meet members and service their needs may be able to benefit particularly from aspects of teleworking.

## Summary and conclusions

Teleworking can be defined as 'distance working facilitated by information and communication technologies'.

The term incorporates both home-based working and remote working in back offices and data processing centres. Home-based teleworking itself can be sub-categorised, to include higher-status professionals likely to be working off-line and lower-status staff more likely to be working permanently on-line (and therefore more under the control of the technology). Self-employed home-based workers make up a further category.

A single trade union response to 'teleworking' is therefore not advised. The individual's experience of teleworking can be either predominantly negative or predominantly positive, depending on a wide range of factors.

Trade unions have identified particular issues of importance for defending the rights of home-based teleworkers. These include the preservation of employment status, voluntary participation in teleworking and the right to return to the workplace, continuation of some degree of workplace working, remuneration of home expenses incurred, the right to privacy and a private life, measures to combat isolation and to promote career development, safe working conditions and appropriate equipment, adequate alternative childcare facilities, and the right of access to the trade union.

Collective teleworking in remote back offices and call centres raises other concerns for trade unions. These include the threat to established employment conditions from the relocation of work. Flexible working and shiftworking is a feature of this type of teleworking. Technology, especially the integration of telephony with IT, is imposing new working conditions on some white collar staff. Flat organisational structures inhibit career development, whilst outsourcing can raise additional concerns.

Teleworking is also taking place internationally, with the relocation of some work to 'offshore' data processing centres, data input centres and telephone call centres. These developments challenge trade unions at both ends of this process of relocation. Evidence suggests that workers undertaking work in offshore centres are primarily women, are probably shift-workers and are unlikely to be unionised. Whilst offshore teleworking raises, in theory, the prospect that developing countries can develop their high-tech sectors, in practice (with the exception of the offshore

software engineering industry of India) much of the work remains low-skilled, with little opportunity for workers involved to raise their skill level.

Teleworking in all its forms challenges trade unions to develop new organisational methods of servicing their members' needs. E-mail and on-line services provide important new ways of communicating with members, and the Internet in particular offers great opportunities. Union recruitment strategies need to be reconsidered, to become more attractive to teleworkers and those engaged in other forms of casual and flexible work. Self-employed teleworkers should also be targeted for membership. Trade unions need to widen the range of issues they are concerned with to include issues of interest to teleworkers, including family life and childcare arrangements. Trade unions themselves may be able to benefit by arranging for their own employed officials to telework.

In conclusion, the following proposals are made for further consideration.

- The right to assembly is a fundamental right for all workers. Through the relevant international organisations, trade union bodies need to ensure that the right to assembly continues to be available to those workers who are physically separated and isolated from their colleagues. Electronic means of communication is one substitute for physical meetings. Trade unions should press for a right to use employer e-mail services.

- Teleworking is one of a number of more flexible forms of working, which challenge the paradigm of a 'normal' working week in a 'normal' workplace. Trade union bodies should continue to work in the ILO to develop conventions (such as that passed for homeworkers and proposed for contract workers) which adequately cover these ways of working.

- Trade unions should make better use of on-line technologies, for communicating with members, developing internal democracy and undertaking solidarity work. The use of hypertext links between trade union sites on the World Wide Web provides a way of demonstrating, in very practical form, the concept of trade union internationalism.

- Teleworking offers new opportunities for the globalisation of the service sector. It is more important than ever to develop effective international trade union structures. International links may, a century ago, have been seen primarily as a statement of principle; in the future, this work will be increasingly of direct relevance to individual members' working conditions. Unions in the developed world may wish to undertake

solidarity work to assist less well-resourced unions in countries attracting offshore teleworking.

- Teleworking is seen by many as a model of future forms of working in an 'information society'. Trade unions need to campaign to ensure that the benefits of an information society are available to all, and not only to those sections of the world community able to afford to pay for the advantages.

## Appendices

Information supplied by the following trade unions was used in compiling this report:

Argentina: Asociación Bancaria  
Australia: Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association  
Austria: Gerwerkschaft der Privatangestellten (GPA)  
Barbados: Barbados Workers' Union  
Belgium: Centrale Nationale des Employés  
Congo: Fédération syndicale des Travailleurs du Commerce (FESTRACOM)  
Denmark: Handels- og Kontorfunktionærernes Forbund i Danmark (HK)  
El Salvador: Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Salud (SITRASALUD)  
Fiji: National Union of Factory and Commercial Workers  
Finland: Försäkringsmannaförbundet (FMF)  
Finland: Handelsbranschens Fackf.-LA  
Germany: Deutsche Postgewerkschaft (DPG)  
Germany: Gewerkschaft Handel, Banken und Versicherungen (HBV)  
Malaysia: Sabah Banking Employees' Union  
Netherlands Antilles: Curacao Federation of Workers (CFW)  
Netherlands: De Unie  
New Zealand: Finance Sector Union (Finsec)  
Norway: Finansforbundet  
Norway: Forsikringsfunksjonærenes Landsförbund (FL)  
Portugal: Sindicato Trabalhadores Seguros Norte  
South Africa: SASBO  
Spain: Federación Estatal de Banca y Ahorra (FEBA- CC.OO.)  
Swaziland: Swaziland Union of Financial Institutions and Allied Workers  
Sweden: Fastighets  
Sweden: Finansförbundet/FSU  
Sweden: Tjänstemannaförbundet HTF  
Turkey: BASS  
Turkey: TEZ-KOOP-ÍS  
United Kingdom: Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU)  
United Kingdom: GMB  
United Kingdom: Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF)  
United Kingdom: Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)

Attention is drawn to the following publications from trade unions or trade union organisations:

Telearbeit: Vorschläge zur Gestaltung (GPA - Austria)  
Telearbeit, Chance oder Risiko? (HBV - Germany)  
Med Jobbet På Distans (TCO - Sweden)  
På lagom distans (TCO - Sweden)

Hemmet som arbetsplats (TCO - Sweden)  
Le Télétravail (UCC-CFDT - France)  
Telework: Working where one would like to live? (Johann Welsch, FIET)  
Export Based Information Processing in the Caribbean with Particular Respect to  
Offshore Data processing (Dennis Pantin, FIET)  
The Best of Both Worlds: Teleworking, a Trade Union Perspective (Bill Walsh, MSF -  
UK)  
The Outsourcing of IT Services: Leading Edge or Bleeding Edge? (MSF - UK)

The following publications are also recommended:

Telelavoro, L'ufficio a distanza (Ediesse, 1995)  
Teleworking and Gender, by Ursula Huws (European Commission DG V, 1996)  
Teleworking, Follow-Up to the White Paper, by Ursula Huws (European Commission, DG  
V, 1994)  
Telework (Conditions of Work digest, ILO, vol 9 1/1990)  
Global Information Processing: the Emergence of Software Services and Data Entry  
Jobs in Selected Developing Countries (by Swasti Mitter and Ruth Pearson, ILO,  
1992)  
Employment of Homeworkers: Examples of Good Practice (by Ursula Huws and Sarah  
Podro, ILO, 1995)  
Telework: A new way of working and living (by Vittorio di Martino and Linda Wirth,  
International Labour Review, vol 129, 1990, no 5)  
Homeworking in the European Union (European Commission, DG V, 1995)  
Working on the Infobahn - Teleworking and the Labour Movement, report of one-day  
conference organised by the Labour Telematics Centre, 13 Jan 1995