

## APPENDIX D

# GENERAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## INTERNATIONAL STUDY VISIT 2008





Hanoi, 3 October 2008

**Mr. Dough Nicholls**

President, General Federation of Trade Unions  
General Secretary, Community and Youth Workers  
and Not for Profit Sector of Unite the Union

Dear Bro. Dough Nicholls,

We, at the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, take much pleasure in inviting a delegation from your organization headed by yourself to visit Vietnam from 23 to 30 October 2008. We are hopeful that this visit will be a good opportunity for you and other colleagues to discover Vietnam, a culture - rich and fast - growing country and to get an insight into the trade union movement of Vietnam. It is also our wish that your visit will give an impetus to developing the **relationship** between trade union movements of our two countries.

Should you need any assistance, would you please feel free to let us know for practical arrangement.

We look forward to hearing from you and to meeting you soon in Vietnam.

Yours sincerely,

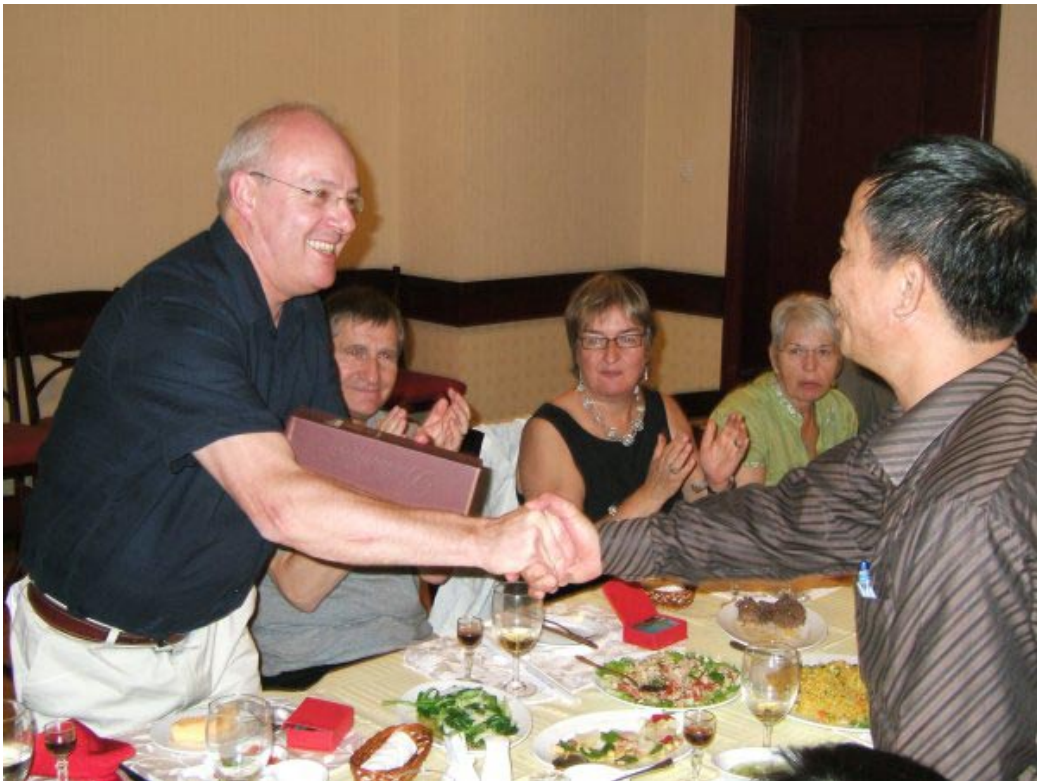
**Chau Nhat Binh**

Deputy Director  
International Department  
Vietnam General Confederation of Labor

## Introduction

In October 2008 a delegation visited Vietnam at the invitation of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL). The delegation comprised of Doug Nicholls (president), Phil Davies, Rosie Eagleson, John Fray, Judy McKnight, Gary Oakes, Terry Pye and Mike Bradley (General Secretary).

The visit was facilitated by Dom Quang Cu of the international Department of VGCL.



**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008.**

## **Vietnam General Confederation of Labour**

**The delegation met with Chav Nhat Binh, Deputy Director of the International Department and Nguyen Hoa Binh, Senior Vice-President of VGCL.**

The Deputy Director explained that the main tasks set for VGCL by the 9<sup>th</sup> national congress were as follows:-

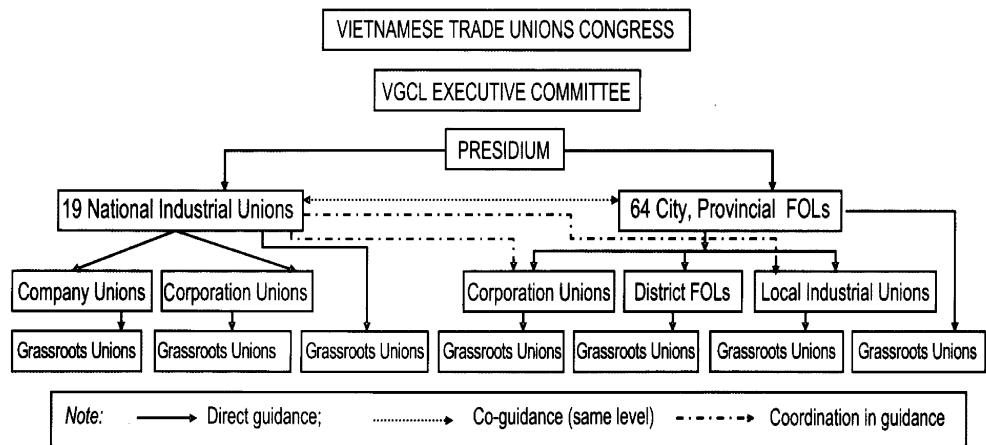
1. To build a strong working class as forerunning force in national industrialisation and modernisation.
2. To well perform the duty of representing and protecting workers rights and interests through joining the decision-making process and enforcing labour legislation.
3. To organise patriotic emulation movements through excellence at work and creativeness contributing to achieving country's social and economic goals.
4. To recruit more members and build a strong trade union organisation, improving trade union capacity.
5. To broaden external relations and strengthen international solidarity.



## Vietnamese Trade Unions

- 1 Vietnam National Union of Industrial Workers.
- 2 Vietnam National Education Union.
- 3 Vietnam National Union of Transport and Communication Workers.
- 4 Vietnam National Union of Civil Aviation Workers.
- 5 Vietnam Maritime Union.
- 6 Vietnam National Union of Banking Workers.
- 7 Vietnam National Union of Building Workers.
- 8 Vietnam National Union of Fishery Workers.
- 9 Vietnam National Union of Health Workers.
- 10 Vietnam National Union of Agricultural and Rural Development Workers.
- 11 Vietnam National Union of Commerce and Tourism Workers.
- 12 Vietnam Public Service Union.
- 13 Vietnam National Union of Post and Telecom Workers.
- 14 Vietnam National Union of Railway Workers.
- 15 Vietnam National Union of Oil and Gas Workers.
- 16 Vietnam Electric Power Workers Union.
- 17 Vietnam National Union of Rubber Workers.
- 18 Trade Union Committee of National Defence.
- 19 Trade Union Committee of People's Police.

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



The Senior Vice-President explained that there had been a market economy working alongside the state sector in Vietnam for 20 years. Representation of workers in workplaces owned by foreign investors meant sometimes facing opposition to unionisation. Benefits for workers had not kept pace with economic development and the 10<sup>th</sup> national congress in November 2008 would focus on measures to improve union representation on a five year horizon.

He felt that co-operation with UK unions could be mutually beneficial particularly in the fields of representation, bargaining and education/training. He concluded by saying that globalisation is affecting all organisations.

Doug Nicholls on behalf of GFTU, introduced the delegation and gave a brief outline of the work of the Federation. He said that it was a great honour to be in Vietnam as it was a country that first brought him and a number of others in the delegation into politics and the Trades Union Movement in the 1960's and 70's.

After that, however, the neo-liberal agenda of Thatcher and Reagan sought to introduce the market to everything. Membership of Trade Unions in the UK reduced from 12 million in 1980 to about 6 million today. Whole industries creating wealth have disappeared and a growth in the financial speculation and debt was encouraged.

Trade Unions in the UK were now concentrating on organising, improving workplace rights and international links. The GFTU was involved in training on issues like collective bargaining and organising which could be beneficial to Trade Unions in Vietnam.

Rosie Eagleson said that PCS would be happy to send training materials about negotiating skills. Judy McKnight said that it was important to work together and to share experiences on the effects of globalisation.

The Senior Vice-President VGCL concluded the meeting by saying that he greatly welcomed the dialogue and exchange and hoped that this was the beginning of a long term partnership for mutual benefit.



## **National Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (VUIC)**

The President of VUIC Do Dang Heiu, welcomed the delegation. He explained that the Union had 24 sectors including manufacturing, chemical, electronics, food, tobacco, postal services, leathers and footwear. Total membership was 250,000 in 540 workplaces.

He explained that a number of industries had been privatised and joint stock companies had been established. When a company is privatised the workers often face difficulties and trades unions need to adapt to these circumstances. VUIC was being restructured to meet these difficulties. Membership and recruitment was being prioritised as was training of union officials to give them the necessary skills.

The President went on to say that international relations were very important and that he was pleased to welcome the first delegation from the UK to visit VUIC.

Doug Nicholls responding said that there were many similarities between GFTU affiliated unions and VUIC. The priority of UK unions is to rebuild. He continued that there were about 6 million members of trade unions in about 70 different unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. He said that the GFTU provides research and education services to 33 affiliated unions encompassing approximately 225,000 members.



## **Union of Thang Long Tobacco Factory (VUIC)**

The Director of the company and the Vice-President of VUIC welcomed the delegation. The Director explained that the tobacco industry was state owned in Vietnam. The company had a 30% share of the market and sells 20 billion cigarettes a year, employing about 1,000 workers.

The Vice-President said that average earnings were about \$90 per month.

**Doug Nicholls responded by informing the Director and Vice-President that the tobacco workers in UK are well organised as part of Unite but that the numbers employed in the industry had declined significantly in recent years.**



**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

## **VIETNAM NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION (VNEU).**

Delegation from VNEU:

- 1 Mr. Do Canh Dnong:- President of VNEU
- 2 Mr. Lngong Tat Thuy:- Vice-President (VNEU)
- 3 Ms. Vu Thanh Binh:- Vice-President (VNEU)
- 4 Ms. Nong Bieh Ha
- 5 Mr.Nguhen Van Luan:- Administration office
- 6 Mr. Nguhen Van Bay:- Director of Organising Department
- 7 Mr. Trinh Manh Thang:- Director of Policy Department
- 8 Mr. Pham Van Thanh:- Training Department
- 9 Ms Luong Viet Ha:- Administration office



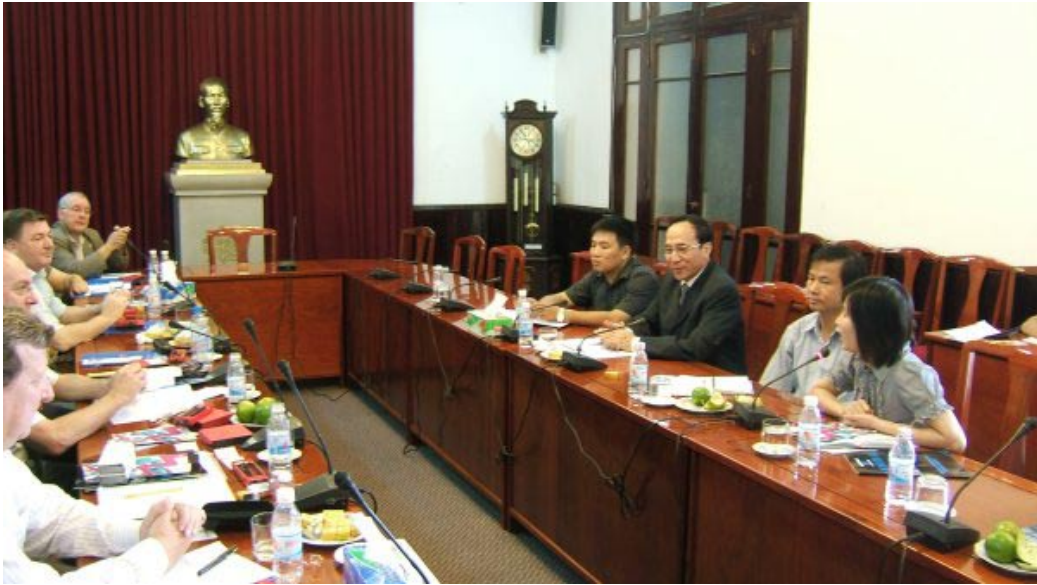
The meeting began with a tour of the union history room.

Dr Vu Thi Thanh Binh welcomed the delegation and said that there were 1.5 million teachers and lecturers in Vietnam in 40,000 educational establishments educating some 22 million students. 22% of the budget of Vietnam was spent on education, which was the first priority of Government.

The union was set up on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1951 and had 1 million members making it the largest union in Vietnam. In terms of international relationships the union has links with Australia, Sweden, France, Japan, Indonesia and Thailand. The union has applied for membership of Education International.

Doug Nicholls explained the position in respect of education unions in the UK including CYWU, AEP, ACM and ASPECT. He said that reducing class sizes was a priority. He explained student loans saying that most students left higher education in debt.

**In a question and answer session the Vice-President said that members paid 1% of salary as a union subscription. In concluding the meeting, Doug agreed to report back to the National Union of Teachers on the application by VNEU to Education International.**



## **VIETNAM TRADE UNION UNIVERSITY**

Professor Nguyen Viet Vuong, Rector, Welcomed the delegation.

Mike Bradley explained the education and research work of the GFTU Educational Trust and said that he hoped to establish a partnership with the university to mutual benefit.

The Director of the University said that he would welcome co-operation between the two organisations particularly on issues such as train the trainers and negotiating skills. The University was established in 1946 and there are currently 10,000 students.

In a question and answer session the director said that funding came from 2 sources: VGCL pay for lecturers and equipment and tuition fees for students are quite low. There are two distinct types of students: trade union officers and ordinary students. Courses undertaken include business administration, labour protection, sociology, accounting and finance.

