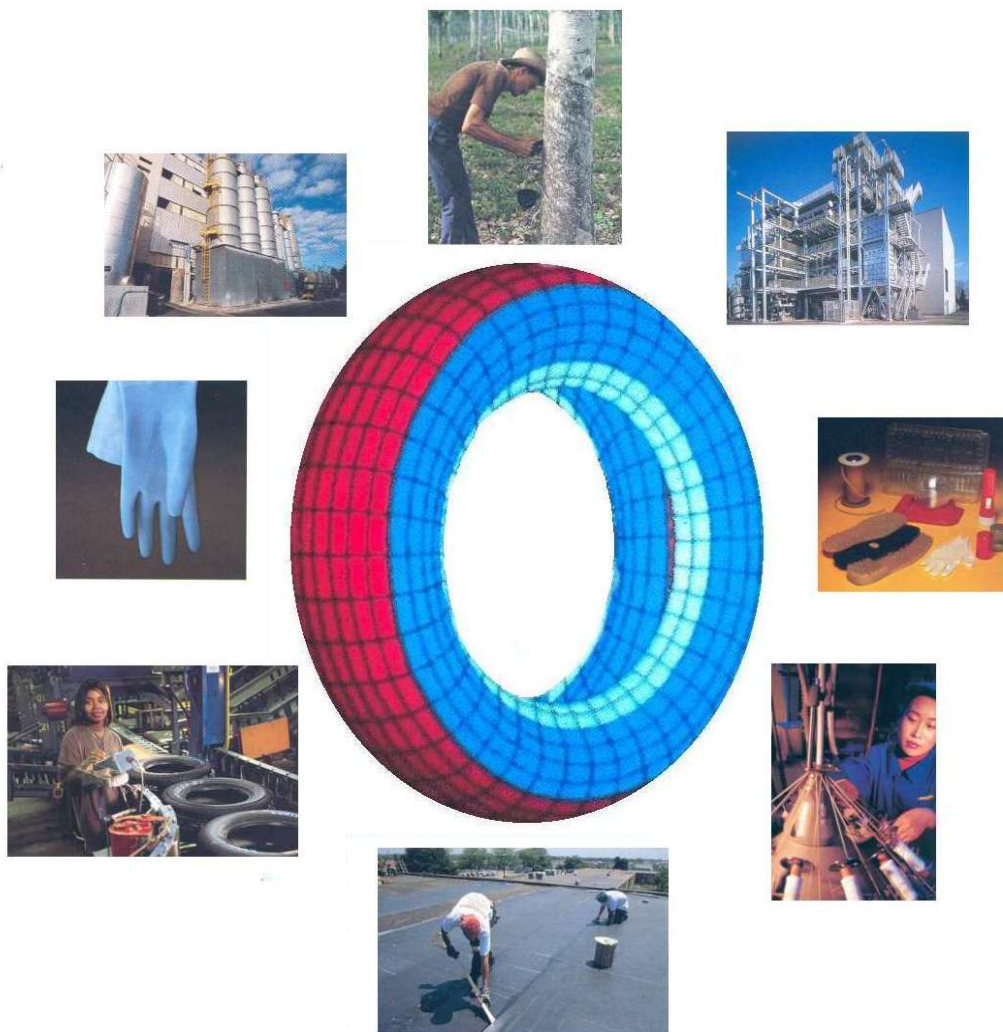


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PART: 1

THE GLOBAL RUBBER INDUSTRY: FORECASTS, STRUCTURE AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

The global rubber industry comprises three basic segments: the production of natural and synthetic rubber, tires, and non-tire rubber goods. The production of the raw materials - natural and synthetic rubber is, therefore, the basic indicator for the current status and health of the global industry. Because the production of tires consumes between 60% and 70% of total rubber production, tire output is the second important indicator for the whole industry.

PRODUCTION AND DEMAND FOR RUBBER

Stock markets and the media, based as they are on instant speculation and the supply of continuous “news”, concentrate on indicators for quarterly and yearly performance in their reports on the industry. Industry professionals and workers, however, must be concerned with developments in the medium and longer term. From this perspective it is clear that the global rubber industry is a growth industry and consumption of elastomers - natural and synthetic rubber - has consistently increased in each year since 1994. (Table 1)

Table 1: Consumption of Elastomer (Natural + Synthetic Rubber) 1990-2002

in million tonnes

	1990	1994	1995	1998	2002*
World Consumption	15.2	14.0	15.2	16.2	18.0

* estimate from International Rubber Study Group

In late 2001 worldwide rubber demand hit a 16-year high at around 18 million metric tonnes. This occurred despite widespread pessimism in 1998 resulting from the 1997 Asian financial crises. In 2001 there was a greater than expected impact of the global downturn in the auto industry but based on previous experience it is confidently expected by industry researchers that 2002 will be another record year.

Total rubber consumption is predicted to grow 10.6% in North America, 4.1% in the EU, 4.7% in Asia/Pacific, 6.8% in Eastern Europe and CIS, and 3.7% in Africa. Significantly, and reflecting the sub-continental economic and political conditions in its major economies, it is predicted that total rubber consumption will fall in Latin America by 3.1%. The global predictions for 2003 and beyond are positive and will be in line with the historical upward trend since 1994. The conclusion is that the long term situation for the global industry is one of steady if not robust growth and this basic assumption, unlike those in other heavy industries, drives the investment and production technologies of the corporations involved.

Natural Rubber Production: Future Turbulence?

All predictions for the industry are based upon current trends continuing and on the strength of existing structures. The only indicator of possible future turbulence in the global industry is currently geared around the low prices of natural rubber. Global rubber consumption consists of about 60% synthetic rubber and 40% natural rubber. Natural rubber is currently about half the price of synthetic rubber. But natural rubber producers have been complaining for decades about the low prices for their product.

In 1980, the natural rubber price was \$1,625 per tonne but by 2000 the price had fallen to half that amount. In a country like Thailand, which has increased its natural rubber production by 33% over the same period, the real value of that production is now less than it was in 1980 despite the increase in output. Thailand claims to maintain its rubber production mainly to prevent the social turbulence which would result from the closure of many of its small natural rubber producers.

These problems were behind the creation of the International Natural Rubber Organization which was designed to help create stability in natural rubber prices. This intervention organization was closed in 2001, leaving producers exposed to the market manipulations and developments in the consumer countries and corporations. For this reason the three largest natural rubber producer countries created a new organization in 2002 - the International Tripartite Rubber Organization. These three countries produced between them about 70% of global natural rubber.

Their objective is to make an OPEC for natural rubber - reducing supply to raise prices. While the industry is not anticipating dramatic movement in this area the creation of the organization is the most important indicator that natural rubber producers are intent on securing higher prices for the commodity. If they are successful some of the basic price structures in the industry would change.

Tires: Following Autos

Because of the dominant position of tire manufacturing in the industry, the global rubber industry is dependant on the growth and developments in the car industry. The corporations have contracts with auto makers for the supply of tires as original equipment (OE), whereas for the replacement market, mass marketing impact for the retailing of tires is the important factor..

Sales of new cars are heavily dependant on economic conditions while replacements are less so. In both cases long term trends, regardless of fluctuations, are for more road vehicles and greater use of them; but there are substantial differences between regions reflecting the different maturity of the passenger car market. The EU and North America are at saturation point for first car ownership and their growth rates are correspondingly lower

Table 2: Growth for Passenger Tires 2000-2005

% Growth in Number of Units

W. Europe	.7%
E. Europe	3.6%
N. America	1.3%
Latin America	2.9%
Asia	3.7%

It is important to the industry that the growth in car ownership is concentrated in the two areas of low production cost and low labour costs. Environmental regulations, health and safety requirements and wages are lower in China and in Eastern Europe, while in both cases investment risk and market stability are better than in the other low cost regions of Latin America and Africa.

Finally, demand for tires is unlikely to be affected by technological innovations in their use. While tires have become hard wearing there are no indications of technological advances which will revolutionize tire use. Likewise, while future advances - such as fuel-cell and hybrid - in traction in transportation - might change use and stresses, the wheel and the tire remain consistent in all current plans.

B. THE INDUSTRY STRUCTURE:

The global rubber industry is small compared with many other global industries. Its total annual sales - estimated at less than \$100 billion - are less than the annual sales turnover of a single company in the auto, retail and oil sectors, for example. The latest available authoritative and complete industry global listings shows 75 companies with sales over \$40 million with a worldwide employment of about 700,000 people of whom about 450,000 are in tire production.

The industry was, however, one of the first to develop into a distinct pattern of three major corporations dominating the industry and affecting, through their purchasing, sales and employment policies, the social and economic situation of companies downstream. Other industrial sectors are only now moving towards this "triadized" structure of mature oligopoly.

This is illustrated by the comparison of the sales figures of the top three rubber companies with those of the rest of the industry. For example, Goodyear sales at \$11.5 billion in 2000 were more than the combined sales of the next three corporations - Continental, Sumitomo and Pirelli.

Tires are the major segment of the rubber industry occupying at least 70% of its total output and it is the tire segment that encouraged the industry to collapse towards a three-corporation scenario, Even the past four years have seen a shrinkage of companies and the disappearance

of names that for decades have been associated with tires. For example, the triad corporation, Japan-headquarter Bridgestone, took over Firestone; French-headquartered Michelin took over Uniroyal/Goodrich; USA-headquartered Goodyear took over German Fulda, after absorbing North American and European operations of Dunlop; and German-headquartered Continental took over Semperit (Austria) , General Tire (USA) and Uniroyal- Englebert (USA).

In addition to these take-overs and mergers, the companies are engaged in alliancing in which they cooperate with one another and with other so-called 'competitors' in ventures and market operations. Goodyear and Japan-headquartered Sumitomo concluded a worldwide alliance, Pirelli and Cooper Tire are involved in a strategic alliance in which Cooper will market Pirelli's tires in Latin America while Cooper is supposed to help Pirelli with productivity issues in USA. Korean-headquartered Woosung Tire Corporation is looking for partners amongst the triad. Part of alliancing also includes take-off agreements in which one company manufactures tires bearing the name of another.

These activities all point in one direction - fewer and fewer corporations producing for, and so dominating, the global tire market. At the end of the 1990s three corporations controlled over 60% percent of the tire market. Industry analysts now expect that figure to be 70% by 2005 and 80% by 2008.

The rubber industry, and especially its tire sector, is a mature oligopoly structure which impacts on all other aspects of dynamics, strategies and policies of the global industry.

CORPORATE STRATEGIES: MARKETS

Until recently the geographic spread between the three majors was: Goodyear predominant in North and Latin America; Michelin in Europe and Africa; and Bridgestone in Asia-Pacific. Their basic spheres of interest reflected their headquarters - 42% of Bridgestone sales are in Japan, 47% of Michelin are in Europe (with 50% of the French tire market), while Goodyear has 54% of its sales in North America. Further, the pattern of activity indicates that the dominant corporations have a tacit agreement not to penetrate each others core markets. In the past, market penetration was achieved by exports but in the era of free capital movement, penetration of markets now means owning production facilities within the markets.

The mergers and acquisitions of the last six years have begun to impact on this basic pattern because when a foreign corporation purchases a smaller foreign corporation it enters the market in which that corporation previously operated. For example, the purchase of Firestone by Bridgestone and other such movements meant that by 2001 there were more tires supplied to the US market by foreign-owned corporations located in the USA than by all the American-owned tire producers put together.

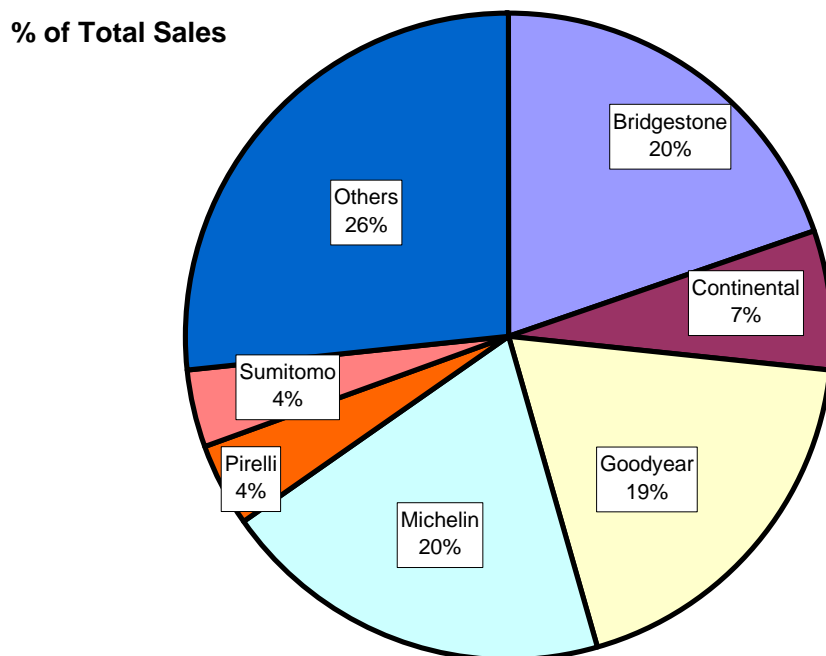
The mergers and acquisitions potential of the industry has, even yet, not been completely realized, so it is still too early to provide a definite prognosis. But the emerging pattern is that, just as Goodyear has retreated from its predominant position in the North American market in favor of expansion overseas, so all the majors are increasingly ready to accept the increasing globalization of brands by which each will have a segment of any given national market.

Each national corporate picture begins to reflect the overall global picture with the assured presence of a combination of the three majors and a minor presence of surviving national producers and other corporations from the top 10.

The basic market strategies of the majors, based on an analysis of their most recent moves, are threefold:

- a) to locate in, rather than export to, the new areas of growth in Asia and Eastern Europe
- b) to ensure a market share in each national or regional market
- c) to convert all markets to just-in-time delivery systems.

Chart 1: Global Tire Market
% sales to the nearest



These strategies are ongoing. The rubber industry is exceptional in that the new growth areas for the sales of tires and no-rubber products are also the low cost areas. In other industries growth in consumption is rarely in the lowest production costs areas.

This means that the new targets are in Eastern Europe and China. Thus, for example, labour cost alone in Rumania with a population of 22 million is one tenth of the wage in Western Europe. Consumption in East and Central Europe will return as the industrial structures and economies are restored after the collapse of the immediate post-Communist era. Also in the case of Eastern Europe the proximity to replacement markets means that transport costs are low.

In the case of China a similar low wage cost is matched by expected vehicle increases. Car sales in China are expected to increase to 1 million in 2002 a 40% increase over 2000 but, in addition, non-tire rubber consumption for the shoe and allied industry is also set to increase substantially. The corporations operating in China, that include Goodyear, Bridgestone, Michelin and Sumitomo, will satisfy the local market as well as export throughout the world. In 2000 Michelin open the biggest tire plant in the world in China.

In Eastern Europe, although car ownership growth is less volatile, the export possibilities are greater for corporations locating there, as for example Continental in Czech Republic (Barum in Otrokovice) , Slovak Republic (Matador in Puchov),Rumania (in Timiosora) and Matador is involved in a joint-venture Matador Omskshina in Omsk, Russia. Other developments include Goodyear in Slovenia (Sava in Kranj), in Poland (TC Debica SAF in Debica), Michelin in Hungary (Taurus Rubber Co. Ltd in Budapest and Nyiregyhaza), in Poland (Stomil-Olyztyn SA in Olsztyn) and Bridgestone - Firestone in Poland (in Poznan)

The use of low cost production areas to produce for export by the tire industry is a mixed picture in contrast with, for example, the rubber footwear industry. Transport costs and lack of conformity in specifications are some of the problems. Significantly, for example, imports may go from so-called high-cost areas to low-cost areas because of other factors. Currently 70% of passenger, light truck and truck tires imported into Mexico are from the United States and Canada. At the same time only 28% of passenger tires are imported into the US and if those from Canada are excluded it is less than 10%. The USA exports slightly less than it imports but in recent years the so-called rubber deficiency been declining. On the other hand between 1999 and 2000 imports from China to the USA grew 18,5% and those from Brazil declined 21%. These are the signs of globalization in flux.

The oligopolistic market strategies are to be seen in the way the big three divide up the national markets of various countries. First, each has a dominant position in its head-quarter countries. After that there are two basic patterns - two rubber major corporations plus a national producer, or two or three of the rubber majors operating in the market alone. Thus in many Latin America countries the whole tire production is shared by two rubber majors - in Colombia it is Bridgestone and Michelin, in Venezuela, it is Bridgestone and Goodyear and in Chile it is also Bridgestone and Goodyear. In the larger market of Brazil, Bridgestone, Goodyear, Michelin and Pirelli supply 90% of the market, in Turkey Bridgestone and Goodyear supply 50% of the market with 50% from a local corporation. Major industrial countries which have no multinationals are in a similar position to the less industrialized countries - all tires in the UK are produced by foreign-owned majors and Spain is host to Bridgestone, Michelin and Pirelli. The spread of this pattern is not always assured - indicating future conflicts. Nizhnekamskshina, Russia's largest tire maker, recently refused alliancing with Western tire makers in favor of a go-it-alone modernization and production program,

The final market strategy of just-in-time market delivery is based on the production techniques discussed below.

CORPORATE STRATEGIES: PRODUCTION

Production technology can be used either to improve aspects of the production of existing products and to produce new products. The rubber industry, dominated by the tire sector, is not likely to be dramatically disturbed by new products. The only new product on the horizon is the so-called 'run-flat', which enables a tire to run without air for a sufficient distance before changing the tire. This means that the vehicle does not need to carry a spare tire and leads to a consequent reduction in cost and weight for auto producers. Problems associated with this tire are the need for an electronic monitoring system to indicate pressure loss, as well as other more technical problems. There are no plans for a massive entry of this product onto the tire market. Most of the production technology in the rubber industry is thus devoted to improving the existing production systems.

There is no doubt that production technology in the tire industry will change dramatically in the next ten years. The future production technologies exist already, but the industry has yet to decide on the system which will predominate. In addition, corporations seem reluctant to plunge into technologies which could go wrong and which require expensive and functioning plant to be made obsolete. This is the reason why, currently, the three dominant corporations each claim to have their own production technology which will substantially reduce the costs of production of tires. Perhaps precisely because of its smaller size, the most dynamic corporation in this area appears to be the smaller player Pirelli.

New production technologies as developed by the industry majors are:-

Goodyear

Process System = IMPACT

Claimed advantages: 135% increase in productivity; 70% increase in cycle time; 15% reduction in material costs; 35% reduction in labour cost

Michelin

process system = 3CM-Process (continuous cold compounding)

claimed advantages: 85% reduction in production time; 90% reduction in space required; 50% reduction in current investment requirements; 40% less energy; 35% reduction in employees

Bridgestone

process system = TOCHIGI and ACTAS (Automatic Tire Assembly System)

claimed advantages: 2500 tires per day with 10 operators; minimal investment costs; 60 different tires with same process

Pirelli

process system = MIRS (Modular Integrated Robotized System)

claimed advantages: 15% lower investment costs 25% cost savings, reduction of manufacturing time from six days to 72 minutes, 80% increased labour productivity; 33% lower energy costs, 80% reduction in required floor space.

Continental also has its MMP system and even smaller corporations are involved in new technology claims. For example, Japanese-headquartered Yokohama Rubber Company in conjunction with Toyo Tire uses a technology developed by Fuji Seiko and has installed a new system with a claimed 20% cost reduction for making “high precision” tires. The tire is seamless and therefore the integrated production system has a just-in-time delivery potential. The companies involved claim a “ground-breaking change in the tire production of the 21st century”.

The economic and business objectives for these technologies are:

- 1) reduction in raw materials used (driven partly by fears of oil price rises)
- 2) reduction in number of workers needed
- 3) smaller, more compact, plants increasing the ease of geographic mobility.
- 4) enabling just-in-time delivery systems that require low-cost start-up and close-down

The technological dream of the tire industry would be a single machine (processing plant) lean in its use of materials, labour and energy, easily transportable, with minimal start-up and shut-down costs. The Pirelli MIRS system is the one which claims to fulfill this dream. Pirelli MIRS plants exist in Milan, Germany, and UK and the company has suggested that 80 such plants worldwide are possible. MIRS plants occupy about 4000 sq. feet, cost \$1 million each, and produce 1 million tires per year on a 24 hour operating basis. In 2002 Pirelli announced the development of a CCM system (Continuous Compound Mixing) as a further supplement to the MIRS.

Industry insiders believe that each of the techniques has been tried by all of the other corporations, each of whom has found something to be lacking and has gone on to develop its own. Further, while some of the claims may be true, others will only be true in the long run. Thus, for example, Goodyear which claimed its system would eliminate internal mixers has yet to achieve that objective, while it would take more than 20 years to instal IMPACT in all its plants. Some cynics point to the advantages Pirelli would achieve if it received a take-over bid while it is claiming to have the ultimate in tire processing technology.

In illustration of the claim that the new technologies may not be robust, one can point to the well-known case of the 13 million tires which Bridgestone/Firestone had to recall as the result of tread separation. Other companies have also needed to recall tires as failure rates have increased and safety standards have become more stringent.

Experts believe therefore that each of the technologies touted by the different corporations has certain negative characteristics often not revealed, since there is no critical authority for the industry. Essentially then, each corporation decides which package of negative and positive aspects of the different technology it can sustain. As has been noted above, these corporations have geographic spheres of interest in which they operate and these will determine which packet they will use. For example, Michelin operates mainly in Western Europe where environmental regulations are strong and enforced, thus any new technology which increases the costs of pollution reduction will not be suitable. In North America, where traveled distances are long and safety requirements supported by routine injury compensation claims, any extra costs for safety checks would be more negative than elsewhere.

Samir Gibara, Chief Executive Officer of Goodyear Tire and Rubber compensation in the single year of 2001 was a total of :

\$4,999,151

that is 466 times the minimum wage and 196 times the average wage in USA.

Most important for the workers concerned is that the reports on these technologies rarely assess the impacts on workers' jobs, health and safety and on environmental pollution. Corporate responsibility in the rubber industry has been defined more in terms of the safety in the use of the product rather than the safety in manufacturing the product. The new technologies will raise these issues in the industry in a way that has been lacking before.

C. CORPORATE DYNAMICS

The rubber corporations are driven by the current general dynamics of corporations as well as by those which are specific to the rubber industry

Corporate Governance

The rubber majors have not escaped the corporate governance problems that have characterized other sectors. Over the past four years the industry majors have shown all the signs of short term cost-cutting in order to produce maximum executive "reward packages" and to maximize associated share value.

The effect of unrestricted annexation of corporate surpluses by the executive strata and the attempt to boost that situation by showing inflated net earnings makes the dynamics of the corporation towards short-term cost-cutting, restricted investment in longer- term technologies, and diminished concern for environment and health and safety 'cost factors'.

The rubber majors have displayed all of these characteristics. The technologies proposed are focused almost exclusively on reducing worker inputs, reducing raw materials and succeeding in flexible management of production and stocks, rather than creating a workforce with some security and a social responsibility towards safety and the environment. The Bridgestone/Firestone recall is illustrative. The work and salary cutting demands of the corporation produced bad labor relations which contributed to the general problems of the production process. The faulty tires were not recalled immediately as the corporation desperately tried to prevent the short term loss in income through compensation inherent in the sales of faulty products.

The current corporate scandals in North America are the consequence of two decades of acquisition of unlimited executive power through side-lining shareholders and weakening unions. This has resulted in unrestricted internal profit-taking via inappropriately large withdrawals from corporate funds into executive reward packages. When the legal route became impossible for some executives there was resort to illegal practices. For decades European and Japanese executives have consistently complained that they are not able to remove from the corporation reward packages at the same level as their North American and

British colleagues. They have consistently and successfully lobbied governments for corporate and high income tax breaks and demanded a flexibilisation of labour conditions which creates uneven distribution of income towards the top bracket. These practices may be exported. A current \$3.5 billion lawsuit against Goodyear in China alleges the corporation supplied jewelry, clothes, travel and employment contracts to persuade a Chinese company to change its contracts to Goodyear. Goodyear denies these allegations.

It will be the power and competence of the union presence in the industry at the global and national level, coupled with more active pension funds and shareholder control that will need to head off these global trends.

In the rubber industry, corporate dynamics are also affected by the structure of a mature oligopoly. The main aspect of oligopolistic industries is that they are no longer governed by the conventional rules of competition by which corporations are supposed to compete on the basis of price and quality which in turn leads to greater efficiency. Dominant corporations are less driven by conventional competition than by rent-seeking - that is, by surpluses which come from manipulation of market segments, national laws, tacit agreements and, in some industries, from illegal collusion. The rhetoric of competition and rivalry are used but the basic dynamic is cooperation. The trade and consumer press currently emphasize the competition between the rubber majors in relation to production technology. Yet in Brazil in 2002, for example, an online consultancy has been opened called RubberNetwork in which Goodyear, Michelin, Pirelli, Continental and Hankook will work together to "supply technology, e-market services, and e-procurement."

Rational economic arguments are replaced by strategic alliances, which in mature oligopolies are increasingly divorced from economic and efficiency factors. For example there are no national Brazilian companies manufacturing tires in Brazil. The tire market is divided by the three rubber majors. This means that any government legislation or policy in social security, labour law, finance, environment and health and safety which affects the rubber industry affects only foreign corporations. A so-called "deregulator" gift in national legislation benefits the "rents" secured by the majors in the Brazilian market. The pressures this places on the national legislature and upon unions and other organizations seeking local just wages, and environmental policies is at the root of social and political problems throughout the world.

PART 2

THE WORKER IN THE GLOBAL RUBBER INDUSTRY CORPORATIONS, WORKERS, TRADE UNIONS AND SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

A. CORPORATE STRATEGIES: LABOUR

The rubber industry majors show a mix of basic corporate strategies and attitudes towards labour and labour relations policies.

As in most industries, there is a common drive to reduce the wage bill by the classic methods of manning reductions, outsourcing and increased intensity of work. Most production innovations are directed towards that end and most of the rhetoric is connected with so-called 'labour flexibility', productivity increases and cost reductions. After a century of automation in the tire industry, however, the labour cost per tire is not high. The main costs are raw materials that depending on the price of oil and the cost of capital. This provides the corporations in the rubber industry with greater flexibility in relation to wages and conditions of work than they are ready to admit. Bolstered by a compliant financial and consumer press employers will always blame labour costs, even when they are not the cause (See boxes). It is easier for the corporation to say it is relocating because of labour costs and labour problems than that, for example, it cannot get the local government to loosen environmental or tax regulations.

Corporations in the rubber industry are moving to a uniform demand of their employees: in order to profit from just-in-time delivery layoffs are becoming a regular feature. Batch production requires batch workers. Economists refer to making labour less of a fixed cost and more a variable cost. Others note that this means the casualisation of previously secure jobs, the treatment of workers as variable production inputs and a reduction in annual income for workers

Always Blame Labour 1- The Companies

In March 2001 USA-headquartered GenCorp announced the closing of its Hennessey Elastomer plant in Ireland because "of "high wage inflation".

This sounded strange since Ireland has notoriously been cited for lower wages. In fact the union revealed that wages were half those paid by the same company in Germany.

But the corporation had another powerful critic of its statements in the form of the independent government-funded Irish Industrial Development Agency.

The real reason, said that Agency, was that the company did not invest sufficiently in the plant to modernize its production and that its product mix was wrong.

Always Blame Labour 2 - The Press

On January 10, 2001 Reuters News Service reported a Goodyear Mexican plant closure with a loss of 1,559 jobs because, a company spokesperson said, “labour costs were too high” and that it “had nothing to do with the slowdown in the USA economy”.

On January 7, 2001 Agencia EFE news service reported the same closure but here the story had the company spokesperson saying that the closure was “part of the company’s” international restructuring “ and was ” mostly due to the slowdown in the USA economy”.

who are not paid between just-in-time batches. Stomil Olsztyn, a tire producer in Poland, announced in June 2002 that 2,500 job contracts were to be changed so that workers will not be paid during periods of non-work of less than 22 days.

Outside of these two cross-industry dynamics the rubber majors show some variety in their basic policy. Michelin seeks the classic form of paternalisation, in which a corporation attempts to have a non-or under-unionized labour force with a core of stable workers and a periphery of casual temporary workers. There is an attempt to coopt the core workers through granting them a raft of company-derived benefits. This makes union organizing difficult.

In 2001, for the 13th time in 30 years, unionization was prevented at Michelin facilities in Nova Scotia, Canada. Michelin has 3 plants in Nova Scotia and, according to the infamous “Michelin” law, passed by the state legislature in order to attract Michelin there in 1979, all three plants must be organized at the same time in order to gain recognition. In France, however, Michelin concluded a 35-hour week agreement with the unions and thus helped French workers in general to have the shortest working hours in the rubber industry. In line with this basic orientation, in 2002 Michelin launched a limited employee share ownership plan and, according to the corporation, 63% of employees took up the offer (which is a greater than usual uptake for a first time share plan of this type). The plan was offered to over 100, 000 employees in 16 countries - meaning that some 27,000 workers were not offered participation in the plan. A second offer will be made in 2003. All of this does not stop Michelin from continually downsizing its labour force and announcing in 2000 a program to reduce 7,500 jobs by 2003. Since 1982 Michelin has dismissed 25,000 workers.

Goodyear follows a more traditional adversarial labour relations policy. Goodyear has recently been forced to reconsider its employee grading system in the USA, under which employees are graded on how well they perform by their supervisors into A, B and C grades. A’s and B’s get raises and C’s get warnings. After two years the corporation has started firing people with a second C grade. Not only is it claimed that this is to secure removal of older workers. It is also stated by workers interviewed in the press that it is making morale low and creating a poor work atmosphere.

Bridgestone and Continental pursue different policies in headquarter countries than in the foreign subsidiaries, since they are constrained by labour law and tradition in their headquarter countries. The charge that corporations attempt to secure conditions in subsidiaries inferior to those found in the headquarter country becomes a common charge heard among global networks and in calls for international solidarity.

B. THE RUBBER WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS: An ICEM Affiliate Survey Employment in the Global Rubber Industry

For the ICEM World Conference on the Rubber Industries a survey was made of affiliates based on a questionnaire with 17 questions about the national industry, the union, working conditions and problems encountered. There were 22 responses to the request for information. Unfortunately the responses were somewhat uneven with respect to regional coverage of the global rubber industries. Presented here are the answers to questions which were sufficiently complete, comparable, or provided information of interest. The results must be taken as a starting point for a more complete and accurate survey rather than as definitive information.

The responses appear to indicate employment of at least 700,000 workers in the industry. This does not include the workers in natural rubber production nor those in the industry in China. The total global employment in 2002 must therefore be in the region of 1 million. About 450,000 thousand workers are employed in the tire sector of whom 370,000 by the top six tire corporations.

The responses were not complete concerning the numbers of women workers but of those responding the percentage varied between 20% and 45%. Of significance was that the Bulgarian and Slovakian affiliates reported that women workers represented 42% and 30% respectively. Only Finland with 45% and USA with 55% in tires had a greater proportion of women workers and Spain also had 42%. These compare, for example, with 28% in Japan, 24.8% in the UK, 25% in Denmark, 19% in France and Germany at 22.6%. In Asia the Malaysian affiliate reported that 45% of rubber workers were women reflecting a different emphasis in the industry structure where there is a high proportion of rubber latex goods. The so-called "feminisation" of the work force is not advanced in the global rubber industry but if production increases in Eastern and Central Europe and Asia, this could indicate a change in that direction in the near future.

Affiliates were asked which jobs were held by women in the rubber industry and what were the wage disparities. The majority of affiliates responding put women workers in the packaging, assembling, quality control, laboratory and administration sections. There were only four affiliates which listed women in processing or physically heavy blue collar work. Several referred to women being in the lower waged grades. Affiliates responding did not, however, report significant wage disparities, several referred to negotiated and legal requirements of equality, while others referred to the well-known disparity arising from job grading. Of those that made specific responses, an ICEM French affiliate noted that there was a nearly 20% disparity in the worker grades and that in the supervisor and management grades men received 30% more than women. The survey does not reveal that the global rubber industry has more gender wage discrimination than other comparable industries.

Table 3: Reported Employment in Rubber Industry
(Ranked in order of industry size)

USA	199,900
Japan	106,000
Germany	72,000
France	70,000
UK	35,520
Malaysia	35,000
Brazil	27,000
Rumania	9,700
Australia	6,500
Bangladesh	6,500
Mozambique	5,852
Finland	4,500

The unions were asked to indicate whether rubber industry employment was declining or increasing in their country and the reasons for the trend. The pattern of growth and decline confirms the analysis of corporate strategies favoring relocation in new growth and low cost areas. Thus the Romanian affiliate reports a 7% growth and the Slovakian a substantial 15% increase. All other affiliates report an overall decline ranging from 25% in Norway, 20% in Austria, 9,5% in Japan and 5% in Germany. Other countries affected by volatile economic conditions, or small enough to be substantially affected by one plant closure, report dramatic declines such as the 40% decline in Peru and similarly in Tanzania.

The reasons for growth and decline also follow what is revealed in the corporate strategy analysis - restructuring, rationalization, and reorganization. Several unions noted that privatization was resulting in a decline in the industry employment and the Bangladesh affiliate directly named IMF and World Bank policies as the causes for the decline. No affiliates directly noted the impact of new production techniques although such reason may be included under the heading of rationalization.

Unionization in the Global Rubber Industry

From the responses of the ICEM affiliated unions, rubber workers appear to be better unionized than the national averages. In most cases the number of workers in unions in the rubber industry equals or exceeds the over-all unionization rate in the country based on latest statistics. The union density rates - the proportion of workers as union members for the industry as a whole - fall into three broad categories: A density rate of over 85%; between 65% and 44%; and below 22%.

In the over 85% category are the countries which have a traditionally high unionization rate - Denmark, Austria, Norway and Australia all reporting 90% or over. Also in this category are the smaller unions in smaller rubber industries such as Bangladesh with 90% and Tanzania with 87%. In the middle category are countries such as Japan, Brazil and Peru reporting 44%, 50% and 60% respectively. In this category Rumania is significant with a reported 63% and at the lower end of the middle range is Germany with 46% and Mozambique with 45%. The lowest unionization rates are found in USA, UK, Spain and France with between 10% to 22% with France as one of the lowest with 10%. Malaysia at 24% and Bulgaria at 36% are also significant in this category.

Table 4: Reporting Unions Rubber Industry Membership
(ranked by size of membership)

Country	Union	Membership
Japan	Gomurengo (Japanese Rubber Workers UnionConfederation)	47,593
USA	United Steelworkers of America, AFL-CIO,CLC	45,699
Germany	IG BCE	33,600
Brazil	Frente Unica da Borracha	14,000
UK	Transport & General Workers Unions	11,523
Malaysia	National Union of Employees in Companies Manufacturing Rubber Products	6,379
UK	General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union	5,000
Spain	FIA-UGT	3,600
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation Workers and Employees Union	4,500
Mozambique	SINTIQUIGRA	2,543
Denmark	Central Organisation of Industrial Employees	2,300
Austria	Gerwerkschaft der Chemiearbeiter	2,186
France	Federation Chemie Energie FCE-CGT	1,900

Rumania	Fed. Nationale des Syndicats du Petrochimie	1,620
Slovakia	OZ Chemia SR	1,293
Finland	Union of Salaried Employees TU	1,036
USA	PACE International Union	960
Australia	Australian Liquor Hospitality Miscellaneous Workers Union	800
Tanzania	Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers	368
Bulgaria		340
New Zealand	Manufacturing & Construction Workers Union	210
Peru	Sindicato de Trabajadores de la CIA Goodyear de Peru SA	116
Norway	Chemical and Industrial Workers Union.	214
Argentina	SUTNA	36

While China and some other Asian countries are missing in this survey, it would appear from the reports of affiliates that the new growth areas and low cost areas do have a medium range unionization rate which can be important for global union strategies in the face of relocations and corporate maneuvers.

Wages

Comparative wages are notoriously difficult to calculate with any degree of practical accuracy. The intervening factors of exchange rates, cost-of-living differences, non-wage benefits and entitlements, overtime rates often distort the real meaning of wage differences between countries. The response to the survey was incomplete in the regional and national areas and often the data was not comparable. The results seen in the Table 5 can only be considered as indicative and useful for further refinement.

With this reservation some conclusions can be drawn from the data available.

Using the benchmark provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics of all-industry average hourly wages throughout world, it would appear that the rubber industry wage rates are roughly equal to, or in some cases below, the all-industry average. For example, Spain with a USB all-industry rate of \$16.2 per hour achieves in the medium grades a slightly lower rate while in New Zealand it is substantially lower. ICEM's affiliate in the USA reports a medium grade hourly wage of \$13.58 while the all-industry average is \$19.2

Table 5: Gross Average Wages in Selected Countries
(blue collar wage rate per month- US\$)

Region/Country	Low	Medium	High
Asia/Pacific			
Bangladesh	28	89	103.5
Japan		2,322	
Malaysia	230	400	700
New Zealand	800	920	1,040
W. Europe			
Germany	1,762	1,906	4,355
Spain	1,000	2,125	4,000
Finland	1,200	2,000	2,700
Central Europe			
Rumania	125	300	500
Slovakia	150	235	430
North and South America			
Brazil	120	200	800
Peru	200	680	1,000
United States	1,326	2,205	3,314

conversion from hours to months = times reported work week x 4

Wage differentials between the lowest and highest wages reported by the affiliates is in the 2.5-3 times range. Thus Germany and the USA both report that the highest wage is 2.4 times greater than the lowest with Finland at 3 times and the UK at below 2 times. The wage differential gets greater as the wages get lower, thus the Brazilian affiliate reports the highest wage at 6 times the lowest and Peru at 5 times, Rumania at 4 times. Displaying a difference with other West European reports, the Spanish affiliate notes a 4 times ratio between highest and lowest wages paid. In Asia both Bangladesh and Malaysia report wage differentials in the 3 times range.

On the basis of the few responses which are comparable, the ICEM survey indicates that Eastern and Central European wage rates are now lower than those in Latin America. This confirms the known position of the Eastern European countries becoming the target for corporations seeking low wage costs.

Finally on the question concerning the last three years' developments in real wages (money

wages minus inflation) all the reporting affiliates report that real wages advanced or were stable , except the Australian union which records a retreat of 1 percent and Bulgaria with minus 2.1% . Amongst those that achieved significant increases in the past 3 years were USA at 11,84%, Bangladesh at 10% and Finland at 6-7%

Working Hours, Annual leave and Retirement

The data supplied under these headings were the most complete of the survey.

The wide difference of working hours per year with a 56% disparity between the highest, Peru at 2,496 hours per year and France at 1600 hours is the most notable factor.

Table 6: Rubber Industry Basic Working Hours
(Ranked by highest non-shift hours per year; as reported by responding unions)

Country	Day Work		Shift Work	
	Per Year	Per Week	Per Year	Per Week
Mozambique	2,688	48	2064	44
Peru	2,496	48	2496	48
Bangladesh	2,304	48	na	na
Argentina	2,300	42.5	na	na
Brazil	2,288	44	2054	39.5
Tanzania	2,169	45	na	na
Malaysia	2,160	48	2160	48
Australia	2,112*	44	2,112	44
Bulgaria	2,045	40	2,045	40
United States	2,030	40.6	na	na
Rumania	2,000	40	2,000	40
Austria	1,976	38	1,976	38
Germany	1,955	37.5	1,955	37.5
Japan	1,951	na	1,894	na
Norway	1,950	37.5	1,846	35.5
New Zealand	1,840	40	1,715	37.3
Spain	1,760	na	1,760	na
Finland	1,716	40	1,655	35
United Kingdom	1,710	39-40	1,545	32-37.5
Slovakia	na	37.5	na	37.5
Denmark	1,628	37	1,540	35
France	1,600	35	1,600	35

*Tires: 1,824 per year, 38 per week

Retirement age statistics are becoming complicated as national legislation removes compulsory retirement, pension schemes change the dates when pensions may be taken in full, and more provisions are made for senior workers to take partial retirement with pension. These changes must be considered when reading the results in the relevant table.

Table 7: Annual Leave, Retirement Age in the Rubber Industry
(Reporting unions - selected countries)

Country	Annual Leave (days)	Retirement Age	
		M	W
Argentina	14-35	65	-
Australia	20	65	65
Austria	30-36*	61.5	56.5
Bangladesh	20-33#	60	60
Brazil	30	65	60
Bulgaria	20-30	67	60
Denmark	30	65	65
Finland	25	67	62
France	25-30+	60	60
Japan	-	60	60
Germany	30	61	61
Malaysia	22	55	55
Mozambique	30	60	65

Country	Annual Leave (days)	Retirement Age	
		M	W
New Zealand	20	65	64
Norway	30	67	67
Peru	30	65	65
Rumania	30	65	62
Slovakia	20-25*	60	53-57
Spain	30	65	58
Tanzania	28	60	55
United Kingdom	25	65	65
United States	20	62	61

* service related

blue collar - white collar

Health, Safety and Environment

There was a good response to question No. 13 of the ICEM questionnaire, which asked “What are the principal areas of concern in health and safety and environment.”

A wide range of concerns has been identified and that these vary – sometimes radically - from country to country and organization to organization. The following table provides summary details of these concerns.

Table 8: Principal areas of concern in health and safety and environment

(The unions are ranked by their stated membership.)

USA/United Steelworkers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC

Exposure to ergonomic hazards
Blame the worker syndrome
Occupational illness

Germany /IG BCE

Dealing with rubber waste
Vulcanisation fumes - especially regarding women workers

Brazil/Frente Unica da Borracha

Need to discuss plant conditions
Need for more participation by women in discussion

UK/Transport & General Workers Unions	RSI - men & women
Malaysia/National Union of Employees in Companies Manufacturing Rubber Products	Exposure to chemical dust Heat Shift work
UK/General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union	Industrial accidents Dust & fumes Carcinogens
Spain/FIA-UGT	Problems of controlling derivatives Problems of control of large number of chemicals
Bangladesh/ B. Forest Industries Development Corporation Workers and Employees	Arsenic in water Malaria Dengue fever
Mozambique/SINTIQUIGRA	Lack of protection from occupational hazards No medical aid available
Denmark/Central Organisation of Industrial Employees	Stress Occupational damage
Austria/Gerwerkschaft der Chemiewarbeiter	Shift work stress Living standards Occupational hazards
France/Federation Chemie Energie FCE-CGT	Work accidents RSI Stress
Rumania/Fed. Nationale des Syndicats du Petrochimie	Technology for toxic elimination Protective equipment, Modernisation of dispensary needed
Slovakia/OZ Chemia SR	New technology New social facilities New production facilities needed
Finland/Union of Salaried Employees TU	Stress
USA/PACE International Union	N/a

Australia/Aust. Liquor Hospitality Miscellaneous Workers Union	Work environment Shift work Work related accidents
Tanzania/Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers	Health & safety education Info. On safe environment HIV/AIDS Family planning
Bulgaria/National Labour Federation "Chemistry and industry"	manual labour changing shifts night shift
New Zealand/Manufacturing & Construction Workers Union	Generally applicable problems
Peru/Sindicato de Trabajadores de la CIA Goodyear de Peru SA	Prevention of contagious infections HIV/AIDS TB
Norway/Chemical and Industrial Workers Union	Health & safety
Argentina/SUTNA	Inadequate legal protection Inadequate medical protection

It is probably useful to break these concerns down into discrete groups in order to understand better how they might be tackled. Table 9. attempts to do this under a number of discrete headings. However, it is important to note that certain concerns could be listed under a number of headings (e.g. HIV/AIDS is a social problem and a general health concern; and stress could legitimately be listed under both psychological hazards and general health concerns.). In other instances (e.g. family planning) social concerns may have a significant effect on general well-being and the ability to perform work safely.

Table 9: Groups of hazards

Physical hazards

Work related accidents
Repetitive Strain Injuries
Dust & fumes
Heat
Exposure to ergonomic hazards

Psychological hazards

Stress
Blame the worker syndrome

Chemical hazards

Problems of controlling derivatives
Problems of control of large number of chemicals
Carcinogens
Exposure to chemical dust
Vulcanisation fumes

Biological hazards

Malaria
Dengue fever

General health concerns

Inadequate medical protection
Prevention of contagious infections
HIV/AIDS
TB
Work environment
Protective equipment
Modernisation of dispensary needed
No medical aid available
Arsenic in water
Occupational illness

Education and Training

Health & safety education
Information on safe environment
New technology

Organisational and structural concerns

Need to discuss plant conditions
New production facilities needed
Technology for toxic elimination
Need for more participation by women in discussion

Regulatory concerns

Inadequate legal protection

Social concerns

New social facilities

Family planning

Shift work

Living standards

Environmental concerns

Dealing with rubber waste

It is important to recognise that while the range of concerns is large, each one of them is a priority for one or other group of workers. The ICEM World Rubber Conference should seek to develop a programme of activities that aim to address as many of the expressed concerns as possible in a unified and coherent manner.

As the world's rubber manufacturers are overwhelmingly multinational corporations, it has long been an ICEM goal to develop global agreements with - and networks within - these companies. Health, safety and environmental issues provide an excellent focus for such activities.

Key ICEM decisions

- A decision was taken by the ICEM Bridgestone Union Network Steering Committee meeting in Tokyo from 19-20 April 2001 that *key topics for the Network will include health, safety and environment.*
 - The ICEM Goodyear Steering Committee met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on January 25, 2000 to set the network's direction. *Among other things, the network held an initial meeting with senior Goodyear executives and proposed that a joint agreement on health and safety be negotiated.*
 - The ICEM hosted the Asia/Pacific Goodyear Network Workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on July 25-26, 2000. In addition to developing ways to network and communicate better, *work groups discussed issues such as industrial health and safety, occupational diseases, and training and education programs.*
-

The ICEM has advised all affiliates that global networks can only succeed if they become the property and responsibility of affiliates. In particular, it has been agreed that no company network should be established unless at least one ICEM affiliate is prepared to take full responsibility for the administration of the network. In light of the existing Goodyear and Bridgestone networks, there are clear advantages in seeking to develop the union health, safety and environmental agenda within these companies.

The ICEM World Rubber Conference will, therefore, provide a forum for discussion of the best ways of moving the health, safety and environment agenda forward with both Bridgestone and Goodyear. At the same time, consideration will be given to using the Bridgestone and Goodyear experiences to develop model health, safety and environment agreements for use both in any future company networks or global agreements and at the plant level in other parts of the rubber industry.

Major Problems for Rubber Industry Unions

ICEM affiliates were asked to list their three major problems and in addition to specify any problems arising from the presence of multinationals in their countries. There were 21 usable responses to the major problems question. Apart from the more general problems of job security and health and safety issues there were three problems listed which were common to two or more affiliates:

Plant closures and relocations to lower production costs areas

Two affiliates specified lower production costs in Eastern Europe as being a major problem. The lower production costs arise from the huge wage disparities between Eastern and Western Europe but also from other aspects which are more difficult to detail, such as more relaxed environmental and health and safety standards;

The increased use of casual workers.

ICEM affiliates in Rumania and Tanzania both singled out increasing casualisation as a major problem of the union. As these are low waged countries it is significant that corporations and companies still seek to reduce the wage bill through casualisation. It is also usually the case that casual workers are more difficult to organize into unions and have less legal protections.

Increased work intensity leading to increased stress

Several unions noted the increased stress or work intensity factors separately and together. It was not stated if these problems arose from newer production techniques but this problem is one associated with new technologies as well as restructuring for the express purpose of a speed up.

The other problems listed, many of which reflect both the local national conditions as well as the reporting unions situation were:- job loss through globalization; health care and costs; unfair labour practices; closures and redundancies; lack of information; gender issues; no social security; job security; equal pay; family issues; political party absorbing trade union members; unpaid wages for 2 years; too many unions; out-sourcing; devaluation of skilled work; no coherent labour legislation; high taxes; ageing workers; health and safety; increase in part-time work; long shift hours; outdated labour laws; arbitrary dismissals. Only one affiliate reported that it had no major problems at the time of the survey.

Problems with Multinational Corporations

Six responding affiliates did not compelte the question relating to problems with multinational corporations and 5 reported that there were no major problems with multinationals at this time. The remaining 10 responding affiliates pointed to a variety of problems. In 4 responses Goodyear was mentioned in relation to problems associated with relocating plants, in one case after the Sumitomo take over and in two other cases concerning lack of respect for the labour laws relating to redundancy and dismissal. But for multinationals in general the relocation problems were expressed in different ways. The ICEM's American affiliate objected that productivity and employee costs were benchmarked against other worldwide companies, while the Australian affiliate noted the problem of multinationals playing off workers from different plants in different areas. Also mentioned were violations by multinationals of national labour law by which companies, if not actually ignoring the law, sought to use existing laws in a the harshest and most exploitative way to conduct activities not possible under the labour laws of their headquarter countries.

C. ICEM SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Since the last ICEM Rubber Conference in 1998 the International has been promoting and has been active in pursuing practical solidarity in three basic areas. Several initiatives taken in the previous period were completed and put into place in this period. This brings the rubber sector of the ICEM into the forefront of international trade union innovations. All of these developments and solidarity actions are reported in full with supporting documents on the ICEM website (www.icem.org) which should be consulted for full and more detailed information. What follows are summaries of the developments and actions.

The information is provided under the headings of **global agreements** in which the ICEM has entered into an agreement with a corporation concerning trade union rights and conditions of work, **global networks** of unions involved with a specific corporations and **solidarity actions** in which the ICEM has supported unions in dispute through solidarity action. Solidarity action is part of the daily activity of the ICEM and many actions produce results without the necessity of a public call for solidarity action or publication of the actions or outcomes. The actions listed under this heading are only those which were publically announced to the press and are on the web page.

Global Agreements

Conclusion of Global Agreement with Freudenberg in 2000 and its Prolongation in 2002

Global Union Networks

Launching of Goodyear Global Network in 1999
Launching of Bridgestone Global Network in 2000

Solidarity Actions

Continental- USA January -September 1999
Michelin(France) September 1999
Bridgestone/Firestone (USA) - September 2000
Goodyear December (USA) - December 2000
Continental - (Belgium) March 2001
China Synthetic Rubber company (Taiwan) 2002

Global Agreement - Freudenberg

The major subject covered in agreements that are now being concluded between the ICEM and individual global corporations are trade union rights, health, safety and environment and equality at work. The aim of such accords is to ensure consistently high standards worldwide by securing the right of the ICEM and its member unions to monitor companies' global performance on these and other issues, and to raise any alleged breaches of conditions with corporate headquarters management. This is the crucial difference between negotiated, bi-partite global agreements and companies' own unilateral codes of conduct.

The agreement in the rubber industry is with the German-headquartered multinational Freudenberg. This company employs 30,000 people in 43 countries and had a 2001 sales figure of approximately \$4 billion. It operates in the non-tire segment of the industry, using elastomers for the fabrication of seals, molded plastic components, vibration control products, household products, floor coverings and footwear. The corporation notes that the agreement is within the framework of its long-standing business principles notably “ the social commitment that the Freudenberg Group has towards all its employees”

The negotiating partners to the agreement were the corporation, the ICEM and ICEM-affiliate IG BCE - all three parties are signatory to the agreement. The agreement covers all of the company's sites and those of its subsidiaries around the world.

The emphasis in Freudenberg's global agreement with the ICEM is strongly on trade union rights and other human rights. Relevant ILO conventions are specifically cited. Thus the agreement clearly acknowledges “the right of the employees in the Freudenberg Group to freely join trade unions of their choice, to elect workers' representatives to represent their interests in negotiations concerning collective bargaining agreements.”

It is “part of the cooperation and confidence” between Freudenberg and its workers that “wherever the employees wish to organize themselves in trade unions, and trade unions apply for recognition, ways are sought to develop good labour relations in joint dialogue.” This “rules out any kind of unequal treatment, discrimination or sanctions against trade union organization”

Of special importance are the monitoring provisions that enable ICEM monitoring and that call for annual meetings between Freudenberg's global management and the ICEM. Both sides commit themselves “to contact each other directly and immediately in case any conflicts or violations of the agreement arise, in order to seek a common solution.”

Among Freudenberg environmental and broader social commitments are:

- sustainable protection of the environment and natural resources
- ensuring “the safety of the workplace and of its products
- not to produce “weapons or any kind of war materials similar to weapons.”

Confidence and cooperation between management, employees and their representatives, innovation and flexibility in work organization are the basis for the employees’ future success and that of the Freudenberg Group,” the agreement says. Every effort will be made to achieve “consensus about the introduction of flexible, efficient and customer-oriented forms of work organization”, while taking account of “the needs of the employees.”

In January of 2002 the agreement was prolonged without amendment to the end of 2002.

Global Union Networks

There are now two global union networks in the rubber industry . The Goodyear network set up in 1999 and the Bridgestone network in August 2000 are both networks of unions involved with specific companies across their worldwide operations.

The basic objectives of these networks are to promote solidarity, mutual support and information exchange. The increasing global operations of corporations and the development of oligopoly in the rubber industry makes it necessary for unions to exchange information, establish regular means of communication and cooperate with each other on a global basis. The ICEM networks are particularly concerned with issues of a global nature as for instance ILO Core Labour Standards, Health Safety & Environment and Human Rights..

The Global Network for Goodyear was created in March of 1999 by over 100 union delegates from 16 countries, spearheaded by the American USWA. It established a steering committee and in 2001 published its first Newsletter “Global Solidarity”. In August 2002 members of the network from Japa, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand met in Singapore under the auspices of ICEM Asia-Pacific Region. They discussed health and safety issues, wage rates between national plants and further communication issues.

The Global Network of Bridgestone Unions was originally organized by union representatives from nine countries. A network Steering Committee is in place which met in Tokyo in April of 2001 and approved a “network protocol” and “principles for a Steering Committee”.

Solidarity Actions

Continental - USA September 1998- September 1999. Workers at General Tire in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, a wholly owned subsidiary of German-headquartered Continental, went on strike over contract conditions. One month later, the company informed the 1,450 workers that they had been “permanently replaced” with strikebreakers. There followed an international pressure campaign which included protests at Continental plants in Slovakia and in Scotland, UK. In South Africa, Continental workers held a morning strike in support of the locked-out US

workers. Demonstrations took place in London (UK), Akron (USA), and Hanover (Germany). The annual shareholders' meeting of the company was addressed on the subject of these breaches in labour law and the anti-union behavior of Continental not only in the USA but also in Turkey. In Australia trade unionists picketed the German consulate and there were many other energetic and courageous actions in the global campaign which was coordinated by ICEM. In September 1999 the corporation finally agreed to reinstate the workers concerned and concluded a new agreement which satisfied the union and the workers.

Michelin - France September 1999. Michelin announced the redundancy of 7,500 workers in the context of an annual corporation report which showed a 20% increase in net incomes. The ICEM called for international solidarity in the settlement of that dispute.

Bridgestone/Firestone USA - September 2000. The ICEM American affiliate, USWA, called for international support in securing a new contract with Bridgestone in the USA. Ten unions took action in sending letters and representations to the CEO of Bridgestone with the result that the new contract was agreed shortly after the agreed deadline.

Goodyear -USA - December 2000. A 64 day strike over job losses through contracting out, health and wage cuts was the focus for calls and deliverance of support from ICEM affiliates. The strike was ended with a successful agreement and the local union thanked the ICEM and affiliates for their solidarity in the difficult negotiation and strike.

Continental-Belgium March 2001 International delegates and ICEM officers and unions from Belgium protested the closure of a modern and efficient plant in Herstel with a loss of 700 jobs. The corporation finally agreed to a more just and careful reduction in production with agreed compensation for the workers.

China Synthetic Rubber -Taiwan June 2002. Taiwanese, USA unionists and ICEM officers lobbied the annual general meeting of Continental Carbon a subsidiary of Taiwan-headquartered China Synthetic Rubber Company over the lock-out in the plant at Ponca City, USA. Shareholders were informed via press packages and presentations of the companies behavior, which also includes prosecutions for pollution law infringement.