

Perspective

World Contracting News, Views & Comments

Submit your news for publication to Denise Anderson at danderson@bscai.org

ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

Despite Debt Swap Coup, Battles Exist

The government of Argentina has pulled off a debt swap that many were skeptical it could accomplish. 76% of investors holding \$62 billion of debt have agreed to accept new bonds, which will be re-issued in April. Some investors will receive only 25 cents on each dollar owed. At stake was \$102 billion including past-due interest, involving 150 bond issues and 600,000 investors. As a result, Argentina's total debt has fallen from \$190 billion at the end of 2004 to \$125 billion. Yet despite the debt reduction and growing economy, which grew by 8.8 percent last year, the country faces large economic problems. Argentina still owes \$13 billion to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an additional \$15 billion to other multilateral institutions and faces battles with hold outs from the debt swap deal, who collectively hold about \$20 billion worth of defaulted bonds. And the country will need to push through stringent reforms in order to meet its new obligations under the debt swap as economists predict it must sustain a surplus of at least 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to do so.

AUSTRALIA-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BSC Market Under Threat

The forthcoming state election in Western Australia marks the clearest watershed and policy polarization between the two political parties that has possibly been in the past thirty years in the commercial cleaning sector in this state. The incumbent state Labour Party has embarked on a campaign that would remove over \$100 million of turnover from the contracting sector and place it back in-house. Contracts already returned to

in-house cleaning include all government hospital work, more than 50% of schools and key facilities such as the Maritime Museum and Disabilities Services. BSCAA WA is mounting a strong political campaign aimed at overcoming this attack on the fundamental core of contracting. All members are being asked to contribute to a fighting fund to help the opposition Liberal Party to win government and overturn the proposed Labour Party agenda.

AUSTRALIA - SYDNEY

Celebrating 40 Years Of Member Servicing

On Friday 25th February a gala dinner was held at Darling Harbour in Sydney to celebrate BSCAA's 40th anniversary. A host of celebrities from days gone by joined current contractors and BSCAA state and national Executive and Board members in a historic night. Current BSCAA National President, John Lazzari said "I am delighted that the night was a sell-out and that our Association is now larger and stronger than ever in its history, we have much to thank those that had the foresight to see that a strong national association was a key to the future. I am equally certain the Association founders would be very pleased with the theme that we have adopted, which is "BSCAA - Committed to servicing our members".

AUSTRALIA-CANBERRA

BSCAA National Lobbying Federal Government

The National Board of BSCAA is stepping up its lobbying campaign with the Australian Federal Government in order to tackle some major industry issues, including the inconsistency of redundancy laws across the country and also an inquiry recently

announced into contracting and labor hire arrangements. A BSCAA delegation met with the Federal Minister for Employment & Workplace Relations on 24th March to progress these matters. As an organization with some 700-member companies, BSCAA is recognized as being a sounding board on employment related issues given that its membership is one of the largest employers of labor in the country. BSCAA will also be participating in a series of talks in the national capital, Canberra in May which coincides with the handing down of the 2005 Federal budget. The opening up of new markets for BSC's will be part of the agenda for these talks.

BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

Strong Economy But Labor Usage Is A Concern

A recent IMF report noted that Belgium's economic growth has been stronger than its trading partners and very robust. Real GDP growth is expected to grow at 2.5% in 2005. However, while Belgium's current account surplus is relatively strong-4% of GDP-its competitiveness has been slightly eroded as compared to France, Germany and The Netherlands as wage increases haven't been offset by productivity. At issue is labor usage. Current employment rates for those aged 20-59 years is at 73%, a big concern given the aging of the population. The rates are among the lowest in the OECD in terms of people and, more importantly, hours. In the 55-64 age group, the employment rate is 25% as compared to the OECD average in that group of 48%. The low labor utilization is attributed to the tax wedge on labor, - among the highest in the OECD - generous early retirement schemes, poor career opportunities for older workers, skill mismatches for the young, and low female participation in the workforce - among the lowest in the OECD. The government is taking steps to correct these factors and an agreement between employers and the labor unions has been reached, allowing for wage increases of 4.5% during 2005-2006 and flexibility in overtime and shift-work usage.

BRAZIL - RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil Battles Underground Economy

More than 30 percent of Brazil's economy is made up of workers and entrepreneurs who operate underground, with no government work contract. Economists say Brazil must

address the situation as it is hampering the country's economic growth, and it stymies the small, undocumented businesses because they cannot get loans, surviving solely by not paying taxes. Cimar Azeredo, head of employment research at the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, said the percentage of people formally working on contract has dropped in recent years to 39.2 percent in January from about 41 percent in 2002. The rise of the underground economy is the result of excessive bureaucracy in registering businesses, high taxes-averaging more than 35% of income, and a lack of enforcement on tax collection. Another problem is no records of receipts for payments, a widespread practice that involves even private clinics and medium-sized companies.

BRAZIL - RIO DE JANEIRO & US-MASSACHUSETTS

Cleaners Face Deportation

A Brazilian national was arrested in Massachusetts for allegedly trying to bribe a US immigrations official with \$20,000, to get immigration papers for him and his wife. The man, José Neto, immigrated to the US illegally ten years ago and started a cleaning service, Spectro Cleaning Services. The business, which he operated out of his home, hired 57 Brazilians-54 men and three women-who were also in the US illegally. The successful company paid the employees with cash and did not make any tax deductions or payments. The Brazilians will face deportation proceedings.

CHINA-HONG KONG

Economy Is Gaining But Issues Are Present

Hong Kong undertook a remarkable turnaround in 2003 when Real GDP grew by 8.75 percent as a result of Mainland growth, a surge of tourism from the Mainland and general global growth. Unemployment, although still high, fell 2 points to 6.7 percent. Growth is expected at 4 percent for 2005. The developments in Mainland China have affected Hong Kong. Most manufacturing plants have now moved to the Mainland, taking low-skilled labor with them. As a result, unemployment among the low-skilled in Hong Kong has risen. Sustaining the growth Hong Kong is now experiencing will depend on its meeting the challenges of integration with Mainland China, and tackling structural unemployment needs to be a key priority.

FINLAND-HELSINKI

Over A Third Of Finnish Hospitals Need Help

A report written by Professor Kari Reijula, head of the Uusimaa Regional Institute for Occupational Health, notes that 15% of Finland's hospitals are in urgent need of repairs; nearly one fourth of all hospital wards need improvements; and some repairs, or at least further study, are needed at 37% of Finnish hospitals. The study looked at ten central hospitals and university hospitals and interviewed nearly 4,000 hospital employees. None of the hospitals investigated got a clean bill of health and only two did not have damage caused by dampness in their washing facilities. In one hospital, all patient wards require repairs. Repairs to the main central hospitals and university hospitals alone are estimated to cost a total of EUR 373 million.

FRANCE-PARIS

Hoping Domestic Services Will Revive Economy

The French government hopes to stimulate its economy and tackle its staggering unemployment rate by reviving domestic services. The sector currently employs more than 1.3 million people and could potentially grow up to 3.5 million jobs, particularly as the population ages and requires these types of services. Jean-Louis Borloo, the labor and social affairs minister, said the government wants to facilitate the creation of up to 500,000 jobs by issuing subsidized vouchers to big companies and institutions, which employees can use to pay for domestic services, offer tax breaks to employers, and provide welfare benefits and training for employees.

GERMANY-BERLIN

Stepping Up Battle Against Unemployment

German unemployment rates, which recently rose to over 5 million, are at an all time post-war high and many German companies like carmaker Opel and retailer Karstadt have plans to cut thousands of jobs. The rise in unemployment, coupled with a slow economy, expected to grow only 1 percent in 2005, have led German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, to propose a cut in corporate taxes and other measures such as the expanding of a loan program for small businesses, and increased investments in transport.

German companies, which currently pay the highest taxes in Europe, would get a cut in the base corporate tax rate to 19 percent from 25 percent. Since the country's budget deficit has violated European Union limits for three consecutive years, Schroeder claimed that the tax cut would be financed by the closing of tax loopholes and would not affect the deficit. The proposal must be approved by the opposition, which controls the upper house of parliament, before it can go into effect.

JAPAN-TOKYO & CHINA-GUANGDONG

One Country's Waste Is Another's Gain

Recycling, has become big business in China and most of the waste comes from Japan. In Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market - one of the world's busiest - more than 50,000 plastic foam boxes used to pack fish, are trashed each day. Compactors at the Tsukiji market squeeze the sheets to one-fiftieth of their original size. The sheets are then shipped overseas for recycling, to places like Dongguan in China's Guangdong province. The plastic foam sheets are crushed into fragments and processed to make the black frames used for video-cassette tapes as well as cushions in compact disc cases, among other uses. Recycled products are then exported to Japan, Europe and the United States. Plastics imported by China for recycling jumped 126-fold between 1990 and 2003, trade figures show, imports of iron scrap grew 51-fold, and the amount of waste paper increased 22 times. However all of the recycling is causing severe problems for China as 5-8 percent of the materials cannot be recycled. Waste dumping grounds and environmental contamination have been the result. The government is trying to cut down on the types of materials received but according to some, this has led to a smuggling operation as recycling jobs comprise 80 percent of all work opportunities in the Guangdong province. One Japanese reporter claims that Japan should share some of the responsibility by monitoring and managing the waste before it is exported.

THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

New Second City Center Planned

Internationally-acclaimed architecture and urban planning firm, The Jerde Partnership, announced it is working with city officials, ING Real Estate and local business owners and residents to develop a new master

plan for the redevelopment of Amsterdamse Poort in Amsterdam's Centrumgebied Zuidoost district. The plan, which includes the Arena Boulevard, Bijlmer Station and Amsterdamse Poort, will create a new residential, office, retail, dining and entertainment district and will provide Amsterdam with a second city center in Centrumgebied Zuidoost.

NEW ZEALAND-CHRISTCHURCH

School Arsons Cost \$ 20m

New figures reveal school arsonists have caused almost \$ 20m damage in the past five years. As there are over 100,000 buildings throughout the country and 300 schools affected by arson fires since 1999, education officials are calling for security guards to patrol the schools. A recent devastating fire at Christchurch's Avondale Primary School has passed \$ 1 million and the Avondale Primary School arson in December is expected to cost over \$ 1m. Hamilton's Fraser High School faced a \$ 3 million bill after arsonists torched the brand new gym in 2001. Twenty-five others have been left with damage worth more than \$ 100,000 each. Costs include demolishing and replacing burnt classrooms, hiring and placing temporary buildings and replacing resources. The arsons are usually committed by either young children or adolescents. Education Ministry figures show that between 2001 and 2003, 446 school pupils were stood down or suspended for arsons.

SCOTLAND-GLASGLOW

Employers Face Offering More Holiday Pay

Seven years ago, legislation was passed to give all staff a minimum of 20 days' paid holidays. Many firms, such as cleaning companies, included the eight bank holidays within the 20 days' paid time off requirement. Now, new legislation proposing that the eight bank holidays be paid in addition to the 20 would entitle staff to 28 paid days off and may force firms to lay off staff to meet expenses. According to The Transport and General Workers' Union, at least 211,260 workers across Scotland are currently missing out on paid bank holidays. Most of those losing out - 133,448 - are women. A spokeswoman representing business interests claims that

small and medium size firms-85% of companies in Glasgow have fewer than ten employees-are laboring under other employment legislation such as extended paternity leave, increased minimum wage and Europe-sourced social contract benefits, and each additional burden decreases their ability to compete. The Federation of Small Businesses has requested a delay in the introduction of any legislation, saying it would drive up overheads.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Homeless Put To Work

The Seoul Metropolitan Government said it will provide part-time jobs for homeless people registered at drop-in centers from March 2 in an effort to encourage the homeless to work again. The jobs will include cleaning streets near the centers and removing unauthorized advertisements from the streets. Hiring will be on a monthly basis and can be extended based on performance and up to 200 could be employed on certain days.

SWEDEN-STOCKHOLM

Welfare Economy Not Factor In World Ranking

A recent paper published by Valerie Cerra and Sweta Chaman Saxena, theorizes that the decline in Sweden's world ranking in per capita income from 3rd in 1970 to 14th in 1991, was the result of poor macroeconomic policies that brought about the sudden onset of the early 90's financial crisis and not the result of its welfare state policies. In 1998, Sweden had the second highest tax wedge on labor in the OECD outside of Germany and the highest ratio of total tax revenues to GDP. Personal income tax in 1998 was 18.6 percent of GDP compared to 10.1 for the OECD, employer contributions to social security were 10 percent of GDP versus the OECD average of 5.8 percent and payroll taxes were 3.9 percent of GDP versus 0.4 percent. However, the country faced the aging population issue much earlier than its trading partners and labor participation rates are among the highest in the world. The paper points to Sweden's policy to maintain a fixed exchange rate in the face of high inflation and rapid credit expansion. This and other policies led to a collapse in asset markets. Resolving the crisis involved considerable expense

and increased public debt substantially. The authors summarize that outside of the crisis, Sweden's growth rate matched the OECD average. If the crisis had not occurred, the authors claim that its income per capita would probably still rank near the top of all countries and this points to the great impact economic and fiscal policies have on a country.

TAIWAN-TAIPEI

Bayer, Other Firms To Move Into 101 Tower

The confirmed occupancy rate of the Taipei 101 Tower currently stands at over 30 percent based on the office space rented out. New tenants scheduled to move in include Cosmos Bank, Fulland Securities, Royal Gold, Bayer, Winterthur Life and the Taiwan Stock Exchange Corp. Other undisclosed lessees consist of a Japanese car company, a jewelry company, a cosmetics outfit, international consulting, trading and asset management firms. Another 10 firms are currently considering setting up shop. The goal of the land developer is to have 95 percent of the space leased by the end of 2006. It hopes the mix will be 60 percent multinational corporations and 40 percent local corporations. It is also currently in contact with 85 restaurant firms to secure restaurants - eight outlets in total, with one to two international operators - for the 85th, 86th and 88th floors of the building.

UK-LONDON

Economy Operating At Full Capacity

A recent IMF Country Report notes that the economy is operating at almost full capacity with 2.5 percent growth. Unemployment is at one of the lowest rates in the industrial world. A good part of the growth has been fuelled by domestic demand, which has slowed somewhat due to rising debt service through items such as variable mortgage rates. Some concern therefore, is given to the rising property rates, as the estimated overvaluation in the UK is relatively large - 25 to 60 percent. There is some speculation prices will fall - possibly 10 to 30 percent - impacting GDP. The outlook overall is very favorable with accelerated business investment as a result of robust corporate profitability versus leverage.

UK-LONDON

Official Statistics On MRSA Deaths

The Office for National Statistics issued the first in a series of annual reports on deaths in England and Wales, where MRSA was mentioned on death certificates. The number of certificates citing MRSA increased from 487 in 1999 to 955 in 2003 and MRSA was involved in two in 1000 deaths in NHS general hospitals, and three in 1000 deaths in NHS nursing homes. (Compared with one in 1000 deaths overall between 1999 and 2003) The superbug affected the elderly the most, with more men than women dying.

UK-LONDON

350 Year Monopoly Ends

UK postal regulator Postcomm is looking at a proposal to issue a long-term license to Racer Consultancy Management Services, Ltd. If granted the license, Racer, a distribution company that provides priority mail and courier services, would be able to provide bulk mail consolidation and tracked business-to-business services for UK businesses. Recently, Postcomm announced that it would open up Britain's postal service to full competition by January 2006, thereby eliminating the monopoly held by Royal Mail Group PLC for over 350 years.

US-OHIO

Revenues To Exceed \$138 Billion

According to a new study by The Freedonia Group, Inc., a Cleveland-based industrial market research firm, revenues for building maintenance services are projected to increase over 4 percent per year to \$138.5 billion in 2008. Gains will be driven by improvement in the overall economy, ongoing growth in both the number of houses and business establishments, and a shift away from "do-it-yourself" to "do-it-for-me" in terms of building maintenance, particularly in residential markets as incomes grow and the population ages. However, further growth will be restrained by strong

price competition in most segments, which will limit the ability of industry participants to raise prices. For more information, go to www.freedoniagroup.com.

US-VIRGINIA

Immigration Fraud Scheme Uncovered

A federal grand jury indicted seven people on charges of immigration fraud and money laundering. Two companies, US Eagle, Inc., specializing in pairing Chinese aliens with American employers, and Global Recruitment And Immigration Services, were charged with receiving tens of thousands of dollars in return for providing fraudulent visas to foreign workers looking to move to the US. The operations generated millions of dollars in a four-year period. The companies filed hundreds of documents with state and local labor departments, claiming the foreign workers would be hired for custodial and construction jobs, which didn't actually exist. In order to obtain the visas, US Eagle and Global Recruitment falsely certified that local employers had tried and failed to fill job vacancies with US employees.

US-WASHINGTON DC

Green Seal Certification Seeks Sponsors

Green Seal is seeking five sponsors to fund the development of a standard to certify those cleaning companies committed to a Green cleaning program. Initial sponsors, will be sought from among a variety of sectors of the cleaning industry - cleaning service companies excluded - and will contribute \$10,000 each toward development of the standard. According to the CEO of Green Seal, the standard, which was driven by requests from the BSC and residential cleaning industries, will apply to cleaning services as opposed to products. Upon securing the funding, completion of the standard is estimated to be within 6-9 months. Once the standard is in place, cleaning services, both commercial and residential, which apply for certification and meet the standard will be able to get "Green Seal Certified".

CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

Avmor

Avmor, a Laval based manufacturer of quality cleaning chemicals, was founded in 1948. In 1965, one of the founders, Mr. Avi Morrow, started an art collection. After 40 years, the art collection has grown to hold over 300 paintings, sculptures and photographs, all commissioned. The mandate to the artists was, "Do a portrait of our building in Old Montreal". The creativity of the human spirit is a wonderful thing; it is amazing how they were all asked to sketch the same scene; however each result is different. To date, Avmor has printed 3,000 books and has given them to people who appreciate and are interested in art. For additional information contact Avmor at 450-629-8074.

JohnsonDiversey

Quartz Publishing & Exhibitions announced the winners of the first ever Cleaning Show Innovation Awards held in the UK. The categories were chemicals, floor cleaning machines, hand tools, washroom products and other machines. Johnson Diversey won in 4 of the 5 categories. Created by the Cleaning Show to honor pioneering advances in the cleaning industry, the awards were given to the five entries out of 42 total contenders which received the most votes from the members of the British Institute for Cleaning Science, Cleaning and Hygiene Suppliers Association and Cleaning and Support Services Association. JohnsonDiversey walked away with the washroom products award for Oxivir, a new detergent-disinfectant based on Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide technology. In the category for best chemical innovations, JohnsonDiversey was the runner up for its J Flex range of twelve color coded products. In the floor cleaning machines category, third prize went to JohnsonDiversey for TASKI smart battery power vacuum cleaner. The runner up for most innovative product in the hand tools category was JohnsonDiversey with the Jonmaster System. Winners collected their awards at an elaborate awards dinner at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole.

In Memoriam

Mr. Takashi Araki, who was the WFBSC's Vice President for a long time, passed away on December 12, 2004. The funeral services were held on December 24, 2004 in Japan. On behalf of JBMA, Mr. Katsumi Sadato, who was the Vice President of JBMA and a long time associate, delivered the message of condolence at the funeral. The condolence message spoke well of Mr. Takashi Araki and we would like to share it with you. Mr. Takashi Araki created the essence of pride for our industry with his talents and hard work that cannot be quantified by any human measurement. Those of us who knew him will miss him greatly. Many hearts reach out to his family in sympathy.



Date: December 24, 2004.

To: Mr. Takashi Araki

From: Mr. Katsumi Sadato

Mr. Araki, this is going to be the last farewell to you. I heard that you were not feeling well since you returned from the Montreal, Canada World Congress in October 2004. Nobody ever thought that you would leave us so quickly. I had been thinking that I wanted to go and see you, but the sad news came before I was able to do so. I am still at a loss and have feelings of disbelief, yet I had to come here to say goodbye to you at your funeral.

I met you for the first time at the 2nd World Congress, which was held in 1980 in Miami Florida. You always spoke freely what was on your mind and spoke with a Northern Japan accent (Miyagi-namari), without any hesitation. Because of your "uniqueness," you always stood out when you attended meetings of the JBMA. Yet, you were always worried about taking care of other people who were around you. You were always very kind and sensitive to others as well. At the same time, you had the strange power to predict what was coming next. All these things combined together made you who you were and made you push forward to be in a position to take care of others.

In 1983, you became one of the directors of JBMA. Thereafter, you became the chairman of the Miyage-pre-

ecture's Building Maintenance Association, which lasted for 18 years. You were also one of the directors of JBMA for a period of 14 years, served 8 years as Vice President of JBMA, and both a Director and a Chief Director for the JBMA Building Management Education Center (22 years).

Among all the work you did, you devoted yourself to the WFBSC and were ever so passionate about developing the WFBSC to a world class standard. You were one of the Directors and Vice President of the WFBSC for more than 10 years. Your participation with the WFBSC started at the 2nd World Congress and culminated with the very recent 15th World Congress at Montreal, Canada. In all those years, you never missed even one World Congress. You were ill when you participated in the most recent Montreal, Canada World Congress; yet, you wanted to attend, so you did.

Like your great predecessors, the late Mr. Asaji and the late Mr. Yagi, as a great leader you had a deeply heart-felt mission. That mission was to elevate the Cleaning and Building Maintenance Industry to a world-class industry standard, as well as to position the JBMA to a world-class standing within the WFBSC. You wanted to carry on this legacy which was the mission of your great predecessor's dreams. That was the very reason you were ever so passionate about the WFBSC.

Mr. Araki, we will miss you, and want to thank you very much for all you did for all of us.

May the soul of Mr. Araki rest in peace.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BSCAI Annual Convention and Trade Show

**Orlando, Florida
April 1-5, 2005**

Visit the BSCAI website at www.bscai.org for more information or call 703-359-7090.

16th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

**Seoul, Korea
October 16-19, 2006**

Visit the WFBSC website at www.wfbsc.org and the website at www.kasmo.or.kr for more information.



International Dimensions is published monthly for the members of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors.

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www.karcher.ca

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Mercury Floor Machines -
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888-568-4606 www.mercuryfloormachines.com

Nilfisk-Advance Canada Co. -
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905-712-3260
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Pioneer Eclipse -Sparta, NC
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