

# Perspectives on Reporting Labor issues

The Initiative for Policy Dialogue

# Different backgrounds

We come from different backgrounds:

- I am a former trade union member, I participated in two strikes and reported on major strikes in Australian coal industry and others, including Marsinah case
- You are inheritors of New Order view of new industrial paradigm – workers are expendable, they are ‘other people’

# Perspectives

- I see labor as including myself
- You see labor as a separate, foreign factor (Indonesian journalists tend to see themselves as professionals, not workers)

My perspective means I will listen more closely to workers' demands

Your perspective may tend to make you more open to management arguments

The worker as object

Marsinah

# The reporter

The reporter should attempt to seek facts and opinions on any case with an objective framework.

This assumes that the reporter will be aware, and act to counter, personal (unconscious) bias.

# Ideal position

The ideal position is to move away from a polarized view

– management, shareholders, workers are all  
STAKEHOLDERS

This assumes that each party has rights, and that there are mutual interests i.e. high productivity, high profit, high wages

# Media issues

What media do you work for?

Print / Internet, electronic media have different requirements, abilities to relate stories:

- *Print – allows full detail*
- *Radio – short duration, limited detail*
- *Television – dependent on visuals*

# Audience appeal

All media reporting requires appeal to audience

- *Avoid cliché reporting*
- *Add value – e.g. what is wider effect of a single industrial dispute*
- *Use a single industrial dispute as an example of national-level problems*



# Clichés

*Too many labor stories use a single worker's plight as an example – it's effective but too often used*

**Look for a different angle**

# Add value

*One formal sector job will support three informal sector workers and three or four family members*

- What effect will the closure of an enterprise have on the local community as a whole?
- What effect will a series of closures have on the nation?

# National impact

What is the effect on national average standards of living if enterprises close?

- Tax payments fall, social services such as education eroded
- Potentially more crime, drug abuse
- Social conflict

# Think positive

Does the media have a role in encouraging fair treatment of workers?

- Higher wages for higher productivity
- 'Advocate' role in presenting realities of all sides

- What we were thinking for the panel: discussion of the ways to cover the story, maybe where you both see holes in this reporting, what could be improved in the reporting of labor, what journalists are missing/doing right/etc. We were thinking of also part breakout session or showing of good stories, either print or tv, that highlight ways that the story of labor (any country, any angle) have been good.