Why Revitalize? Labour's Urgent Mission in a Contested Global Economy

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Abstract
What looked like carte blanche for corporate-led globalization just a few years ago is now increasingly contested. The brave new vision of market fundamentalism has been challenged on several fronts, from massive demonstrations in Seattle and Genoa to contested trade and environmental summits at Johannesburg and Cancun. The critical insights of highly placed insiders have undermined the dominant neo-liberal ideology and given credence to mounting protests and opposition viewpoints (e.g. Soros 2002; Stiglitz 2002). Economic stagnation, inequality, desperate poverty and violence—whether in Japan, East Asia, Russia, Germany, or the United States and Latin America—have belied optimistic predictions of the positive effects of unbridled globalization. Economic policy makers from the rich countries are challenged both by domestic opposition and by a growing reluctance in the global South to acquiesce in one-sided trade deals. The future shape of the global economy and its international, as well as national and local economic policies, are now open to widespread and growing debate.

Yet, debate is clearly not enough. What is also required are strong organized actors to promote alternative viewpoints and to build the progressive coalitions—global, national, and local—that can turn policy around. While together they cannot yet match the power of multinational corporations (even if they could act together consistently), many such actors are already present, and many of them are increasingly ready to contest the dominant policies. Opposition forces include a broad range of international and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs), from environmental to health and human rights groups, swelling protest movements from global justice, and antiwar to land reform, from Jose-Bove-inspired farmers to religious and cultural defence movements, as well as increasingly independent governments across the global South (from Brazil and Argentina to South Africa, India, and China). And one clearly indispensable actor in present and future reform efforts is organized labour, the subject of this book.

Comments

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In a global economy of vastly increased mobility and interdependence, our own prosperity and leadership depends increasingly on our ability to provide our citizens with the education that they need to succeed, while attracting the primary human capital for our workforce. We must ensure that the most innovative ideas take root in America, while providing our people with the skills that they need to compete. Two out of three Federal agencies identify information technology as a mission-critical occupation: failure to have these capabilities in the workforce means that the organization will fail to accomplish its mission. Child labour continues to be a global phenomenon - no country or region is immune, the report says. A wide range of crises - including natural disasters, sharp economic downturns, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and armed conflicts - increasingly draws the young into debilitating child labour, including illegal and clandestine forms such as prostitution, drug trafficking, pornography and other illicit activities. The informal economy, in which workers are not recognized or protected under the legal and
regulatory frameworks of the labour market, is where by far the most child labourers are found. “The effective abolition of child labour is one of the most urgent challenges of our time and should be a universal goal.”