

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

It is my great pleasure to introduce my first issue as the new Editor of *Labour, Capital and Society*. As you well know, the last year has been a transition period as Rosalind Boyd, the journal's founding editor, handed over responsibility for the journal; and the Secretariat moved from McGill University in Montréal, Québec to Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This issue marks a culmination of that process. We hope you will enjoy these few cosmetic changes we made but assure you that we intend to maintain the high quality of articles you have come to expect of the journal.

Our first is a special issue on International Labour Solidarity and the Changing Organization of Production. International labour solidarity is an increasingly important focus for the labour movement in response to growing capital mobility and the expansion of transnational corporations. Accompanying this is the transformation of production into global commodity and value chains and changes in state-economy relations. States are deregulating, privatising and weakening labour and environmental laws, among others. It is now easier for capital to push for optimum investment conditions, obtain greater labour flexibility and exercise greater management control over the labour process.

Workers now face deteriorating wages and working conditions, a loss of job security, the movement of jobs from regions of higher employment, wages and levels of unionisation to areas with fewer labour rights, where significant struggles are fought over minimum labour standards. This dislocation occurs within a single country and frequently jobs leave industrialised countries in the North, and flow to developing economies in the South. Irrespective of location however, labour conditions are increasingly shaped by a complex interconnection of global and local conditions. Most detrimental is the flight of jobs from the formal to the informal sectors with increasing numbers of workers without minimum job protection.

Workers and their organizations face new challenges along with the re-emergence of older struggles to improve basic labour standards. Labour actions are increasingly going beyond local and even national boundaries in response to capital globalization. The result is the emergence of new ways of working together through partnership and global campaigns while existing international and regional trade union structures have taken on greater importance with the creation of regional trading blocks. At the national or industry levels, unions engage in partnership between North and South

within a same industry or around industry-specific shopfloor concerns.

Partnerships and alliances are also extended between labour and social groups in response to the many direct and indirect global labour issues. Labour is thus engaging with others in broad-based resistance as part of national pro-democracy movements, or as part of anti-globalization campaigns, or joining with consumer movements to improve sweat shop conditions. Particularly interesting are the alliances between labour and non-governmental organizations to organise the informal sector. The boundaries between them are becoming blurred as they borrow language and strategies from each other. Non-union groups seek to expand collective bargaining structures and national labour laws to provide informal sector workers with the same protection accorded workers in the formal sector while pushing trade unions at the national and international level to organize in the informal sector.

The contributors to this special issue touch on different aspects of labour internationalism yet they have in common an exploration of organizing issues resulting from new forms of work, regional and international trade union alliances and alliances between unions and social groups, all of which are aimed at expanding trade union structures to include workers in the new forms of work and expand international labour solidarity into broader resistance.

Two contributors ask if a new form of labour internationalism exists. Ramasamy explores changing labour density in industrialised countries and the rise of new forms of unionism in selected countries of the South, situating these changes within the ongoing contradictory relationship between labour and capital. Hodkinson examines the ICFTU's international work since the end of the Cold War and asks whether it remains embedded in the core ideology of 'old labour internationalism' or if it exhibits a new form of labour internationalism. Collombat examines the new regional dynamics of the international labour movement in the Americas, paying close attention to the cleavages between political and social organizations that are now taking place. These 3 articles not only touch on current debates around the emergence of an international labour movement but analyse fundamental political questions around the possibility of new forms of alliances between labour and social groups, a necessary precursor to the emergence of broader-based resistance to globalization.

Wong and Chang examine alliance-building between trade unions and social groups within an international consumer campaign, in response to capital movement in the global garment indus-

try, and its contribution to the creation of international union solidarity. They reveal a significant tension between a union-based class approach and the more individualistic consumer approach. They argue these can be reconciled, perhaps with some difficulty, but if they were, it would allow the labour movement to go beyond factory and national boundaries to enhance labour's contribution to social change.

Miller examines new regional opportunities created by South African capital's expansion into Southern African. She notes the difficulty in building regional trade union solidarity when union strength is uneven and when additional resources are required to carry out this new area of regional work.

Several articles look at different forms of work and argue for their inclusion into union and collective bargaining processes. Ally looks at new forms of organising among care workers and urges the trade union movement to appreciate their successes, as these were gained from struggles with complex workplace issues, shaped by gender and the very nature of the work. Horn examines own-account workers such as street vendors and others in the informal sector and the ways in which collective bargaining structures could be expanded to include this group, instead of dismissing them as workers because a direct 'employer' cannot be identified.

Finally, in addition to thanking Rosalind Boyd, the journal's founding editor, Mamire Mennasemay book review editor, and members of the Editorial Committee, I would like to extend our thanks to the new team of people who assisted with different aspects of the journal and its move to Saint Mary's. The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at Saint Mary's, Dr. Kevin Vessey; the Dean of Arts, Dr. Esther Enns; and the Coordinator of the International Development Studies Programme, Dr. Anthony O'Malley. Several current and former IDS students also helped put together the new web page, lay-out this issue and stuff envelopes: Mehjabeen Alarakhia, Stefanie Carmichael, Allyson Chisholm, Ngozi Otti, Kristen Winters, Leah McMillan and Modeste Mba Talla.

Suzanne Dansereau