

ward-off criticisms that may arise pertaining to the book's lack of ecological considerations, or a more substantial consideration of the role of the state – particularly the role of national banks-- in preserving the profit system. Nonetheless, Smith makes a significant contribution to LTV and our understanding of capitalist crisis, and as such should be of interest to patrons of this journal, for whom this book is definitely a worthy read.

Reference

Brenner, R. 1998. "Uneven Development and the Long Downturn: The Advanced Capitalist economies from Boom to Stagnation, 1950 –1998", *New Left Review* 229.

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Andreas Bieler, Ingemar Lindberg and Devan Pillay (eds): *Labour and the Challenges of Globalisation – What Prospects for Transnational Solidarity?*, Pluto Press, London, Ann Arbor, MI, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2008, 330+xxii pages

It is increasingly recognized that sweeping changes in the world of work and of workplaces have created massive changes in possibilities for labour mobilization and for transnational labour solidarity. With fragmentation of production processes and global relocation and restructuring of production, it has been argued that labour movements have become fractured and irrelevant to the challenges faced by the working class.

The edited volume by Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay addresses certain key challenges that face labour organizations in the context of changes in the world of work and the nature of workplaces at the global level in the era of neoliberal globalization. The three key aims of the book are to provide an overview of the working class around the world, to document the responses of trade unions to the challenges of globalization and to critically assess the strategies that could be adopted by labour movements in the face of these changes.

The first chapter provides the conceptual framework of

the book in the context of the changes in the world of work. Case studies which look at the changes in work and employment patterns, the state of formal unionization and the responses to contemporary challenges in specific countries are presented through Chapters 2 to 13. The last two chapters look at the idea of the global working class and of transnational labour solidarity.

The editors locate themselves in a neo-Gramscian framework that looks at different national forms of state and labour regimes even as global dimensions are recognized. They argue that, in addition to Beverly Silver's analysis of capitalism as being characterized by the continuous tension between the crisis of profitability, which requires the tightening of labour controls and the crisis of legitimacy, when labour movements can challenge capital's prerogatives, the framework adopted in the book looks in detail at national institutional setups that diverge quite widely despite global features. The case studies attempt to bring forth this diversity.

The first chapter also lays down the basic changes that have been seen in the world of work and patterns of employment at a global level and the challenges to unionization presented by fragmented production, flexibility in employment and multiplicity in strategies adopted by highly footloose capital. It points to the increasing power of capital over labour through increased unemployment, increased informalization of work and growing inequality.

The case studies of South Korea, South Africa, India, Japan, Sweden, China, Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the European Union broadly demonstrate a weakening of the position of labour in relation to capital and an increased informalization of work contracts across the board, with extremes such as almost 40 per cent unemployment in post-apartheid South Africa and about 92 per cent of the workforce engaged in the informal sector in India. India has also seen an erosion of rights earned by organised labour in the pre-reform period, though there have been advances in organization among major categories of heretofore unorganized workers, by the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) amongst others. In South Korea, the old authoritarian developmental state regime gave way to a new repressive state, the neoliberal democratic state which criminalized unionism and weakened labour protection even as the majority of the workforce moved towards a status of irregular workers. In China, with increasing levels of marketization and inequality, mainstream official trade unions,

traditionally concerned with social welfare, have begun to move towards addressing problems of migrant workers, even as schisms have emerged between workers employed in state owned enterprises and the migrants. Argentina, which traditionally had strong unions influenced by the Peronist legacy, has seen a decline in the effectiveness of unions even as new patterns of organization are being attempted, based on counterposing market society with a system of social production and reproduction that respects differences and is aimed at a larger humanistic project.

Given such specific, yet broadly generalizable trends in mobilization and workplace changes, the book makes two major critiques of current organizational strategies: first, that while transnational corporations in production networks are able to play workers in different countries against each other and capital moves across easily borders, trade union strategies to confront capital are still limited to national strategies. Second, existing unions organize mostly core workers, while excluding the irregular and informal workers, as well as the self-employed and the unemployed, thus limiting their reach. In such a context, formal trade unions run the risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant and marginalized from the real concerns of the largest segments of the working class.

The editors, in the concluding chapter on the global working class, consider various alternatives that exist presently and suggest specific ways forward: first, they suggest that initiatives such as the ILO's Decent Work framework, though grounded in an earlier phase of capitalism characterized by the social compact between capital and labour, can produce short-term gains because they engage with workers in many industrial sectors that are targeted for 'improvement'. Second, they suggest that the understanding of labour needs to be widened, to include not only workers involved in physical production of goods and services but also those involved in social reproduction, to include workers under all kinds of contracts, including regular and irregular and those at the periphery of the labour market. Translating this recognition into action requires active collaboration between trade unions and social movements of different sorts. Third, national trade unions have to engage with the needs of transnational solidarity which must be based upon the multiple identities and livelihood strategies of those in the world of work and build an internationalism that connects workers across formal and informal work on the one hand and those in work and

livelihood strategies on the other. Within this, the editors discuss the need for and the effects of ‘accomodative solidarity’ that seeks to make adjustments to the new global working class, and ‘transformatory solidarity’ that addresses the need for transforming the roots of uneven development. The former, like the ILO’s Decent Work initiative, attempt to level out social conditions in countries where capital relocates production whereas the latter would attempt a radical transformation through internationalist strategies like challenging the free trade paradigm or workers control of retirement and pension funds.

The book engages with a debate that is animating labour studies significantly in the era of neoliberal reforms and contributes valuable empirical evidence on the changes in the world of work, labour mobilization and institutions across a diverse set of countries. It brings forth the two ideas of recognizing national diversities on the one hand and forging international solidarities on the other as being necessary for responding to the sweeping changes.

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