
***Globalization and Its Discontents.* Edited by Stephen McBride and John Wiseman.** New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. 237.

The debate about globalization, markets and the role of the state has become familiar in the last decade or so. However, the issues raised (or arguments recycled) have earlier variants — in the years following the Second World War, in the 1920s and 1930s, and beyond that to the exchanges between classical political economy on the one hand and its neoclassical critics on the other (with the German Historical School associated with Friedrich List, opening up its own line of influence). The editors, McBride and Wiseman, and the various contributors to this volume, are to be congratulated on the work that they have produced. They have considered this old familiar debate, as it has been represented in recent years in the guise of the notion of “globalization”, and they have produced an erudite, concise, and intellectually sophisticated discussion of the various claims made.

The collection is organized into four sections. In the first, the contributors consider directly the nature of the processes of globalization, understood as a development in the nature of the global political-economy, and its implications for the scope of action of individual states. This is familiar territory for those disposed either to assert the unrestricted pre-eminence of the market place, or to deny these claims in favour of the continuing and maybe central (as with the East Asian “developmental state”) role of the state. The opening section of the collection makes it clear that there is a difficult debate to run here, and that whatever the final answer might turn out to be, the deployment of simplistic answers will not help.

It is to the historically specific patterns of the exchanges between the pressures for marketization on the one hand, and the concerns and projects of states on the other that analysts must look. And it is to the subtleties of these matters that the contributors gathered in the second section move. The exchanges between domestic national structures (with their domestic forms of life and associ-

ated politics), generated over long historical periods, and the demands of presently powerful (or at least vociferous) advocates/celebrants of the (partially) internationalized financial sector and the large multinational corporations are pursued in the realms of financial sector reforms. These reforms are considered in the context of the views of the neoliberal theorists (who would argue, one way or another, that these are both inevitable and a good thing), and those sceptics who point out that deregulation was and remains a political project, in construction contingent, and in principle reversible.

The contingency of the process of globalization is considered in the third major section of the collection where a series of issues are pursued, including citizenship, labour standards and welfare, tax policy, and the matter of the free movement of people. It is clear from these analyses that the simplistic tales of the celebrants of globalization (and some of the claims made by critics) need to be set to one side in favour of disciplined scholarship. The increasing internationalization of some elements of humankind's activities is of great interest, but the lessons to be learned will only flow from precisely specified detailed analyses.

In the final section, the contributors move from critical analysis to more prospective work — and arguably move into territory which overlaps with the public sphere of political commentary and action. Of course, these matters are more speculative, value based and contentious. Nonetheless, it is instructive to note that there is increasing opposition — intellectual, policy analytic, and political (in the form of social movements and political organizations), to the unrestrained intellectual, policy, and practical celebration of the power of the putatively globalized market place.

The authors are to be congratulated. They have made a very useful intervention in these difficult and important debates. If there is one thought to offer in respect of further analysis, it is to note that the academic conference from which these contributions have flowed linked universities in Canada and Australia — both, one might say, relatively small nations, and each with an awkward

relationship to the United States. If one reaction to the celebrants of globalization has been to point out (as has been done in this volume, and quite correctly) that the world is considerably more complicated, then another has been to point to the construction of regional blocs. The project of the European Union continues to move forward and the talk of an Asian bloc continues, most recently, in the form of renewed consideration of an Asian Monetary Fund. The point here is that if globalization is read as an essentially political project, then it is clear that effective replies are being made.

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***The Super-Rich: The Unjust World of Global Capitalism.* By Stephen Haseler.** London: Macmillan Press, 2000. Pp. 208.

Stephen Haseler's catchy and easy to read volume is one of a number of recent publications that deals with the ugly side of a globalized world — the extremes of wealth and poverty. Haseler, a disciple of famous British socialist, Tony Crosland, and a self-described "political scientist" is concerned that, to modify the cliché, the rich are not just getting richer, but getting "super-rich", while the poor are getting poorer. At the heart of his argument is that in the post-Cold War era the government has lost its ability to "constrain", "civilize", and "calm ... down" capitalism (p. xiii). Third Way politicians, such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair are seen as putting a respectable sheen on capitalism, which is in reality completely unrestrained. Furthermore, the modern "super-rich" rely on capital flows to generate their wealth, thus this exploitation is worse than that of traditional industries because the latter are at least involved with the working class. The super-rich that Haseler refers to are not mere millionaires (or the "poor cousins" (p. 2)), but, for example, the 500 individuals which the UN cites as owning 50

per cent of global wealth. Haseler provides the reader with a myriad of statistics to demonstrate how filthy rich a small proportion of the global population are — in fact the book is crammed full of examples. In short, the increasingly globalized world is creating the conditions for the "return to aristocracy" (p. 79) but without the "noblesse oblige" of the old aristocrats who were tied to locality and nation. (A familiar theme of the Old Left is that the old capitalists were not as bad as they seemed at the time *vis-à-vis* the new breed of globe trotting financiers.)

Haseler saves his real venom for massive inheritance of money and property. Polemically impressive, he demonstrates the inherent unfairness of money passed through the generations: "Grossly unjust and deeply unfair — rewarding lineage not merit or work, and undermining the enterprise culture so beloved by neoliberals — support for inheritance, appears contradictory if not hypocritical." (p. 74). Far from pursuing family and traditional values that conservatives and neoliberals support, it is posited that those who are dependent on inheritance engage in terrible family infighting and "are likely to transmit non-productive, idle and dependent values. And they [inheritors] are likely to experience poor social relationships" (p. 75).

While this book is an interesting read, and it is to be recommended, there are a number of points, particularly in the latter half, that may not stand up to scrutiny. The author seems in two minds about what the state can do with regard to capitalism. Should the state control capitalism as the author wants? Or has the state lost all power to even contemplate controls as the author also suggests? The idea that politics is "little more than a branch of the entertainment industry" sounds like good rhetoric (in which Haseler excels), but is this a fair statement? While many, including this reviewer, are concerned by the direction of many modern democratic election campaigns, governments still have an enormous degree of power over the market. Social welfare spending in Western countries is hardly favoured by economic rationalists but persists nonetheless. Bill Gates of Microsoft, one of Haseler's bogeymen, failed to