



International Dockworkers Council

Coordination Office

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GLOBALIZATION AND SOLIDARITY

In this age the impact of economic globalization is indisputable. Goods and capital move freely among economies and various nations of the world, a phenomenon that is accepted simply as a natural manifestation of development and of capitalism. Trade barriers have been brought down with globalization: tariffs and customs have disappeared entirely in many countries. Benefits generated at one end of the economy move freely, I would venture to say that they move with impunity, from territories that gave rise to the gains to territories where taxes are evaded. The profits gained through tax evasion are then marketed as a means for job creation. The slate was to appear clean once again to accommodate “newly-adjusted” labor rights.

In reality, global trade and exploitation which enrich only a few, is nothing new. The history of humanity is marked by exploitation. The colonization of the people in Africa, America, and Asia by world powers over centuries past is an example of the plunder of wealth and raw materials and the exploitation of people, in the most crude and literal form: Slavery.

What is surprisingly truly novel in this age is the acceptance of global economic dominance as a normal phenomenon. It has emerged as a natural event, accepted by a majority of social groups.

At the dawn of the birth of capitalism, the pressure of organized labor pushed governments to dictate the first labor laws, by means of conviction or interest. In the process, workers and their representative organizations articulated the struggle for social rights, common to all workers in the world. They were well aware INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY was an essential and indispensable instrument in the struggle for dignity.

If I said now that "universal peace can only be based on social justice," that the "existence of labor conditions involving injustice, hardship, and privation threaten world peace," and that "the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labor is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries," it would sound alike to the words of a union leader. However, these are all statements contained in the Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919 to support the creation of the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO-ILO).

"Work is not a commodity," the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia declared in 1944. However, the law of supply and demand is applied each day in the so-called "labor market," where unemployment and undignified worked conditions affect millions of people.

We are no strangers to globalization in ports. Port workers around the world know this. Every day, we feel the effects of globalization on each sector of the economy, and we understand the struggle to maintain employment in decent conditions, under great pressure. We have the shared experience, perhaps unlike any other group of workers, of a connected workplace- where the ship we work on comes from another port, where our colleagues have done their work.



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Under what working conditions, security, and economies do our brothers and sisters their work? Are they also under the pressure of being replaced by other workers? Can we afford to stand alone amidst the thrust of globalization?

The answers to these questions are obvious: Alone, in each port, we cannot resist. Therefore, I propose formulating a straightforward global international action in ports. Although I am aware that formulating it might be simple but implementing might be a more complex task, I have the certainty of its necessity and the confidence that it is possible.

Let us return to the idea that drove the labor movement in its origins: INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY through a common and simultaneous action in all ports around the world.

We know why and so do they.

We will never walk alone again.

Jordi Aragunde
IDC General Coordinator