

Arbeitspapier zur Tagung:

Globalisierung als Aufgabe

Handlungsmöglichkeiten und Gestaltungsoptionen der Politik

Expertenkolloquium der Evangelische Akademie Loccum

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Coming to Terms with Globalisation

I have tried to write down what I hope to learn at Loccum.

As Quakers, we work for peace, human rights and economic justice. Our Brussels office was set up in 1979 to provide a link between European Quakers and the European political institutions.

To me, globalisation (as a worst case scenario) means the following.

1. Nation states can no longer control:

- flows of goods and services between buyers and sellers;
- flows of capital from investors and speculators;
- transfers of ownership of corporate or personal assets.

2. States have some but not complete control of the movement and establishment of people. They may have some control over the physical manifestations of culture and media, but they cannot control electronic media.

3. A 'race to the bottom' of deregulation is taking place, in terms of:

- exploiting labour and natural resources;
- unlimited extremes of personal wealth and poverty
- avoidance of redistributive taxation.

4. National boundaries are often accidents of power politics from the past. In the nineteenth century, geographical considerations prevailed, sometimes in terms of conquest and sometimes in terms of physical landscape and defensibility. In the twentieth century, ethnic considerations were introduced, but no one has solved the problems of mixed communities or of how reasonable it is to create smaller and smaller entities.

5. The only way to stop the race to the bottom is first to accept a need to stop it and then to create international agreements. If the 'prisoner's dilemma' is to be overcome, leaders need to be wise, populations need to be educated or properly informed, and administrations need to be uncorrupt.

6. Failures can give rise to violent conflict, which destroys civilised behaviour and a civilised habitat. Once a conflict has started, there will be people who benefit from its continuation and who will lose

out if it is ended. A negotiated settlement is particularly difficult if the contest is for control of resources rather than over political differences. [This is perhaps a controversial statement that should be discussed.]

7. NGOs and Churches find organised crime hard to discuss, but it makes trust impossible in day to day life and is therefore an immense economic and psychological burden. Ownership after the abdication of state capitalism is a minefield in a very real sense.

Therefore, my question is: What can stop the race to the bottom?

There are some encouraging signs.

- The IMF and World Bank seem to have recognised that something more than economic growth is needed to cure poverty.
- We (Quakers) are working with other groups in efforts to give non-violent conflict resolution more space in the EU's over-militarised political agenda.
- Some transnational companies are introducing codes of conduct, and some consumers are beginning to recognise the value of the 'Fair Trade' concept.

There are some open doors.

- The EU, through its member states could try harder to reform the UN and its agencies and linked bodies. (I think the EU should take over the two Security Council seats held by Britain and France, with the current Presidency as representative.)
 - The WTO, for all its faults and the failure of Seattle, has the capacity (if not the will) to prevent certain abuses - it exists.
 - There is scope to reform further the international financial institutions and the OECD.
 - A Tobin tax (to limit speculative currency transactions) now seems to be *technically* feasible.
 - The NGO movement, including the Churches, is taken more seriously by politicians than ever before.
- We have the technical means to distribute our messages.

We have faith.

R H S, 7.12.99

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