

**Book Review**

**FROM CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION TO GLOBAL CO-OPERATION: WE OWE IT TO OUR GRANDCHILDREN:** J. Tom Webb, 2016, Halifax&Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing, ISBN 978-1-55266-872-6(pbk) pp.x+186. Price CA\$25.

The Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for action by all countries for ending all forms of poverty and to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. But the rising trend of inequality across the world creates the greatest threat to the expectations of an inclusive and equitable world. A 2014 report by Oxfam indicates that the richest one per cent have almost 50 per cent of the world's wealth as an impact of the growing corporate power all over the world under the dominant free market economy. The book, entitled *From Corporate Globalization to Global Co-Operation*, is about the need for an alternative to capitalism. Tom Webb argues that a massive shift to social enterprise, primarily co-operatives, is required. More than 250 million people around the world work for co-operatives and co-operatives impact on the lives of three billion people. This model reduces almost every negative impact of capitalism. Webb outlines the principles co-operatives need to hold to if they are to be a successful alternative to capitalism and examines the public-policy changes needed to nurture such a transition.

The first chapter, entitled "A World of Ominous Uncertainty," explores the trends that create a situation of greatest threat to our world. The global issues of growing inequality, massive environmental problems associated with the phenomenon of climate change, addiction to infinite growth in a finite world and growing economic instability are briefly analysed with the support of scientific data to present the interconnectedness of the emerging global trends. These interconnected trends, which are the product of an increasingly dysfunctional economy and economics, are undermining the quality of life which is evidenced by the fact that nature and human society are under increasing stress. The argument that unrestricted property rights combined with the free market can solve all problems is found to be failing in the context of growing economic inequalities the world over.

Chapter two reviews the economic ideas that have dominated the last thirty-five years and their deficiencies. The collapse of communism and

the emergence of triumphant capitalism, the myth of free markets and free trade and the failures of the trickledown theory are analysed to explain that economic growth does not ensure the equal progress of human society. The formation of an alternative to the dominant capitalistic model is a formidable challenge for real human progress and wellbeing. It must be based on multidimensional caring, understanding of the behaviour of people and the solid grasp of the relationship of people with nature. The thread of the new thinking is visible in the domains of environmental economics, the economics of participation, behavioural economics, no growth economics, development economics and co-operative economics. The present volume delves deeper into co-operative economics as a viable alternative to the capitalistic form of business. The basis of co-operative economics fits well and resonates with co-operative purpose, values, and principles: “Justice: A new economy must work for all people, starting with those who have historically been marginalised and exploited by racism, imperialism, classism, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression. Sustainability: a new economy supports regeneration of both human and natural systems. It builds community resilience by rooting wealth and power in place and in service of human need on a finite planet. Democracy: a new economy incorporates democratic principles into the management of economic and civic life” (New Economy Coalition (n.d), <neweconomy.net> p.63). The purpose, values, and principles of co-operation make a valuable contribution to how we think about and structure relationships to build a new economy.

The wealth-driven business models and their alternatives are described in the third chapter. The investor-owned company is the dominant business model globally. The other business models of family-owned business, ‘for profit,’ ‘non- profit’ and social enterprises, and co-operatives are summarily described to present a comprehensive perspective of the business sector. The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)’s co-operative values, principles and personal ethical values for co-operators are detailed to depict the relevance of the co-operative economy. The co-operative values and principles of ICA are continuously evolved over time and flexible business models are developed to create a viable alternative to the corporate model of business. Workers’ co-operatives, Consumer co-operatives, Small business co-operatives, Solidarity co-operatives, Community co-operatives second and third tier co-operatives are some of the successful models. The large network of co-operative organisations spread all over the world affiliated under the ICA clearly affirms the viability of co-operative business models.

Chapter four elaborates on the question “Is co-operation a viable alternative?” The co-operative business model provides work to 250 million people having more than a billion co-operative members globally. The observance of 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives has provided the impetus for the growing co-operative movement. In co-operatives, the multiple interdependent relationships among people are approached not from the perspective of how to exploit them for profit but how to use reciprocity to meet each other’s needs. Reciprocity is based on a belief that all human beings deserve to be valued equally and that their dignity should be respected. Truly followed reciprocity is co-operation (p.95). The challenge before co-operatives is the competition from the capital-driven firms. To the extent co-operatives become more like the investor-owned business; they reduce the hope for creating a better world for the next generation. In spite of all competitive challenges, if co-operatives could maintain “power to” relationships in their engagements, there is a hope of building up a better community and a better world. The envisioning of a co-operative economy capable enough to transform the present economy which is increasingly unsustainable, unfair and unstable so that it works for people and planet is the major focus of Chapter five. Economic stability, increased trust, collaboration and networking, environmental responsibility, equality and justice, meaningful work, enabling democracy and freedom, social cohesion, peace, and security are some of the building blocks of such a co-operative economy. The public policy formulation is advocated for evolving better co-operative business models which are sustainable as well as enabling the well-being of people and planet.

Chapter six elaborates on the need for co-operative renewal and reform. Co-operative performance needs to improve significantly if co-operatives are to rise to the challenge posed by the collapse of capitalism. The deepening of co-operative identity, increasing co-operative education, stewarding the environment, developing new co-operatives, forming co-operative capital, and developing courageous vision and leadership in the co-operative sector are the important domains for co-operative renewal and reform. The need and importance of co-operative friendly public policy are discussed in chapter seven. The role of government is to protect all of its citizens and ensure them, as far as is possible, the opportunity to have meaningful lives in reasonable comfort (p.115). The governments, by creating effective public policies, should be ‘open for co-operatives and economic democracies’ rather than being just ‘open for businesses.’

The eighth and final chapter elaborates on the visioning of a better world modelled on the framework of co-operative economics. Corporations have a history dating back about 400 years, and were chartered by governments to serve a public purpose but they are no longer servants of the people. Rather, individuals, families, communities, and governments have become the servants of corporations. Communism or co-operative socialism also failed to be an alternative because violence was embedded in the system which is anti-co-operative and violence destroys solidarity, caring, sharing, honesty, democracy, openness, mutual help—almost every value and principle of co-operation. Co-operatives are consistent with human nature and that co-operative culture brings out the best in people. Co-operation is the foundation of life on the planet, from cell level to country level. Informal co-operatives and co-operation have existed among people from the dawn of humanity. The current co-operative business model has roots going back almost 200 years. From its inception, the co-operative model of business drew on the resources of ordinary people who lacked pools of wealth to drive its growth and expansion. The success rests on the indomitable human spirit rather than the power of great wealth or the driving force of competition.

A better world for future generations with everybody having access to resources and services could be created with a shift from corporate globalisation to global co-operation. The co-operative leaders and co-operative organisations are uniquely positioned to play a positive role in shaping human destiny. The co-operatives are simply a tool, and co-operation is a way of thinking and a state of mind to lead us to a better world. The challenge is to build up co-operative movements in all sectors of human endeavour and create a co-operative way of life so that a unified co-operative culture will evolve as an alternative to the dehumanising corporate globalisation.

The detailed bibliography and index are useful for further research on the topic of global co-operation. The information about the websites of the organisations exploring economic alternatives is also listed at the end of the volume and is beneficial for the readers to know the details of the initiatives in building up economic alternatives to corporate globalisation.

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