

John Mihevc. The Market Tells Them So: The World Bank And Economic Fundamentalism In Africa. London And New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1995. Pp. 313, \$29.95.

This book examines structural adjustment policies (SAPs) emanating from the World Bank. There is no attempt to analyze SAPs in a detached manner by evaluating the pros and cons of these policies in the context of African countries; rather, Mihevc has produced a work that is entirely polemical in nature. He views the World Bank as having an agenda which denies all alternative strategies for development except the policy of SAPs promulgated by the Bank. Whereas most discussions of SAPs occur at a macroeconomic level, the book moves to an analysis of the impact of SAPs at a grassroots level. Mihevc asserts two themes which unify his approach. One theme focuses on the many movements opposing SAPs and the fact that these movements "cut across a variety of social, ethnic, religious and class groupings." His second theme "involves an intellectual commitment to these emerging alliances" (p.10).

This book very simply rejects development policies which work through the market. Such policies, it is argued, have worsened the lives of the typical citizen of the nations where they have been adopted. Women and children have suffered the most. In the process, large-scale environmental degradation has taken place in a global market that has exploited the nations of the South to the benefit of the North. As you read this work, you quickly detect a familiar leftist ring in the analysis. In fact, nearly all of the citations come from non-mainstream sources and contain standard terminology from Marxist writings such as "fetters" and "withering away." In short, this critique of market adjustment policies are clearly recognizable to anyone who has had contact with criticisms of the capitalist system.

Having entered the teaching profession in the late-sixties and being exposed to radical critiques of the capitalist system of that period, I noted a similarity between those arguments and that of Mihevc. Leftist analysis was long on the shortcomings of capitalism but noticeably weak on alternatives. Mihevc constantly attacks market policies but offers little in the way of other options. A strategy having Africa delink from the global economy is suggested, but not explained. Thus, we are repeatedly given examples of a global market economy that produces hardship for the poor of the South while generating riches for the elite of that region and the transnational corporations of the North. And repeatedly the author fails to offer a concrete and integrated set of policies (program) to counter this system.

These criticisms aside, there are several aspects of the book which are worthy of comment. Mihevc indicates "the World Bank has become the predominant theological institution devoted to changing the world in the area of development" (p. 22). He gives a less than charitable overview of protestant fundamentalism, noting it is narrow and dogmatic in approach. In particular, fundamentalists reject any interpretations other than what is accepted within their own orthodoxy. Mihevc argues the World Bank has a fundamentalist mindset and has "attained undisputed

hegemony by means of tactics employed by fundamentalist religions" (p.31). He goes on to draw parallels between major tenets of fundamentalism and policy positions of the World Bank.

The final two chapters were of some surprise given their inclusion in a book devoted to SAPs; however, since the book's focus was on the impact of SAPs at the grassroots their presence is understandable. The chapter titles are "African Churches and the Crisis of Structural Adjustment" and "Structural Adjustment and Women: The Response of the Churches." Both examine the response of church and women's organizations to the dislocations produced by structural adjustment. These organizations are seen as growing in number and in activity. The interpretation, which follows, suggests that church and women's activities have become a more important force in political life. No evidence was presented which would substantiate this claim. Has the political process become more participatory or are there now more groups outside of that process? Mihevc charges the World Bank has created a vision of the development process that has become narrow and dogmatic - an economic fundamentalism. Sadly, his own criticism stripped to its essentials has the ring of that " old time religion" of the left.

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