

The World Economic Crisis: Labor's Response

June 12, 2009

IN HIS INTRODUCTION to the Winter 1998 *New Politics* symposium (Vol. VI, No. 4) marking the 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*, Julius Jacobson, co-editor and co-founder of this journal, noted that “symptomatic of the crisis in Marxism” is not only the “failure of the working class to act as the agency for social transformation but the changing nature of the working class itself which is a legitimate area of concern and debate” (p. 47). This special section renews the challenge that New Politics symposium set out, of understanding what has happened to the working class and labor unions internationally, and how they have — and have not — responded to the greatest financial crisis in capitalism we have witnessed in generations. All of the authors are activists in the labor movements in their respective countries. We asked them to describe and analyze how workers in their countries are responding to the world economic crisis, noting what they see as the role of the revolutionary socialist left in all of this, if it has a role, and describing the prospects. Their essays reflect the great differences in political life, social class relations, and union organization in various nations. We anticipate that two additional contributions will be posted on our website (www.newpol.org) by the time the print edition is in your hands. We intend this as the beginning of an ongoing discussion in *New Politics* and invite readers’ submissions on the subject.

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