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*Working Children Around the World: Child Rights and Child Reality* edited by G.K. LIETEN, New Delhi: Institute for Human Development, 2004, 200 pages, ISBN 81-88315-08-7.

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pays considéré. Pour comprendre les causes de ce résultat relatif il faut revenir aux trois conditions de succès énoncées par Agocs au chapitre 1. La lecture des diverses expériences nationales indique que dans la plupart des cas, ces conditions n'étaient que partiellement respectées. Ceci reflète un clivage entre l'adoption formelle de mesures d'équité en emploi par les différents gouvernements et l'absence de volonté politique réelle de les mettre

en œuvre efficacement. L'expérience du Québec avec les programmes d'accès à l'égalité en emploi aurait bien illustré ce paradoxe. Malheureusement, c'est une lacune importante de ce livre, par ailleurs très utile, d'ignorer complètement la situation québécoise, pourtant riche en enseignements.

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***Working Children Around the World: Child Rights and Child Reality***

edited by G.K. Liet en, New Delhi: Institute for Human Development, 2004, 200 pages, ISBN 81-88315-08-7.

It is widely acknowledged that the phenomenon of "child labour" is complex, multi-faceted and resistant to simple remedies. While many in the developed world might argue in favour of abolishing child labour altogether, more recent analyses make clear that a more nuanced approach – taking into account the relative dangerousness of the work, the age of the child and the social context – is necessary. Virtually no one considers it likely that under-18 employment will vanish anytime soon, and many advocate putting resources in eliminating the "worst forms" of child labour, while striving to improve the conditions under which less burdensome forms of child labour are carried out. In this regard, a book of this kind, consisting of a collection of essays on various aspects of child labour, is useful insofar as it assists us, through empirical data, in identifying concrete features of the reality of contemporary child labour.

I must confess at the outset to some scepticism as to the value of essay collections in general, particularly where there is internal disharmony as between a broad brush versus a detailed approach, and where there is a failure at the outset to identify recent thematic "headlines" that might help to capture the essence of major debates in the

subject. In any case, it certainly could be argued that publishers rely too heavily on essay collections, as opposed to treatises. The challenge for a collection such as this one on child labour is to do justice to a culturally and geographically diverse subject, while still allowing the reader to come away with some sense of a coherent topic, with sufficient internal links to make the idea of a collection meaningful. It is relevant to ask, does the collection work as a collection, and can a reader come away from the collection with a better sense of the subject as a whole?

This particular collection of papers on child labour, deriving from social science, politics and law, purports to emphasize the empirical side of the issue, by presenting objective contemporary research into "how working children live." The first two papers set out views of the role of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in dealing with the global problem of child labour, presumably to situate the reader in what we might call the international legal context. The next two papers aim at social context, by attempting to sort out the main causes and characteristics of child labour today. The final contribution in this introductory/contextual set of essays concerns

the participation of child labourers in ngos, a familiar theme of "child empowerment" in the field of children's rights, containing a message that might be described as, "All is not lost, however bad things might look." Although not articulated as part of a global debate, this essay reflects on ongoing conversation as to whether children in difficulties ought to be considered as dependent or powerful, in other words, as capable of participating in decisions about their own circumstances and future.

What makes this collection more interesting than most is the final set of essays, all centred on case studies of children working in a particular location, with little in the way of context or evaluation, but much detail on the traditions that create the working conditions under examination. This section is valuable in that while many theorize on the subject of child labour, the embeddedness of this phenomenon in family custom and social class makes its "reality" often distinctly inaccessible. To this extent, the final section containing these studies makes the implicit statement that there is meaning in allowing the circumstances to speak for themselves.

The first two essays, by Jaap E. Doek and Sharon Detrick respectively, outline the conceptual connections between the UNCRC and the main ILO instruments relating to child labour. Both writers make the general point that the CRC adds a great deal of substance to national obligations to eliminate exploitative forms of child labour. Abstract discussions of human rights norms never make for thrilling reading, but both of these essays at least draw attention to the link between the CRC and the struggle to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The next essay, by Ingrid Stegeman, purports to place the idea of child labour in a global context, explaining that simple opposition to child labour in the developing world cannot be successful, as it reflects a modern

Western conception of the "ideal childhood." While not rejecting the importance of striving to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, Stegeman asks that working children be seen as living within a complex set of pressures urging them in the direction of work. While not particularly original, the essay does make the useful point that merely instructing countries to eliminate child labour is ineffective without a stronger sense of the forces at work—familial, social and cultural—in leading children to work for a living.

G.K. Leiten contributes an interesting essay which attempts to add complexity to our understanding of why children work, and encourages the reader to reject simplistic explanations. He shows that the link between poverty and child labour is not absolute or predictable, and urges a nuanced reading of specific labour market traditions and conditions. He also encourages a policy approach based on differentiating the various categories and types of child labour. Leiten makes some suggestive if inconclusive observations about the nature of labour markets, and the manner in which a particular industry may become the province of child labour, effectively cutting it off from adult workers in terms of employer demand.

The various child labour case studies are engaging, and ensure that the collection has something of novelty to add to the current debate. Detailed studies from Vietnam, Bolivia, Brazil, India and Guinea are included, providing a satisfyingly broad sampling. Somehow, though, this reader found the set of case studies to have a fragmentary feel, without any clear links or set of themes. As mentioned above, child labour is not one thing, but has many faces, from the worst forms through light, family-related work, seen as "helping out" for a certain number of hours per day. The degree of isolation, coercion and exploitation varies dramatically

depending on the specific context. While this collection as a whole acknowledges that fact, the short, heavily detailed nature of the case studies perhaps does not provide as much enlightenment as one would like. Human Rights Watch and other specialist studies already do a superb job of integrating empirical research data with theoretical overview. Despite its many interesting passages, it remained somewhat unclear what this collection, *qua* collection, was really trying to achieve.

Finally, although the subject of street children is often and inevitably related to that of working children, street children are, in many respects, a separate and extremely challenging population. Amma A. Asante's chapter on "Street Children of Cochabamba," while moving and in one sense self-contained, seemed rather out of place in the collection as a whole. More generally, I considered whether Working Children Around the World isn't a rather enormous a topic to capture in a disparate

set of short essays. G.K. Leiten's own essay on the (often non-obvious) causes of child labour seemed the most innovative of the theoretical pieces. The papers concerned with specific populations of child labourers, while also refreshingly "real," seemed not to be integrated within the framework of the book itself.

I think it is fair to say that readers do approach a book, whether a collection of pieces or a treatise, in an effort to gain a more coherent and theoretically contextualized sense of the topic than they had previous to actually reading it. According to that test, I think this collection leaves something to be desired. If we take each piece on its own, as we might accept conference presentations on their own terms, then there are many fine moments here, especially those based on empirical research carried out in places where children really live and work.

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### ***Are Activation Policies Converging in Europe? The European Employment Strategy for Young People***

edited by Amparo Serrano Pascual, Brussels: European Trade Union Institute, 2004, 518 pages, ISBN 2-930352-38-8.

The countries of the European Union took a significant step when, in 1997, they agreed to coordinate their employment policies. The first fruit of this agreement was the Luxembourg Guidelines, prescribing policy goals for action against long-term unemployment. The general aim of the Guidelines was to shift policy in an "active" direction, in which unemployed people – especially the young – would be led back to jobs with support from programs. This development provides the backdrop for the collection of papers reviewed here, which comes from a seminar organized by the European Trade Union Institute and the Group ESC Toulouse at the end

of 2001, with the aim of characterizing policies of "activation" across Europe. The authors come from eight countries, the majority of the papers are comparative, and the only (pre-accession) EU countries omitted from review are Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal. There is also considerable discussion of US developments, and one chapter offers a comparison of Canada with Germany.

The editor's concluding chapter refers to the "semantic confusion" inherent in the concept of "activation," and contrasts its senses of goal, method, principle and ideology. None the less, most contributors are agreed that government