Labor in the Era of Globalization

The third quarter of the twentieth century was a golden age for labor in the advanced industrial countries, characterized by rising incomes, relatively egalitarian wage structures, and reasonable levels of job security. The subsequent quarter-century has seen less positive performance along a number of these dimensions. This period instead has been marked by rapid globalization of economic activity that has brought increased insecurity to workers. The contributors to this volume – prominent scholars from the United States, Europe, and Japan – distinguish four explanations for this historic shift: (1) global competition for both business and labor; (2) deregulation of industry with more reliance on markets; (3) weakening of legislation to protect workers and provide income security; and (4) increased migration of workers, especially unskilled workers, from developing to developed countries. In addition to analyzing the causes of these trends, the contributors investigate important consequences ranging from changes in collective bargaining and employment relations to family-formation decisions and incarceration policy.

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