

One crisis too many !

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Politis, March 27th 2008

Today's financial situation is in the process of confirming the most pessimistic of forecasts and analyses. According to the former chairman of the Federal Reserve himself, Alan Greenspan, this is the most serious crisis to arise since the Second World War. Should it come as a surprise? This is the logical outcome of the evolution of capital into its purest and its most brutal form: that of creating profit for shareholders – the end result of lifting restrictions on circulation of capital, of deregulation, of the proliferation of financial instruments, of securitisation and the distancing of central banks from politics in order to better serve financial markets.

The financial world, whose alleged independence from systems of production has only served to mask the extraordinary siphoning-off of produced wealth into financial assets, has come down to earth. For its belief in the illusion of an eternal rise in real estate prices, for having promoted an economic growth sustained not by a rise in the salaries of low wage-earners but by the magic of the variable-interest rate loans on offer to them, the US banking system has plunged international finance and banking systems into the abyss, possibly along with the world economy itself, and in the process those who live from their own labour.

For twenty-five years unemployment trends have followed dividend curves. Social protections such as health cover and pensions have been dismantled in order to channel more savings into markets thirsty for liquid assets. The erosion of social rights and employment laws has rendered the workforce more malleable in the face of job insecurity. The IMF has openly declared that redistributive, or pay-as-you-go, pension systems create too much of a sense of security in society. Employers now have only to exploit their advantage by applying the rule “work more for less”. The shift towards a financial economy not only caused the deterioration in salaries and working conditions, it is also its consequence, because all those distributed profits have to be re-invested.

It is time to say enough is enough. We must put an end to speculation, to the enslavement of companies to the world of finance, to treating the world as if it were simply a piece of merchandise, to the privatisation of profits and to the collectivisation of losses. We propose a European petition to be signed by all citizens, associations, trade unions and political parties for whom the notion of the general interest still has a meaning. We will start out by demanding the abrogation of Article 56 of the Treaty of Lisbon forbidding restrictions on circulation of capital. This is a political act that will demonstrate that solutions exist for regaining the control of our future.

We must first put the banking system, in particular the European Central Bank, back under public control and dedicate it to the service of useful activity and employment. Central banks have the choice of going from the frying pan into the fire: either they restrict credit in order to check inflation and the economy breaks down – or they promote credit and the financial bubbles return when hedge funds use leveraged borrowing in order to get their hands on the most attractive industries.

Next, we must put drastic limits on financial revenues through the implementation of taxes high enough to both dissuade shareholders from pressuring the employment sector for increased profit and also deprive them of the inordinate amount of power they wield within companies.

We have arrived at a point at which widening inequalities are matched only by the arrogance of the powerful, who care for nothing but themselves. Since they refuse to listen to reason of their own accord, and in response to their soothing declarations on the market's capacity for self-regulation – declarations that would be laughable if they weren't so insulting to those having suffered from the damage caused – the only way forward is a political one: public intervention has now become indispensable.

Traduction : Jane Hollister et Carol Bonvin, Coeditrad