

The WFSW Newsletter 3 (2011-1)

Current works of the WFSW

In this letter (N° 3) and the following ones, we intend to develop the topics examined and developed by our secretariat and affiliated organizations within the context of the present global crisis (crisis of civilization, systemic crisis, scientific and technical transition/revolution ?).

We start with the papers originating from the very rich studies of our executive council in april 2010, together with a personal note intended to spur an undoubtedly polemic controversy and healthy reflection.

Jean-Paul Lainé
President

NB : Please note our site "<http://www.fmts-wfsw.org>" for consultation of the minutes and reports of our missions and meetings.

Science and crisis

Is economics a science ? This question still triggers controversy. There are researchers in economics. The crisis will probably renew the scope of research in this field. In order to deserve the term « *scientific research* », however, an absolute criterion will entail giving up the « *Market* » as a founding divinity (or even the « *God of vengeance* » or the « *jealous God* » of this or that religion !). « *The Market has no confidence... the Market has punished... What will the reaction of the Market be ? ...* ». Overcoming the crisis will require political decisions imposing rules on the financial market players (banks, investment funds, etc.) and on the monetary authorities (the central banks, which, among other functions, set the price of money).

With regard to this question, scientific workers have, in addition to the interests identical to those of all citizens, an obvious moral interest : to free research from a discourse that makes research the main culprit in the trial of non-sustainable growth. Hence, the term techno-science : science that is challenged and not the frenzied conquest of new markets through a policy of innovation leading to new consumption ignoring any ecological consideration. Not to mention mathematics, used to serve innovations in the financial markets. To reason simplistically, if we stopped making scientific discoveries these bad innovations would also stop. An old anarchist once told me that he did not want to have children so as not to increase the ranks of the future exploited !

The organizations of scientific workers (trade unions, associations, professional groups, societies of scholars...) should take this into account, and should lead or at least actively participate in the crusade against the Religion of the Market. To paraphrase Pierre-Simon Laplace⁽¹⁾, we shall say that we do not need this assumption to solve today's problems.

André Jaeglé
Emeritus President

⁽¹⁾ Responding to Napoleon, who asked him why his theory of the universe did not include God, Laplace answered « *Sir, I did not need this assumption* ».

Resolution on nuclear disarmament and peace

Whereas the Executive Council of WFSW urgently seeks a global agreement to free the world from nuclear arms, and other lethal conventional and non-conventional weapons, and to free humanity from the threat of annihilation.

And, whereas a number of specific proposals have been made to further the goal of eventually abolishing nuclear weapons in their entirety.

The WFSW welcomes the START II treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

The WFSW further welcomes peace initiatives taken by several heads of state, particularly President Obama, including measures involving the arms reduction and nuclear threat, and emphasizes the importance of the proposals in five points of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon for Nuclear Disarmament.

Whereas Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has now 188 signatures and only 149 ratifications, but only 39 have presented their instrument of ratification. Four countries are missing, India, Israel, Pakistan, and the United States.

The WFSW further endorses its Executive Council member, Prof. Seiji Yuasa of Japan's call to support global grassroots movements towards a great success of the NPT Review.

The WFSW Executive Council asks for the strengthening of the NPT. The NPT must be signed, ratified and promulgated by all Member States of the United Nations.

The WFSW reaffirms the right of all countries, including Iran, to have a peaceful nuclear industry.

The WFSW recalls that all NPT signatories are committed and must comply with the controls of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The WFSW appeal to move toward to deep reform of international institutions, restore real power to the UN by changing the rules of the right to veto and representation, to make the IAEA independent, and give it the financial resources and the a priori powers of control that it obviously needs.

The WFSW Executive Council mandates the chairman of the International Commission on Disarmament, Security & Peace (ICD), and the membership thereof, to seek a cooperative and collaborative relationship with the United Nations Disarmament Division, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and other international and inter-governmental organizations dedicated to the goal of disarmament.

The WFSW mandates the ICD to disseminate its disarmament activities as widely as possible within its resources.

Paris, on 16th April 2010

From Copenhagen to Cancun, what role can scientists play ?

Declaration of the World Federation of Scientific Workers

The result of the Copenhagen Climate Conference caused great disappointment and much worry in a large part of public opinion. In its fourth report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provided the figures indicating the CO₂ emission reduction that must be achieved in order to stop a dangerous climate trend. This conference ended with no commitments on the part of states with respect to those figures.

Some scientists challenged the statements in the IPCC report concerning the major role of human activities in global warming. The function of the World Federation of Scientific Workers is not to take a position on the validity of these challenges. Scientific debate is normal, and is part of the process of expanding knowledge. Scientific truth is not the result of a majority vote. As regards scientific data entailing political decisions with long-term implications, however, the existence of a majority scientific opinion must necessarily be taken into account, whatever conjectures we might make about the possible finetuning of this data in the future. We cannot wait to act « *to see what happened in the end and who was right* » ! This is the whole meaning of the Copenhagen Climate Conference and the disappointment that followed it.

The future of the Planet Earth and the human society who inhabits it depends on human activities to such a point that the fulfilment of a common world ambition has become an absolute necessity to control the impact of human activities. The dangers inherent in climate changes are not the only ones caused by social and economic development. All the problems of pollution and other damages to the environment as well as the waste of natural resources and their depletion are also involved. The consequences of this waste will appear sooner or later as just as frightening for our future as those related to greenhouse gas emissions. We must give priority to procedures leading to complete regeneration of inputs, whether for agricultural, industrial, or household effluents. It is urgent to put an end to the waste of raw materials, the wealth of the planet in general and not only the waste of fossil fuels. This « *new development* » will require a tremendous effort in scientific research in directions hitherto ignored or neglected.

A multitude of voices asserted that the failure of the Copenhagen Climate Conference was predictable. The real obstacle is known : it was the fact that powerful economic interests were challenged. The binding measures that people hoped to see adopted at the conference had powerful consequences for the competitiveness of national economies. Once again the dogma of allegedly free competition on a worldwide scale turned out to be an obstacle to sustainable development. We must put an end to this dogma. We must establish a new type of international economic relations.

We have reached a stage of exasperation at which every company is in danger of being absorbed and disappearing unless that company absorbs others. The « *free and undistorted competition* » that the WTO watches over is a myth which contributes to destroy existing solidarities and public missions. The free circulation of capital and the domination of financial markets have opened the

reign of predators. If you do not want to be swallowed up, you must swallow up others. Under these conditions, how can you not see that the efforts to reduce greenhouse gases are jeopardized ? It is a short-term vision and « *every man for himself* » that will prevail. How can we imagine that it is possible to control growth if we do not put an end to a situation in which there is no solution other than a frenetic race toward growth ? And how can we fail to understand that a state which allows its national economy to lose all independence dooms itself to lose all power, to lose every means of action with regard to implementing an international agreement like the one we hoped for in Copenhagen ?

This type of growth has become unbearable. Billions of human beings are kept in a state of poverty endangering the control of population growth. The harm done by this type of growth is far from limited to hindering efforts toward sustainable development, but it also manifests itself in the choice of scientific policies and in all areas of social and economic life. The world financial crisis that broke out in 2008 is one more proof of this.

We do not consider ourselves to be competent to criticize UN institutions to which certain persons attribute the responsibility for the present deadlock. But our conviction is that the solution requires an agreement between states. It depends on states to pull us out of the present economic situation which is the main obstacle to the control of development. They must agree to :

- ▶ put an end to the free circulation of capital by establishing rules protecting in particular states against the flight of capital in reaction to the implementation of sustainable development projects ;
- ▶ compel central banks and international financial institutions to promote monetary policies, credit and savings policies privileging the needs of the real economy ;
- ▶ replace the dogma of allegedly free and undistorted competition, particularly in the action of the WTO, by the principle of fair trade relations in the framework of international multilateral agreements ;
- ▶ protect the economy of a state, when this state unilaterally undertakes to introduce transformations in line with the recommendations of the IPCC or other necessities of sustainable development ;
- ▶ ban the export of polluting agents by rich countries to underdeveloped countries ;
- ▶ encourage the creation or the restoration of public services in the fields where collective interest requires it : transport, energy, water, health...

The scientific workers of the whole world, whether they work in universities or industry, have a role to play. What is at stake is the image of science and the public perception of the responsibility of scientists in the content of growth and the meaning of progress.

To contact the Federation

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