

VI. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CASE FOR CORE LABOUR RIGHTS?

In light of all of the above, we can revisit and restate our case for Canada's concern with core international labour rights as follows:

1. Pursuing core labour rights is part of a larger agenda of pursuing respect for basic human rights. This is important as an end in itself, and reflects deep Canadian values. Respect for core labour rights so conceived is indifferent to stages of development and the values it espouses are universal values of human freedom.
2. Respect for core labour rights is part of what we now perceive as a more comprehensive understanding of development and the necessary ingredients for sustainable and competitive economies in societies. Respect for core labour rights is likely to manifest itself in jurisdictions which simultaneously advance other key elements of the "package" of economic, political, economic, and social institutions and norms (rule of law, transparency, political stability, etc.) required for successful societies. It follows, as a result, that is highly unlikely that isolating core labour standards, and ignoring other elements of the package, or vice versa, can be successful.
3. There is still a problem of a "policy" failure to attend to these understandings. This may be understood, perhaps most generously, as a "collective action problem" in the sense that in the long run we would all be better off if we avoided regulatory competition in core labour standards, but political actors are prone to fall for short term "payoffs". The trouble is, so are all other political actors. As a result there is no short term gain - and only long term pain. International commitments can guard against such failures.
4. Finally, there is the overwhelming political reality - regardless of the truth of points 1-3 - of the lack of political support for the ongoing project of economic integration and development. Inconsistency and hypocrisy fuels this "backlash". Labour standards are a central theme in this political discontent. In short something must be done - we might as well do the right thing.