

Chapter 4

Social Partnerships: Jamaican Expressions

ABSTRACT

The pattern from international experience suggests that social partnerships emerge as forms of governance reflecting to a broadened governance capacity, which enables better governance of the political system. Crisis has been a catalyst for the co-opting of multiple stakeholders into governance models globally, which resonates the global context with the local context of Jamaica. In the previous chapter, the global, regional, and national contextual frames within which the discourses around Jamaica's social experience could be located were established. In the context of Jamaica, reasons are posited to account for the low pursuance of tripartite social partnership and why deeper models appear elusive or limited in scope. This would suggest that other factors of context, culture, issues of power, capacity, structure, and institution have an influence in determining modalities and models.

INTRODUCTION

From country experiences of social partnership, there are undeniably benefits realized from creating these arrangements but vary in scope, depth of success and duration. There is even the view that crisis is critical for the development of social partnerships from the experience of Belgium that tried to create one without a crisis scenario. Regardless of the challenges in operationalizing social dialogue and the different forms taken as a result of country history

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and context, the process has proven to be valuable and has yielded some positive outcomes.

Given its root, representation and expression within global space, social partnership has been used as a hegemonic device in relation to changing governance. Firstly, towards participative, democratic industrial relations practice with respect to the labour movement and in support of a shift towards social governance as a model supporting the neoliberal philosophies that undergird the process of globalization.

There have been benefits where tripartite arrangements have been instituted within Europe with varied results in developing countries with the degree of transformation dependent upon the state context and capacity as in post tripartite scenarios the labour movement has become fragmented and less resilient to the state in terms of its original mandate. The dominant and institutional discourses and their representation by institutions of global governance bring to the forefront the benefits of pursuing social dialogue, noting that social partnerships are contentious arenas of negotiation, dealing with threats to stability of the existing order and distributions of power within the network of the state towards a new equilibrium or consensus.

International Labour Organisation

In the case of Jamaica, the fundamental rights afforded the labour market reflect accords of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of which Jamaica is a member and are predicated on the assumption of the traditional contract of employment, whereby a number of these are only available to unionized workers. With respect to the fundamental rights at work, Jamaica has adopted a number of ILO Conventions, as reflected in Table 1. which operate within the framework of the traditional contract of employment, applicable in scope and effect mainly to unionized workers. As aforementioned, for many developing countries, a large proportion of the workforce falls within the informal sector and the challenge is to also enable this larger group some modicum of benefit and protection. It is argued that Jamaica has extensive worker protection in the formal sector and these coupled with strong trade unions may limit labour market flexibility and the ability of employers to replace unproductive workers with productive ones.

The ILO has facilitated the development of trade unions as political institutions within their own individual country context, which fundamentally alters the distribution of power relations within them as they become agents

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