REGULATION OF WORK 2070, an optimistic scenario

By

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Harry Arthurs’ 2070 curriculum posits a plausible, some might even say probable, outcome of some current trends. But, as always, there are contrary trends that may gain strength and lead to a much different future. In the U.S. an authoritarian populist has been dumped after a single term and socialism has become almost respectable. In Europe, proposals for a fundamental remake of the corporation that would have it become more consistent with political norms has gained considerable traction, especially among young academics. Calls for a move towards “economic democracy” have even been announced in Canada. So, here is an alternative future, one also based on contemporary “trends.” It may not be the most probable road to 2070, but it too is plausible.

Module 1: Where have we come from?
- Dark satanic mills 1770-1850
- Trade Unions and Labour/Socialist Parties Emerge 1850-1914
  * Trade Unions and Labour/Socialist Parties established in several countries; fascist/authoritarian challenge turned back, 1914-45
  * Widespread social and economic progress for labour 1945-1980
- Ascendance of neo-liberalism results in decline of labour’s power, influence and wellbeing (1980-2020)
- Labour Rights become part of global movement for Human Rights; economic democracy emerges in Canada (2020-2040)
- Economic democracy ascendant - melds with political democracy to become norm (2040-2070)

Module 2: Why the 21st century rebirth and success of economic democracy?
- Response to rising inequality due to neoliberal excess
- Reaction to authoritarianism
- Most effective response to climate degradation
- Antidote to labour market volatility and insecurity

Module 3: Where are we in 2070?
- Govt policy “promotes” universal collective bargaining in a manner similar to the promotion of the right and duty to vote.
- Conditions of work that are collectively conceived and applied are collectively negotiated.
- Collective bargaining is only one part of a broader participatory system. Bi-cameralism governs corporations who are responsible to multiple stakeholders.
- Stockholders lose legal control of corporations, become passive investors.
- National and regional economic and social policy are co-decided.
- Technological efficiency increases wealth; economic democracy ensures that the wealth is more widely and equitably distributed.
- Authoritarian governments are mostly historical curiosities much like the fascist governments of the 20th century.
Module 4. Challenges

- Like all human systems, this system of enhanced democracy faces challenges.
- Powerful elites (as they have always done) attempt to rejig it in their interests.
- Thus, the challenge is to identify and effectively oppose such attempts both through policy and ideology.
- For this system to persist, the labour movement and its allies must achieve and maintain a set of broadly accepted democratic norms.
- The success of this system requires the continual nurturing of national, regional and grass roots organizations for its defense.