

It's a Small World After All

The idea of globalization is now entering its second decade, making it less a new concept and more an established business reality. One need only drop by the local store to see that practically every product comes from somewhere other than the country you're in. On the flip side, the countries that are importing products are exporting technologies and services, which is supposed to, at least theoretically, even out the trade balance.

It usually doesn't.

Rather than become a way for poorer countries to reach new markets, more often globalization has become a way for richer countries to expand their wealth and solidify their dominance (at least economically) over the developing nations. This has led to a backlash in developing nations, where the general population is somewhat weary – and sometimes downright against – treaties like CAFTA that are supposedly designed to offer the smaller, poorer countries a shot at gaining access to markets in the larger, richer ones. They have failed to see how the treaties bring benefit to those who need it most – the poor.

In many ways the fault can be placed on the wealthier countries, which may in fact enter the treaties with good intent and the hope that the poorer countries take full advantage of the opportunities being presented. In fact, as a gesture of their goodwill, the richer countries generally sponsor – at the cost of millions of dollars – programs in the poorer countries designed to boost their competitiveness and enable them to exploit the treaty. While usually well intended and a source of pride, the wealthier countries have failed to structure and manage these programs sufficiently to insure maximum results. In fact, it could be said that for all the intentions, dollars, and self-congratulations, the programs, almost uniformly, fail to deliver the hoped for results.

Globalization is a fact of life – making for some a better life than others. The only way it will succeed as a force of good and not an incentive for resentment is if the formula for enriching the poorer countries is discovered and supported. The opportunities for growth being what they are, this can almost certainly be done without it in any way diminishing the position of the wealthy nations.