

Commodity Chains, Global Production, and Development Goals

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Introduction

Commodity chains are the organizations that, in their operations, gather resources, repackage them, and distribute them to consumers. They can, therefore, be referred to as the intermediaries between the producers and the consumers. Their work is to ensure that products from the main producer find their way to the consumers. This has taken a new turn as these organizations have gone international, bringing in products from other countries and redistributing them to the locals.

Commodity chains have their uniqueness based on the products that they are dealing with^[1]. Different challenges are faced by the people directly affected by their operations, including the employees. This has led to the need for such people to find ways of dealing with the different challenges that they face in the course of running the business. This paper shall focus on specific chains, i.e., Fast food commodity chains, electronics commodity chains, and corporate logistics systems. The paper shall also focus on the goals of these groups towards developing effective collective challenges and the best approaches to dealing with the same

a) Fast Food Commodity Chains – Beef Processing in Washington

Persons working in the beef processing unit in Washington have their challenges. Most of the employees are immigrants, mostly from Mexico. The main challenge that these people are facing is the need to have a workplace environment that cares for the welfare of the employees. Health, safety, and the dignity of the employees seem to be a thorn in the flesh. There have been claims of unfair and unjust treatment of the employees in their line of duty. The high demand for packaged meat has led to employees being subjected to rapid speeds of production. The situation at Tyson Foods has led to increased incidences of injuries and other health problems that need to be addressed[2]. Discrimination and poor treatment of immigrant employees is also a biting problem, with most of them being subjected to low wages and poor treatment in general.

The main goal of the Tyson

The main goal of the employees is to have a healthy workplace where they are treated as human beings and the general welfare is catered for. They have first to ensure that they are documented

with the immigration department to ensure their legality even as they push for better treatment. They are usually labeled as illegal immigrants, making it more difficult for them to raise the issues with the government. Not being documented not only makes their lives hard at their places of work but also out there on the streets. Police brutality, plus racial and ethnic profiling, is always an issue they have to deal with.

Approach to dealing with the challenges

Employees of the meat company are able to deal with the issue at hand only if they can form a labor union. To have a democratic workplace where the voices of both the management are heard and not the one-way traffic, they will need to have some representation, and this is only possible if they have a union that fights for them. The union shall enable them to have a unified voice, unlike in cases where individuals have to confront challenges facing them individually. This can only happen if the employees can gain legal documentation and stop being labeled as illegal employees. They have to follow the laws of the land, considering that the United States has very strict rules regarding the issue of immigrants. Once registered, they can register a union that will see the management of the company change their attitude towards them and begin treating them like the humans they are.

b) Electronic Assembly Work

Most of the employees in the assembly industry are subjected to poor working conditions, especially in situations where the organization has to ensure that they reach the target production within a short period. A good example is the Foxconn company, where one of the employees, just like most of those employed by the company, has turned to suicide, citing poor working conditions. Companies such as Foxconn have been on the receiving end concerning the issue of workplace environment for their employees. Yu explains how stressful it is to work for the company, which relies on it to complete tasks within a short period. Such strict timelines leave one with no time for themselves, nor are they able to interact with friends and family. Such devastating situations in such organizations that have globalized their operations have seen most of their employees fall into desperation, consequently contemplating suicide.

The main goal of the employees

Most of the employees who are subjected to such devastating situations are rural immigrants moving to cities and industrial towns in search of greener pastures. They are, therefore, not aware of any labor unions that could help them solve the problems they are facing. Industrial managers are taking advantage of such situations, manipulating them into working beyond their capabilities. Their goal is to have a situation where the management provides a platform for them to air grievances. Employees would like the management to introduce a system where communication is open. This will be a great step toward identifying and resolving workplace-related problems.

The first step towards realizing their goals would be for the government to regulate both private and public entities. This will form a basis where the employees can unanimously decry oppression in the workplace since they have government protection. There is also the need to break the Chinese trade union confederation into smaller divisions to allow them to adequately deal with the issues of the people they represent adequately^[3]. The Chinese Trade Union Federation has more subscriptions than the International Trade Union subscriptions in more than 156 countries. This makes it impossible for the federation in China to zero down on individuals or groups who feel oppressed. Employees in the Chinese market should push for the reconstruction of the federation to enable them to air their grievances with ease.

c) Securing Corporate Logistics System

Supply chain companies are finding it hard to run their business efficiently due to the changes that have occurred in the past decade in the field of logistics. Gone are the days when logistics simply implied the act of transportation and warehousing. It has taken a new turn, and the production, transportation, warehousing, and distribution are now under the company's logistics department. All these changes are put under one name, i.e., Supply chain management. This has led to an increased cost overall for running the whole process. Companies like Walmart have been making moves to try to reduce the overall cost of running the business. This is the main challenge in most companies, and they have their goals towards ensuring that they maximize profits while reducing the overall cost of running a business.

The main goal of these companies is to make their business procedures easier than they were when logistics only involved transportation and warehousing. With the introduction of supply chain management, there has been an increase in regulations, making it harder for companies to maintain the low cost of running the business[4]. As earlier said, it is the dream of every company to maximize their profits and lower the cost of running the business. These companies want to ensure that they are in full control of the business by removing the middlemen who have always been there to make it hard for them to effectively run their business.

To ensure that they can make business as efficient as before, the companies have to come up with strategies that will see the whole process remain economical for them to remain in business. Reducing the cost of labor requires that almost all the supply chain companies are in agreement on how they are going to control the cost of labor. They have, therefore, to come up with a union that standardizes the cost of labor across the board. Companies may also choose to outsource production, taking their production plants to areas that have low labor costs. For example, most of the American companies have turned to China for their production units. Most of the products are manufactured and assembled in China and then transported to high-end markets such as Europe.

Merits for forging alliances

Forging alliances refers to the act of groups coming together and working towards attaining the same goal. From the above paper, we can conclude that, indeed, there are merits in forging alliances since most of the challenges mentioned can only be solved if these groups come together.

One of the advantages is that alliances improve the base support for the groups mentioned. Coming together reinforces the voices of the people who feel that they are being frustrated in their operations^[5]. There is also the issue of reinforcing advocacy and protection for the members. Most of the groups who form alliances have a voice that can be heard. Raising an issue as an individual makes it hard for you to be heard compared to raising the same as an individual. It is very difficult for persons to be victimized once they raise issues together. Alliances are also a way of encouraging people to continue fighting for what is rightfully theirs. One feels that they have the support they need, and joining in the conversation becomes even easier for groups than for individuals.

Conclusion

It is clear that people in the commodity chains have challenges that are often difficult to handle as individuals. There are, however, different methods that can be employed by both the employees and the management of such organizations to ensure that the workplace environment is of the recommended standards. Governments also have a role to play in ensuring that employees, both in the private and public sectors, are well protected to avoid cases of employee harassment and discrimination.

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