

SMASHING THE IRON RICE POT

Workers and unions in China's market socialism

All bosses are the same - they're only there for making money. God damn it, I've worked for thirty years and still have to serve dishes to capitalists! I still don't understand why we have to enter into joint ventures with bosses and that the masters of our country, the workers, have to work for capitalists. Are we really that poor that we can't even afford this little bit of dignity? But then again, it's true that the standard of living of my colleagues and I has got much better. Now everybody has TV, fridge, hi-fi and washing machines. It is all a result of joint ventures....If we were to wait for state investment only, when will we ever have these luxuries? It's all a very difficult question, isn't it?
(Restaurant worker, People's Republic of China, 1987)

Smashing the Iron Rice Pot, the third of the new series of Asia Labour Monitor publications, looks at the trade union movement inside mainland China, and the stresses and strains imposed on it by China's ambitious programme of political and economic reform.

Smashing the Iron Rice Pot explores the extent to which workers are 'masters of the country' following these reforms. Reform and 'State Capitalism' have brought with them new problems: spiralling wage disparities; the possibilities of bankruptcies and layoffs; the loss of extensive welfare benefits and job security; and new management techniques from overseas, involving considerable reductions in trade union power.

Smashing the Iron Rice Pot is the result of research and interviews inside China, along with careful analysis of official reports. It provides the first sympathetic yet critical analysis of modern Chinese trade unionism.

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