

## *Our Labor Policy Vision*

### *Stable Employment, Working with Dignity, and Labor-capital Equality*

The width and depth of a country's protection of its workers' rights represent the degree of attention the country pays to its workers. In terms of the development of human rights, basic labor rights include the right to life, the right to work, and the "three workers' rights," which encompass the right to unionize, to collective bargaining, and to industrial action.

First, the right to life indicates the state has the obligation to guarantee that the citizens' essential life needs are met. To workers, the right to work is a basic prerequisite for the right to life. Only when workers work to earn wages can they obtain access to various kinds of social insurance and security and maintain stable family livelihoods, so the right to work is no doubt the centerpiece of basic labor rights. Guaranteeing workers' rights means that the state should provide comprehensive particulars of protection for its people's right to life and to work; thus "the workers' right to life with dignity" and "working environments that are in conformity to humane concepts" have become the core of basic labor rights.

The Taiwan Brain Trust believes that the core values of labor policy should include:

1. **Stable employment:** This is to set the creation of stable, sustainable, and good-quality jobs as the objective. The government has to get rid of the myth to one-sidedly reduce the unemployment rate. It should not offer large numbers of non-productive temporary jobs that give a low sense of achievement at work. Rather, it should both encourage enterprises to establish stable and sustainable working environments and prevent the propagation of atypical types of employment such as temporary or part-time jobs that serve to beautify unemployment statistics.
2. **Dignified labor:** This is to map out development strategy to improve workers' families and enhance their quality of life. Taiwan should discard the "mindset that cares only about GDP," shake off the "working long hours for low pay" economic development strategy that resulted from export-oriented competition, and remove businesses' motives for vying for cheap labor. Therefore, the government should properly raise minimum wages, reduce legal working hours, implement two-day weekends, and enjoin companies enjoying tax preferences offered by government policies from hiring non-national workers so as to strike a balance between workers' work and life.
3. **Equality in the employer-employee relationship:** This is to establish collective bargaining as the mode of development of employer-employee relationship. All employees should enjoy the protection provided by joining labor unions so that they, through the institutionalization of bargaining mechanisms that ensure equality between employers and employees, may in the spirit of industrial democracy promote the democratization of policy-making and management in enterprises, resolve the confrontation between employers and employees in industries, seek consensus between employers and employees, and realize distributive justice.

In the global economic crisis triggered by the 2008 financial tsunami, Taiwan's workers underwent great trials caused by the hazards of losing jobs. This invasive wave of the "global

unemployment crisis,” which originated mainly from the widespread shortage of investment and production occasioned by the “crisis of confidence in global capitalism,” has plunged Taiwan and other countries in the world into the plight of the “global crisis of structural unemployment.” The unemployment crises that Taiwan faces in this wave of global unemployment have not only presented old problems recognized by the Taiwanese society in the past such as “layoffs,” “unemployment among middle-aged and elderly people,” and “youth unemployment,” but have also begot several new features like “long-term unemployment,” “atypical employment,” and “the working poor,” which current public opinions have not paid much attention to. Taiwan’s existing labor policy cannot respond to or handle these new types of labor problems, either.

What’s more, the signing of free trade agreements (FTAs) will make a severe impact on industries in domestic markets, leading to further employment instability in various countries, reduction in wage rates, and increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people. Taiwan has to seriously consider how to prevent these problems in the future. In other words, the government should examine and reevaluate workers’ working environments, comprehensively review and revise the direction of Taiwan’s economic and industrial development, strengthen investment in Taiwan, for what the people of Taiwan want is economic development that will increase “jobs” instead of “GDP figures.” Therefore, Taiwan should practically protect workers’ basic rights such as the right to life and to work and the “three workers’ rights” when making labor policy for the future. It should also uphold the core values of “stable employment, dignified labor, and equality in the employer-employee

relationship” when drawing up related measures so that it may safeguard the rights of the vast population of grassroots workers. **BT**