

Why we cannot a Ford to depend on multinationals

By *Letitia McQuade*

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The farewell of Ford from Australian production is not only understandable, but a welcome wake-up call, says [Letitia McQuade](#).



(Image courtesy [Cagle.com](#).)

IF ANYTHING is demonstrably clear in this golden age of globalisation, it is that multinational corporations don't care about people.

We can cry foul all we want, but the corporate *raison d'etre* has nothing to do with providing us with well paid jobs, housing, food, education and healthcare. And really, why should we expect them to? They exist for the sole purpose of making money and we would be foolish to think otherwise.

Globalisation has been a boon for multinational behemoths. They casually shuffle jobs around the world, looking to exploit the sub-living wages of the world's most wretched, then proceed to funnel the profits through tax-shelter nations like it's all some enormous game of monopoly.

Those who play the game hard – aggressively crushing wages and conditions, pursuing huge profits and stealthily avoiding tax – are rewarded with fat options and strong stock prices. Those who play steady and sustainable are not.

Given the nature of this globalised world, I find all the huffing and puffing about Ford's departure – and who's to blame – quite odd. Ford's was losing money, so they're going to close us down — it's hardly a surprise.

But what concerns me more is how do we, as a nation, intend to deal with the big boys that are staying here (at least for now). Exactly how far are we willing to go keep them on our shores?

Any multinational that stays in a country does so because it's making money, and logic dictates that it will stay as long as it can turn a profit.

Yet, at the behest of these behemoths, governments all across the globe are eagerly slashing wages, handing over natural resources, turning a legislative blind eye to off shore “tax minimization”, and offering up lavish taxpayer funded incentives in the hope that these great '*providers of employment and opportunity*' will grace them with their presence.

The sad fact is that none of these accommodations buy so much as a nanosecond of loyalty if profits start to fall; or

heaven forbid, they could pay someone less somewhere else.

It's the industrial equivalent of grabbing the dowry, burning the bride, and heading off to the altar with the next available victim. And the message from the corporatocracy is quite clear:

"shut up and take it, or we'll leave you for someone who will".

However, this threat, when you think about it, isn't really that much of a threat when you know they will eventually dump you anyway.

Thing is, when you are in a toxic relationship it can be hard to see a life outside of it, and ending an abusive relationship can seem overwhelmingly terrifying:

"It's all we know, how we will survive?"

But, as many a battered spouse who has found the courage to get up and move on knows, things can be different; and while it's not always an easy course, more often than not, it can, and does get better.

The adjustments will take time, new skills will be required, and we would have to be willing to direct our eyes towards new opportunities; but there is a whole world of possibilities out there that don't involve grinding working people into the dirt in an effort to please some avaricious corporate overlord.

To me, the question is: why are we all so desperate to have unconditional relationships with these psychopathic Goliaths, who clearly couldn't care less if we all dropped dead tomorrow?

Honestly, it's like we are all suffering from some weird kind of economic abuse bonding:

"Please don't leave us, we'll do anything ... work for 1/2 price, charge you no tax, we'll even pay you to stay and screw us to the wall, what ever you want, please, please don't go!"

HERE'S...



...WORKCHOICES!

I can hear Tony Abbott's dulcet tones now:

"Come on, I've got WorkChoices II in my back pocket; if you stay, I promise I'll get them to bend over a bit further."

But seriously, is that really the answer?

The reality is, we are a high cost, high wage, nation and no matter how hard the LNP urges us to accept the wholesale erosion of our pay and conditions to 'meet the global market', we will never be wage competitive with the likes of Bangladesh or Indonesia, for example, when it comes to manufacturing.

We need to offer something different. We need to be smarter, more efficient, more innovative. We need to lead the world in education, design, research, intellectual property, green technology, clean agriculture; and, above all, we need to ensure that we adequately tax those that profit from digging up our natural resources. (Yes Gina, that means *you!*).

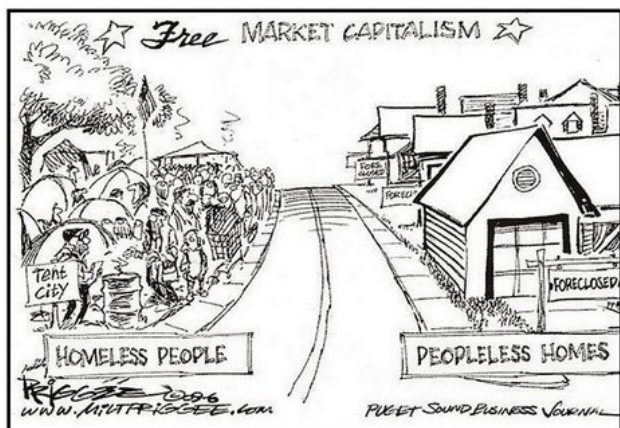
We need to support and expand small business, which is actually the largest employer in the nation. (Currently there are about 2.5 million small businesses employing roughly 5 million people, which is over two-thirds of our workforce).

Small business, education, infrastructure, innovation — these are the things we can rely on. These are things that have treated us well and, unlike our fair weather friends at Ford, they are with us for the long haul.

So what can we do to ensure we still have a life if the multinationals bleed us dry and desert us?

We can vote with an eye to education, infrastructure and future technology.

We can buy from small businesses wherever we possibly can. Locally made, locally grown! Even if it means we sometimes pay a bit more, and get a bit less — at least we know our local shopkeeper will pay her taxes and spend her money in our communities (*not siphon off profits to overseas tax havens to fund the excesses of the 1%*).



No question, our Ford workers got a raw deal and they deserve better — but this has been coming for a long time and nothing was done to move production to more viable models. Ultimately, they were failed by the lack of vision, care and commitment of some very rich men in faraway offices.

Anyway, it's not the first time an international corporate giant has walked out on us – and it won't be the last – so why are we constantly bending over backwards for these so called "titans of industry"?

Small business may not be glamorous, but it's the backbone of our nation. It loves us, it supports us and, most importantly, it's committed to us.

So as I wave bye bye to Ford, I'm off to a spend some money with a local Aussie business.

Anyone care to join me?



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