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Middle Class Losing Economic Power, New Book **Unions Key to Challenging Price Gouging, Wage Cutting, and Personal Debt**

Minneapolis - Increasing corporate power in the marketplace is causing stagnant wages, increased cost of living, and massive debt for America's middle class, according to a new book by a University of Minnesota economist and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

Published shortly before Labor Day, *Middle Class: Union Made* (Itasca Books) by Dr. Richard Levins explains in a common sense style the importance of market power in a globalizing economy. Dr. Levins is a Professor Emeritus of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota. He is an award-winning author of books about policy and market power issues affecting the food system.

Dr. Levins writes, "All strategies that trade good jobs for cheap toasters eventually erode the market for the goods and services provided. A handful of hyper-wealthy individuals along with millions of people living on the economic edge are not the sound, stable market needed for growth. Only the middle class, with buying power widely distributed, can provide that."

"Dr. Levins' book lays out how farmers, workers and consumers all have lost ground in the marketplace," said Jim Harkness, President of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. "Dr. Levins' insights must be part of the debate about how to build a long-term, sustainable global economy."

Dr. Levins writes, "The ideas being used to justify free trade and deregulation of business, among other things, measure their age in centuries. The world of commerce has changed so much that these ideas, while as brilliant as ever, no longer match the conditions for which they were developed."

Speaking on CNN's In the Money program last month, Dr. Levins explained, "In the past, we've had unions that were strong enough and when there was a little extra to be made out there, the unions would make sure some of that came back to the middle class in terms of solid wages and benefits. We're losing that now. We're losing that to an ownership society and trickle down economics, things that may benefit the very wealthy, but the evidence is very clear are not helping the middle class."

For journalists, contact Ben Lilliston (ben@iatp.org, 612-870-3416) for a review copy. To order copies, go to: <http://www.itascabooks.com>.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works globally to promote resilient family farms, communities and ecosystems through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.