

How to kick-start the economy

The general situation of our country

How to promote an economic revival is the problem that is tormenting the current Renzi government, just as it tormented many of the governments that preceded it.

The reason is rather simple: promoting a recovery of employment calls for very innovative competences, such as favouring research and liberalising labour and product markets from unnecessary bureaucratic constraints.

Italy is lagging behind with reforms that have enabled the revival of all those countries (including European ones) that acted sooner. There is no collaboration between the main players: politicians continue with their sterile, destructive polemic, which serves only to stop any attempt to recovery. Similarly, professional associations and trade unions are ready to cooperate only when the innovations do not affect their current privileges or balance, to defend them, they will not hesitate to carry out actions that will damage the entire country. It is difficult to make any forecasts, for the moment Renzi's decisional ability is winning, although opposed, first of all, by a past that lingers in the present, kept alive but defeatists who have lost their power.

The common good

If all the parties involved realised that it is possible to find an agreement and push together in the same direction, our problems could be solved. Everyone should drop their weapons and work for the common good.

Federico Pedrocchi, business journalist for Sole 24 Ore, writes in his book "Parole per il futuro" ("Words for the future") that important recent events can help us to understand the meaning of common good. Let me quote from his book: "How many people were stunned at finding out that an entire nation can be attacked by a patrol of financial operators who, on board a computer, shift colossal amounts of Euro, Dollars, Yen, ignoring the fate of hundreds of millions of people? It is difficult to find an example of an activity that is more antithetical to the concept of common good. Europe must defend itself from speculation: it is objectively a paradoxical event."

In Italy, the author adds "we have had an experience of great value, in this sense, that of Olivetti, a company that placed great importance on the internal relations between management and employees, as well as on the relations with the local community. However, oversimplification should be avoided: the common good is also a great antidote against a kind of localism that instead of spreading a culture of sharing has generated a lot of aggressiveness". The common good does not stop inside a company or a community: it is a value that goes beyond the borders of a nation. Instead of perceiving this as a competition, we should feel in collaboration with every country in the world. In this sense, globalization can be of help to us.

Commitment and good will of everyone

To overcome the current crisis we cannot wait for national or international aid. Whilst defending ourselves from overly harsh policies that consider productivity only an economic financial fact, we have to endeavour to adapt our companies to the current state of technology. The industry must stop producing durable goods and consumables with outdated designs and methods. Only modern technology allows us to produce goods with new performance levels, more

CATTANI S.p.A.

Via Natta, 6/A — 43122 Parma — Italy — Tel. +39 0521 607604

SALE DEPT. FAX: +39 0521 607628 — PURCHASING DEPT. FAX: +39 0521 607855.

ACCOUNTING DEPT. FAX: +39 0521 399966.

<http://www.cattani.it> Email: info@cattani.it Certified mail: cattani@peclife.it

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Econ. Adm. Reg. 173616
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flexible, more compact and with characteristics of ecological sustainability.

The least innovative productions can still find commercial outlets in developing countries, but they have no hope of future growth.

Doing research

Doing research and keeping abreast of the times is not an impossible undertaking reserved to factories and large production units. Often research is also within the reach of small and medium sized companies, it is a matter of good will: you devote a part of the company's financial resources to innovation and assign the responsibility to one or more engineers chosen among the most capable and committed. If necessary assistance can be sought from external firms or suitably equipped university departments, or firms linked to industry associations. An ambitious but not impossible plan is made and then work can be started. Step by step production is improved and perseverance will lead to advancement.

One could argue that there are few resources, that the crisis makes this kind of initiative impossible. We cannot close up and passively wait for better times, it would mean losing more time and making the situation worse. We have dealt with other crises, we kept a stiff upper lip and never gave up. A sea captain who is sailing through a storm cannot be discouraged and leave the ship; a sports person experiencing difficulties will not quit sport, you can lose a match but you do not withdraw.

The spirit of service

Running a company is a service that you do to people, who draw their family's livelihood from that work. Those who work in a company are doing a service to the local community and to their country. The common good of a community or of an entire country, depends also on its production units. A company cannot solve a country's problem on its own, but a group of companies joined by the same desire to work towards the common good, can have an influence.

The honesty of a politician and of government members, the commitment of business people, the good will of employees, the spirit of service needed from everyone, are not outdated ideas, it is not a simplistic concept, it is a concrete method used by good-willed people who have achieved important things in many sectors.

I would also like to quote Gunter Pauli from Blue Economy (Edizioni Ambiente, 2010, page 59)

□A prosperous economy is essential for sustainability, but the opposite is also true. Without true sustainability, no kind of economy can continue to work". Today we have many reflections and projects, and also precise guidelines to change existing technologies and apply new ones, with the aim of reducing waste.

The future will bring greater moderation in lifestyles and production, it will be an inevitable direction for everyone.

I wish you all success in your work,
Augusto Cattani

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