

# REPORT SUMMARY

A BETTER WORLD  
IS POSSIBLE!



## ALTERNATIVES TO ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

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SUMMARY OF AN UPCOMING REPORT  
BY THE ALTERNATIVES COMMITTEE OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON GLOBALIZATION

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CHAPTER OUTLINE OF  
FULL REPORT (DUE SPRING 2002)

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INTRODUCTION	4
A. Global Resistance	
B. Different Worlds	
C. Transformational Imperative	
Box A. Commentary: Conflicting Paradigms (Khor)	
D. Economic Democracy	
E. Global Governance	
F. Building Momentum	
I. CRITIQUE OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION	6
A. Key Ingredients and General Effects	
1. Pillars of Globalization	
Box B. National Laws as Impediments to Free Trade (Mander)	
Box C. Export-Oriented Production: Intrinsic Negative Consequences (Mander)	
2. Beneficiaries of Globalization	
Box D. Global Economic Apartheid (Broad, Cavanagh)	
B. Bureaucratic Expressions of Globalization	
1. World Bank	
2. International Monetary Fund	
Box E. Argentina (Anderson)	
3. World Trade Organization	
Box F. Effects on the Third World (Bello)	
C. Conclusions	
II. TEN PRINCIPLES FOR DEMOCRATIC AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES	8
A. New Democracy	
B. Subsidiarity	
C. Ecological Sustainability	
Box G. Sustainable Chile (Larrain)	
D. Common Heritage	
E. Human Rights	
F. Jobs/Livelihood/Employment	
G. Food Security/Food Safety	
H. Equity	
I. Diversity	
Box H. Cultural Diversity (Barlow)	
J. Precautionary Principle	
Box I. Canada: Citizens' Agenda (Clarke)	

III. ISSUES ON COMMODIFICATION OF THE COMMONS	10
A. The Tradition of “The Commons”	
1. Europe	
2. Indigenous Peoples	
Box J. Living Alternatives (Corpuz)	
3. Asia	
Box K. No Patents on Life Forms (Shiva)	
4. Global Commons vs. National/Local Commons	
B. The “Modern Commons”	
1. Duty of Governments in the Modern World	
2. Basic Human Rights: Economic and Political	
3. Intrinsic Rights of Nature	
4. Against Commodification of Basic Services	
C. An Affirmative Agenda	
IV. THE CASE FOR SUBSIDIARITY:	12
BIAS AWAY FROM THE GLOBAL TOWARD THE LOCAL	
A. Understanding Subsidiarity	
B. The Road to the Local	
C. Focus on Investment and Finance Issues	
1. Capital	
2. Taxation	
3. New Rules on Investment	
D. Critiques of Localization and Subsidiarity	
V. REIGNING IN CORPORATE POWER	14
A. Addressing Corporate Power	
1. Corporate Responsibility	
2. Corporate Accountability	
3. Corporate Removal	
4. Corporate Re-chartering	
5. Corporate Restructuring	
6. Corporate Dismantling	
B. Tackling Corporate-State Collusion	
1. Eliminate Corporate Welfare, Special Corporate Rights, and the Mechanisms by Which Corporations Exert Influence over Public Policy	
2. Policies to Rebuild Economies Responsive to Human Needs	
VI. ALTERNATIVE OPERATING SYSTEMS:	15
ENERGY, AGRICULTURE, TRANSPORT, AND MANUFACTURING	
A. Energy Systems	
1. The Promise of Alternative Energy Systems	
B. Transportation Systems	
1. Subsidies	
2. The Private Car	
3. Ecocities	

- Box L. Curitiba, Brazil (Retallack)
- C. Agriculture and Food Systems
  - 1. Actions and Policies Toward Alternative Solutions
    - Box M. Cuban Organic Agriculture (Retallack)
- D. Manufacturing Systems

## VII. FROM BRETTON WOODS TOWARD ALTERNATIVES

18

- A. Unify Global Governance Under a Restructured United Nations
- B. Weaken or Dismantle Bretton Woods Institutions
  - 1. The WTO: Reform or Reject?
  - 2. World Bank and IMF
- C. Strengthen the Countervailing Powers of Other International Organizations
  - Box M. Alternative Policies for Southern Economies (Khor)
- D. New Global Institutions
  - 1. Create an International Insolvency Court
  - 2. Create an International Finance Organization
  - 3. Create Regional Monetary Funds
  - 4. Replace the WTO
  - 5. Create an Organization for Corporate Accountability

## CONCLUSIONS

Bibliography/Resources

Notes

*In January 1999, the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) initiated a process to define alternatives to the current model of corporate globalization. Over the past three years, some two dozen of our board members and key associates have held regular meetings to discuss and prepare drafts of crucial ingredients of viable alternative systems. This document is an executive summary of a 250-page document that represents the present status of this process.*

*The final report, which will be published in spring 2002, offers a broad menu of viable options that are consistent with a new set of operating principles for international society. The principles and proposals are not meant as final arguments for any specific system. Our plan is to distribute the document among the many thousands of citizen and public policy groups on all continents that are engaged in these issues.*

*We will then begin a three-year process that will include meetings in every region among interested groups to further refine these ideas, expand and/or modify them for local conditions, seek general consensus on as many points as possible, and then republish a new document that may also include clear and more specific steps to take us from here to there. We welcome all responses.*

*The following are summaries of the upcoming full version of the IFG's alternative report.*

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

**A. Global Resistance** Society is at a crucial crossroads. A peaceful, equitable and sustainable future depends on the outcome of escalating conflicts between two competing visions: one corporate, one democratic. The schism has been caught by media images and stories accompanying recent meetings of global bureaucracies like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and numerous other gatherings of corporate and economic elites, such as the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, (although in 2002 it will meet in New York City).

Over the past five to ten years, millions of people have taken to the streets in India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Bolivia, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, France, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Spain, Sweden, England, New Zealand, Australia, Kenya, South Africa, Thailand, Malaysia and elsewhere in massive demonstrations against the institutions and policies of corporate globalization. All too often the corporate media have done more to mislead than to inform the public on the issues behind the protests. Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times* foreign affairs columnist, is typical of journalists who characterize the demonstrators as "ignorant protectionists" who offer no alternatives and are unworthy of serious attention.

The claim that the protestors have no alternatives is as false as the claims that they are anti-poor, xenophobic, anti-trade, and have no analysis. In addition to countless books, periodicals, conferences, and individual articles and presentations setting forth alternatives, numerous consensus statements have been carefully crafted by civil society groups over the past two decades that set forth a wealth of alternatives

with a striking convergence in their beliefs about the underlying values human societies can and should serve. Such consensus statements include a collection of citizen treaties drafted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 by the 18,000 representatives of global civil society who met in parallel to the official meetings of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). A subsequent initiative produced The Earth Charter, scheduled for ratification by the UN General Assembly in 2002 — the product of a global process that involved thousands of people. In 2001 and 2002, tens of thousands more gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, for the first annual World Social Forum on the theme “Another World Is Possible” to carry forward this process of popular consensus building toward a world that works for all.

***B. Different Worlds*** The corporate globalists who meet in posh gatherings to chart the course of corporate globalization in the name of private profits, and the citizen movements who organize to thwart them in the name of democracy and diversity are separated by deep differences in values, world view, and definitions of progress. At times it seems they must be living in wholly different worlds — which in many respects they are.

Corporate globalists inhabit a world of power and privilege. They see progress everywhere because from their vantage point the drive to privatize public assets and free the market from governmental interference appears to be spreading freedom and prosperity throughout the world, improving the lives of people everywhere, and creating the financial and material wealth necessary to end poverty and protect the environment. They see themselves as champions of an inexorable and beneficial historical process toward erasing the economic and political borders that hinder corporate expansion, eliminating the tyranny of inefficient and meddling public bureaucracies, and unleashing the enormous innovation and wealth-creating power of competition and private enterprise.

Citizen movements see a starkly different reality. Focused on people and the environment, they see a world in deepening crisis of such magnitude as to threaten the fabric of civilization and the survival of the species — a world of rapidly growing inequality, erosion of relationships of trust, and failing planetary life support systems. Where corporate globalists see the spread of democracy and vibrant market economies, citizen movements see the power to govern shifting away from people and communities to financial speculators and global corporations dedicated to the pursuit of short-term profit. They see corporations replacing democracies of people with democracies of money, self-organizing markets with centrally planned corporate economies, and diverse ethical cultures with cultures of greed and materialism.

***C. Transformational Imperative*** In a world in which a few enjoy unimaginable wealth, 200 million children under five are underweight due to a lack of food. Fourteen million children die each year from hunger-related disease. A hundred million children are living or working on the streets. Three hundred thousand children were conscripted as soldiers during the 1990s and six million were injured in armed conflicts. Eight hundred million people go to bed hungry each night. Human activity — most particularly fossil fuel combustion is estimated to have increased atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide to their highest levels in 20 million years. According to the WorldWatch Institute, natural disasters — including weather related disasters such as storms, floods, and fires — affected more than two billion people and caused in excess of \$608 billion in economic losses worldwide during the decade of the 1990s — more than the previous four decades combined.

***D. Economic Democracy*** Humanity has reached the limits of an era of centralized institutional power and control. The global corporation, the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank are structured to concen-

trate power in the hands of ruling elites shielded from public accountability. They represent an outmoded, undemocratic, inefficient and ultimately destructive way of organizing human affairs that is as out of step with the needs and values of healthy, sustainable and democratic societies as the institution of monarchy. The current and future well being of humanity depends on transforming the relationships of power within and between human societies toward more democratic and mutually accountable modes of managing human affairs that are self-organizing, power-sharing, and minimize the need for coercive central authority.

**E. Global Governance** The concern for local self-reliance and self-determination have important implications for global governance. For example, in a self-reliant and localized system the primary authority to set and enforce rules must rest with the national and local governments of the jurisdictions to which they apply. The proper role of global institutions is to facilitate the cooperative coordination of national policies on matters where the interests of nations are inherently intertwined — as with action on global warming.

**F. Building Momentum** Growing public consciousness of the pervasive abuse of corporate power has fueled the growth of a powerful opposition movement with an increasingly impressive list of achievements. Unified by a deep commitment to universal values of democracy, justice, and respect for life this alliance functions with growing effectiveness without a central organization, charismatic leader, or defining ideology — taking different forms in different settings.

In India, popular movements seek to empower local people through the democratic community control of resources under the banner of a million strong Living Democracy Movement (*Jai Panchayat*). In Canada, hundreds of organizations have joined in alliance to articulate a Citizens' Agenda that seeks to wrest control of governmental institutions back away from corporations. In Chile, coalitions of environmental groups have created a powerful Sustainable Chile (*Sustenable Chile*) movement that seeks to reverse Chile's drift toward neoliberalism and re-assert popular democratic control over national priorities and resources. The focus in Brazil is on the rights of the poor and landless. In Bolivia it takes the form of a mass movement of peasants and workers who have successfully blocked the privatization of water. In Mexico, the Mayan people have revived the spirit of Zapata in a movement to confirm the rights of indigenous people to land and resources. Farmers in France have risen up in revolt against trade rules that threaten to destroy small farms. The construction of new highways in England has brought out hundreds of thousands of people who oppose this desecration of the countryside in response to globalization's relentless demand for ever more high speed transport.

These are only a few examples of the popular initiatives and actions in defense of democratic rights that are emerging all around the world. Together these many initiatives are unleashing ever more of the creative energy of humanity toward building cooperative systems of sustainable societies that work for all.

## CHAPTER I CRITIQUE OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

The alternatives offered in this report grow from the widespread damage inflicted by economic globalization over the past five centuries as it passed from colonialism and imperialism through post-colonial, export-led development models. The driving force of economic globalization since World War II has been several hundred large private corporations and banks that have increasingly woven webs of produc-

tion, consumption, finance, and culture across borders. Indeed, today most of what we eat, drink, wear, drive, and entertain ourselves with is the product of globe-girdling corporations.

**A. Key Ingredients and General Effects** Economic globalization (sometimes referred to as corporate-led globalization), features several key ingredients:

- ▲ Corporate deregulation and the unrestricted movement of capital;
- ▲ Privatization and commodification of public services, and remaining aspects of the global and community commons, such as bulk water and genetic resources;
- ▲ Integration and conversion of national economies (including some that were largely self-reliant) to environmentally and socially harmful export-oriented production;
- ▲ Promotion of hyper-growth and unrestricted exploitation of the planet's resources to fuel the growth;
- ▲ Dramatically increased corporate concentration;
- ▲ Undermining of national social, health and environmental programs;
- ▲ Erosion of traditional powers and policies of democratic nation-states and local communities by global corporate bureaucracies;
- ▲ Global cultural homogenization, and the intensive promotion of unbridled consumerism.

*1. Pillars of Globalization:* The first tenet of economic globalization, as now designed, is the need to integrate and merge all economic activity of all countries within a single, homogenized model of development; a single centralized system. A second tenet of the globalization design is that primary importance is given to the achievement of ever more rapid, and never ending corporate economic growth — hyper growth — fueled by the constant search for access to natural resources, new and cheaper labor sources, and new markets. A third tenet concerns privatization and commodification of as many traditionally non-commodified nooks and crannies of existence as possible — seeds and genes for example. A fourth important tenet of economic globalization is its strong emphasis on a global conversion to export-oriented production and trade as an economic and social nirvana.

*2. Beneficiaries of Globalization:* The actual beneficiaries of this model have become all too obvious. In the United States, for example, we know that during the period of the most rapid globalization, top corporate executives of the largest global companies have been making salaries and options in the many millions of dollars, often in the hundreds of millions, while real wages of ordinary workers have been declining. The Institute for Policy Studies reports that American CEOs are now paid, on average, 517 times more than production workers, with that rate increasing yearly. The Economic Policy Institute's 1999 report says that median hourly wages are actually down by 10 percent in real wages over the last 25 years. As for lifting the global poor, the U.N. Development Program's 1999 *Human Development Report* indicated that the gap between the wealthy and the poor within and among countries of the world is getting steadily larger, and it named inequities in the global trade system as being one of the key factors.

**B. Bureaucratic Expressions of Globalization** Creating a world that works for all must begin with an effort to undo the enormous damage inflicted by the corporate globalization policies that so badly distort economic relationships among people and countries. The thrust of those policies is perhaps most dramatically revealed in the structural adjustment programs imposed on low and intermediate income countries by the IMF and the World Bank — two institutions that bear responsibility for enormous social and environmental devastation and human suffering. Structural adjustment requires governments to:

- ▲ Cut government spending on education, healthcare, the environment, and price subsidies for basic necessities such as food grains, and cooking oils in favor of servicing foreign debt.

- ▲ Devalue the national currency and increase exports by accelerating the plunder of natural resources, reducing real wages, and subsidizing export-oriented foreign investments.
- ▲ Liberalize financial markets to attract speculative short-term portfolio investments that create enormous financial instability and foreign liabilities while serving little, if any, useful purpose.
- ▲ Increase interest rates to attract foreign speculative capital, thereby increasing bankruptcies of domestic businesses and imposing new hardships on indebted individuals.
- ▲ Eliminate tariffs, quotas and other controls on imports, thereby increasing the import of consumer goods purchased with borrowed foreign exchange, undermining local industry and agricultural producers unable to compete with cheap imports, which increases the strain on foreign exchange accounts, and deepening external indebtedness.

The World Bank and the IMF, along with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO) are together known as the Bretton Woods institutions — the collective product of agreements reached at an international gathering held in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in July, 1944, to create an institutional framework for the post-World War II global economy.

**C. *Conclusions*** The Bretton Woods institutions have a wholly distorted view of economic progress and relationships. Their embrace of unlimited expansion of trade and foreign investment as measures of economic progress suggests that they consider the most advanced state of development to be one in which all productive assets are owned by foreign corporations producing for export; the currency that facilitates day-to-day transactions is borrowed from foreign banks; education and health services are operated by global corporations on a for-profit, fee-for-service basis; and most that people consume is imported. When placed in such stark terms, the absurdity of the “neoliberal” ideology of the Bretton Woods institutions becomes obvious. It also becomes clear who such policies serve. Rather than enhance the life of people and planet, they consolidate and secure the wealth and power of a small corporate elite, the only evident beneficiaries, at the expense of humanity and nature. In the following section, we outline the principles of alternative systems that posit democracy and rights as the means toward sustainable communities, dignified work, and a healthy environment.

## CHAPTER II TEN PRINCIPLES FOR DEMOCRATIC AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

The current organizing principles of the institutions that govern the global economy are narrow and serve the few at the expense of the many and the environment. Yet, it is within our collective ability to create healthy, sustainable societies that work for all. The time has come to make that possibility a reality. Sustainable societies are rooted in certain core principles. The following ten core principles have been put forward in various combinations in citizen programs that are emerging around the world.

**A. *New Democracy*** The rallying cry of the amazing diversity of civil society that converged in Seattle in late 1999 was the simple word “democracy.” Democracy flourishes when people organize to protect their communities and rights and hold their elected officials accountable. For the past two decades, global corporations and global bureaucracies have grabbed much of the power once held by governments. We advocate a shift from governments serving corporations to governments serving people and communities, a process that is easier at the local level but vital at all levels of government.

**B. Subsidiarity** Economic globalization results first, and foremost, in de-localization and disempowerment of communities and local economies. It is therefore necessary to reverse direction and create new rules and structures that consciously favor the local, and follow the principle of subsidiarity, i.e., whatever decisions and activities can be undertaken locally should be. Whatever power can reside at the local level should reside there. Only when additional activity is required that cannot be satisfied locally, should power and activity move to the next higher level: region, nation, and finally the world.

**C. Ecological Sustainability** Economic activity needs to be ecologically sustainable. It should enable us to meet humans' genuine needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs, and without diminishing the natural diversity of life on Earth or the viability of the planet's natural life-support systems.

**D. Common Heritage** There exist common heritage resources that should constitute a collective birth-right of the whole species to be shared equitably among all. We assert that there are three categories of such resources. The first consists of the shared natural heritage of the water, land, air, forests, and fisheries on which our lives depend. These physical resources are in finite supply, essential to life, and existed long before any human. A second category includes the heritage of culture and knowledge that is the collective creation of our species. Finally, basic public services relating to health, education, public safety, and social security are "modern" common heritage resources representing the collective efforts of whole societies. They are also as essential to life in modern societies as are air and water. Justice therefore demands that they be readily available to all who need them. Any attempt by persons or corporations to monopolize ownership control of an essential common heritage resource for exclusive private gain to the exclusion of the needs of others is morally unconscionable and politically unacceptable.

**E. Human Rights** In 1948, governments of the world came together to adopt the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which established certain core rights, such as "a standard of living adequate for ...health and well-being..., including food, clothing, housing and medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment." Traditionally, most of the human rights debate in the United States and other rich nations has focused on civil and political rights as paramount. We believe that it is the duty of governments to ensure these rights, but also to guarantee the economic, social and cultural rights of all people.

**F. Jobs/Livelihood/Employment** A livelihood is a means of living. The right to a means of livelihood is therefore the most basic of all human rights. Sustainable societies must both protect the rights of workers in the formal sector and address the livelihood needs of the larger share of people who subsist in what has become known as the non-material, or "informal sector" (including small-scale, indigenous, and artisanal activities) as well as those who have no work or are seriously underemployed. Empowering workers to organize for basic rights and fair wages is vital to curb footloose corporations that pit workers against each other in a lose-lose race to the bottom. And, the reversal of globalization policies that displace small farmers from their land and fisherfolk from their coastal ecosystems are central to the goal of a world where all can live and work in dignity.

**G. Food Security and Food Safety** Communities and nations are stable and secure when people have enough food, particularly when nations can produce their own food. People also want safe food, a commodity that is increasingly scarce as global agribusiness firms spread chemical- and biotech-intensive agriculture around the world.

**H. Equity** Economic globalization, under the current rules, has widened the gap between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor within most countries. The resulting social dislocation and tension are among the greatest threats to peace and security the world over. Greater equity both among nations and within them would reinforce both democracy and sustainable communities. Reducing the growing gap between rich and poor nations requires first and foremost the cancellation of the illegitimate debts of poor countries. And, it requires the replacement of the current institutions of global governance with new ones that include global fairness among their operating principles.

**I. Diversity** A few decades ago, it was still possible to leave home and go somewhere else where the architecture was different, the landscape was different, the language, lifestyle, food, dress, and values were different. Today, farmers and filmmakers in France and India, indigenous communities worldwide, and millions of people elsewhere, are protesting to maintain that diversity. Tens of thousands of communities around the world have perfected local resource management systems that work, but they are now being undermined by corporate-led globalization. Cultural, biological, social, and economic diversity are central to a viable, dignified, and healthy life.

**J. Precautionary Principle** All activity should abide by the precautionary principle. When a practice or product raises potentially significant threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary action should be taken to restrict or ban it even if scientific uncertainty remains about whether or how it is actually causing that harm. Because it can take years for scientific proof of harm to be established — during which time undesirable or irreversible effects may continue to be inflicted — the proponents of a practice or product should bear the burden of proving that it is safe, before it is implemented.

### CHAPTER III ISSUES ON COMMODIFICATION OF THE COMMONS

This section grapples with one of the most pioneering yet difficult arenas in the alternatives dialogue: the question of whether certain goods and services should not be traded or subject to trade agreements, patents or commodification. Lengthy discussions among IFG members have clarified a lot of issues, but discussion is ongoing. The section will lay out the categories of goods and services that the drafters believe should be subject to different kinds of restrictions in global economic commerce: goods that come from the global or local commons, and goods which fulfill basic rights and needs. The section will then offer categories of proposed restrictions.



In a world where many resources have already been over-exploited and seriously depleted, there is constant pressure by global corporations and the public bureaucracies that serve them to privatize and monopolize the full range of common heritage resources from water to genetic codes that have thus far remained off limits to commodification and management as corporate profit centers. Indeed, the more essential the good or service in question to the maintenance of life, the greater its potential for generating monopoly profits and the more attractive its ownership and control becomes to global corporations.

Water, a commonly shared, irreplaceable, and fundamental requirement for the survival of all life, is a leading example. Everywhere around the world, global corporations are seeking to consolidate their

ownership and monopoly control of the fresh water resources of rivers, lakes and streams for promotion as an export commodity — like computer memory or car tires. The rules of many new trade agreements directly assist this commodification process.

Another formerly pristine area — one that most human beings had never thought could or ought to be a commodity bought and sold for corporate profits — is the genetic structure of living beings, including humans, which is now falling rapidly within the control of “life science” industries (biotechnology), and coming increasingly under the purview of global trade agreements. A third area concerns indigenous knowledge of plant varieties, seeds, products of the forest, medicinal herbs, and biodiversity itself, which has been vital in successfully sustaining traditional societies for millennia. A fourth area is bioprospecting currently underway by global corporations seeking genetic materials from the skin and other body parts among native peoples. Several of these latter areas, and others, are subject to patenting (monopoly control) by large global corporations, protected under the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) of the WTO and a similar North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) chapter. The net result of these new corporate protections and rights over formerly non-commodified biological materials is to make it costly, difficult or impossible for agricultural or indigenous communities to avail themselves of biological resources that they formerly freely enjoyed.

Parallel to such efforts at privatizing and commodifying areas of the global commons is the tremendous effort to privatize and commodify as many public services that were once taken care of within communities and then performed by local, state and national governments on behalf of all people. These services may address such basic needs as public health and hospital care; public education; public safety and protection; welfare and social security; water delivery and purity; sanitation; public broadcasting, museums and national cultural expressions; food safety systems; and prisons. While these areas may not have been traditionally defined as part of “the commons,” in the same way as water, land, air, forests, pasture or other natural expressions of the earth that have been freely shared within communities for millennia, in the modern world these public services have nonetheless been generally understood to fall within the vital fundamental rights and needs of citizens living in any nominally successful, responsible society.

If the corporate globalists have their way in negotiations at the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the WTO, or within the FTAA, the way will be cleared for many of these essential services to move directly into the hands of global corporations to be operated as corporate profit centers accountable only to the interests of their shareholders. As with corporatized healthcare in the United States, the rich may be well served, but the vast majority of people will be unsatisfied, overcharged, or abandoned.

In the view of the drafters of this document, this process of privatizing, monopolizing, and commodifying common heritage resources and turning public services into corporate profit centers and the protection of this process within global trade agreements, must be halted at once. There is an appropriate place for private ownership and markets to play in the management, allocation, and delivery of certain common heritage resources, as for example land, within a framework of effective democratically accountable public regulation that guarantees fair pricing, equitable access, quality, and public stewardship. There is no rightful place in any public body, process, or international agreement to facilitate the unaccountable private monopolization of common heritage resources and public services essential to life or to otherwise exclude any person from equitable access to such essential resources and services.

CHAPTER IV  
THE CASE FOR SUBSIDIARITY:  
BIAS AWAY FROM THE GLOBAL TOWARD THE LOCAL

It is the major conceit or gamble of the corporate globalists that by removing economic control from the places where it has traditionally resided — in nations, states, sub-regions, communities or indigenous societies — and placing that control into absentee authorities that operate globally via giant corporations and bureaucracies, that all levels of society will benefit. As we have seen, this is not true, and it is a principal reason why so many millions of people are angrily protesting.

The central modus operandi of the globalization model is to delocalize all controls over economic and political activity; a systematic, complete appropriation on the powers, decisions, options and functions that through prior history were fulfilled by the community, region or state. When sovereign powers are finally removed from the local and put into distant bureaucracies, local politics must also be redesigned to conform to the rules and practices of distant bureaucracies. Communities and nations that formerly operated in a relatively self-reliant manner, in the interests of their own peoples, are converted into unwilling subjects of this much larger, undemocratic, unaccountable global structure.

If democracy is based upon the idea that people must participate in the great decisions affecting their lives, then the system we find today of moving basic life decisions to distant venues of centralized, international institutions, which display a disregard for democratic participation, openness, accountability, and transparency, brings the death of democracy. We have reached the end of the road for that process. It's time to change directions.

***A. Understanding Subsidiarity*** As globalization is the intractable problem, then logically a turn toward the local is inevitable; a reinvigoration of the conditions by which local communities regain the powers to determine and control their economic and political paths. Instead of shaping all systems to conform to a global model that emphasizes specialization of production, comparative advantage, export-oriented growth, monoculture, and homogenization of economic, cultural and political forms under the direction of transnational corporate institutions, we must reshape our institutions to favor exactly the opposite.

The operating principle for this turnaround is the concept of subsidiarity, i.e., favoring the local whenever a choice exists. In practice this means that all decisions should be made at the lowest level of governing authority competent to deal with it. Global health crises and global pollution issues often require cooperative international decisions. But most economic, cultural and political decisions should not be international; they should be made at the national, regional or local levels, depending on what they are. Power should be encouraged to evolve downward, not upward. Decisions should constantly move closer to the people most affected by them.

Economic systems should favor local production and markets rather than invariably being designed to serve long distance trade. This means shortening the length of lines for economic activity: fewer food miles; fewer oil supply miles; fewer travel-to-work miles. Technologies should also be chosen that best serve local control, rather than mega-technologies that operate globally.

***B. The Road to the Local*** Localization attempts to reverse the trend toward the global by discriminating actively in favor of the local in all policies. Depending on the context, the “local” is defined as a sub-

grouping within a nation-state; it can also be the nation-state itself or occasionally a regional grouping of nation-states. The overall idea is for power to devolve to the lowest unit appropriate for a particular goal.

Policies that bring about localization are ones that increase democratic control of the economy by communities and/or nation-states, taking it back from global institutions that have appropriated them: bureaucracies and global corporations. These may enable nations, local governments and communities to reclaim their economies; to make them as diverse as possible; and to rebuild stability into community life — to achieve a maximum self-reliance nationally and regionally in a way that ensures sustainable forms of development.

Moving in the direction of localization will require changes in the assumptions of industrial society, and will also require a long time and many steps. But to get our thinking started, we mention only a few points:

- ▲ Reintroduction of protective safeguards that have traditionally been used to protect domestic (local) economies, and to aid local economic renewal.
- ▲ Changes in subsidy policy to favor vital local enterprises such as small-scale organic agriculture for local markets, small-scale energy and transportation infrastructures.
- ▲ New controls on corporate activity, including a “site here to sell here” policy for manufacturing, banking and other services, whether domestic or regional.
- ▲ Grounding capital and investment within the community; profits made locally remain primarily local.
- ▲ Major changes in taxation policies such as increases on resource taxes for extraction and depletion of natural capital like forests, water, minerals; and the introduction of pollution taxes.
- ▲ Increased direct public participation in policy making to help ensure equity and diversity of viewpoint.
- ▲ Re-orientation of international aid and trade rules and the domestic policies that influence those changes so that they contribute to the rebuilding of local rather than global economies.
- ▲ New competition policies such that global corporations lose access to local markets unless they conform to all local investment rules.

***C. Focus on Investment and Finance Issues*** Perhaps the most crucial issue concerning the viability of a local economic system is how to channel investment capital into productive investments while preventing a loss of local control to foreign owners and the economic disruption created by massive unregulated flows of speculative money through international currency markets. It is important to bear in mind that productive capital includes the natural capital of healthy forests, fertile soils, and clean rivers, and the social capital of relationships of trust and cooperation. Too often conventional measures of economic performance such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) create an illusion of growing prosperity even as a country is depleting its real capital and mortgaging its future to foreign bankers to finance luxury imports for the rich and military armaments to keep the poor in check.

- ▲ Capital: Every country must provide a framework of rules for both foreign and domestic finance to direct resources to areas of productive investment need and to limit predatory speculative extraction. To this end, communities are encouraged to explore a range of options, including: the reintroduction of exchange controls; re-regulation of banks and finance institutions so that far greater advantages are achieved through local investment than flight; introduction of very high “speed bumps” that penalize investors who move money from one asset to another with no contribution to useful productive output.

***D. Critiques of Localization and Subsidiarity*** Critics of localization fear it may bring local threats to human rights or encourage autocracy. Of course subsidiarity is no guarantee of democracy or rights, but makes them far more likely, as smaller communities offer much greater access to sources of power. On the other hand, corporate globalization is intrinsically centralized, undemocratic and destructive to community viability and democracy. In any case, the area of human rights is one in which international agreements may continue to play a useful role. Other criticisms include loss of competitive stimuli, threats to benefits from markets, encouragement of "protectionism," etc. All are discussed at length in the full document.

## CHAPTER V REIGNING IN CORPORATE POWER

Any citizens' agenda for transforming the global economy must be rooted in a plan of action for dealing with global corporations. By the onset of the new century, the combined sales of the world's top 200 corporations exceeded a quarter of all countries' measured economic activity. And, if one listed the top 100 economic units on the planet, 51 are corporations and only 49 are countries.

***A. Opposing Corporate Power*** There are six strategic options for taking on corporate power, ranging from more reformist ones to more transformative ones:

*Corporate Responsibility:* One of the longest standing strategies has been what is frequently called the "corporate responsibility" movement. The prime objective is to make corporations operate in a more socially responsible manner, often in relation to specific environmental, labor and human rights issues. In the past, this strategy has made use of shareholder action tactics. Similarly, the United Nations Global Compact, launched in 2000, whereby a number of transnational corporations in various sectors of the global economy were invited to sign a set of nine guidelines, was an exercise in promoting voluntary corporate social responsibility. (Many people fear, however, that the compact has undermined UN social and ecological responsibility.)

*Corporate Accountability:* Closely related are strategies for corporate accountability. The objective here is to make corporations operate in a more publicly or democratically accountable manner in society at large. Often, these strategies are pursued through legislative initiatives that seek to ensure that U.S. corporations, for example, act in a more publicly accountable manner through their overseas operations by establishing standards along with some enforcement mechanisms. The standards could include: the payment of a living wage to workers; bans on mandatory overtime for workers under 18, and pregnancy testing; and retaliation against whistle blowers; respect for basic International Labor Organization (ILO) standards such as right to unionize, and health and safety protections.

*Corporate Removal:* Some activists have also developed the strategic action capacity to rid their communities of unwanted transnational corporations. In India, for example, communities have developed a significant track record in removing corporations that abuse workers, cultural integrity, or natural resources. Similar movements have succeeded in the Philippines.

*Corporate Re-chartering:* In some countries, notably the United States, citizens are now reclaiming their right to participate in government decisions about whether or not specific corporations should be granted the authority or licence to operate.

*Corporate Restructuring:* Another strategic action option emphasizes the need to change the nature and structure of corporations today. Here, a prime target is the existence of "limited liability" laws.

*Corporate Dismantling:* Strategies are being developed to dismantle the corporation as it is presently constituted. Such strategies aim to eliminate the publicly traded, limited liability form of corporate

organization with a focus on: limiting size and mobility, eliminating publicly traded shares, and eliminating the limited liability provision as foremost destructive characteristics of the corporation. Many advocates would leave available a smaller range of other corporate forms, including various kinds of worker-owned and/or locally owned corporations that do not have obligations to absentee owners over all other stakeholders.

***B. Tackling Corporate-State Collusion*** If the objective is to dismantle corporate rule, then it is also imperative to develop strategies for confronting the corporate takeover of the state and the hijacking of democratic governance itself. A platform for alternatives to corporate globalization must include a plan of action for replacing corporate rule with effective forms of democratic governance. For most national civil society alliances, this will likely require a two-pronged program of action.

*1. Eliminate Corporate Welfare, Special Corporate Rights, and the Mechanisms by Which Corporations Exert Influence over Public Policy:* Corporate dominance of the political process not only deprives people of a meaningful voice, it also excludes a voice for the local businesses that public policy should seek to favor. While corporate executives have every right to participate in the political process as citizens, corporations themselves have no rightful place in a democratic political process except to the extent government officials or citizen groups may call on them for advisory input.

Appropriate initiatives include measures to:

- ▲ Eliminate all prevailing patterns of bribery and corruption;
- ▲ Impose tight rules on big business lobbying operations;
- ▲ Eliminate corporate welfare (e.g., subsidies), rights, and special exemptions;
- ▲ Establish the liability of corporate officers and shareholders for corporate wrong doing.

*2. Policies to Rebuild Economies Responsive to Human Needs:* As corporations have appropriated public policy to their own ends, national policy has come to favor global corporate interests over the national and local interests of people and communities. This process must be reversed. The policy process must respond to people and their needs and the priority of national policies must be to build national and local economic security for all. Necessary actions include limiting corporate mobility, strengthening local ownership and radically reforming systems of money and finance to end, or at least strictly limit, financial speculation, and restore the integrity of money.

## CHAPTER VI ALTERNATIVE OPERATING SYSTEMS: ENERGY, AGRICULTURE, TRANSPORT, AND MANUFACTURING

Before completing the discussion of alternative systems to the now dominant one, we must recognize that the problems reside not only in the bureaucracies and corporations that presently deprive citizens and nation-states of the abilities to act on our behalf. They are also exhibited as part of the fabric of the practical operations of society, especially in its most important overarching economic sectors:

- ▲ Energy systems
- ▲ Agriculture and foods systems
- ▲ Transportation systems
- ▲ Manufacturing systems

It should not be surprising that in almost every country each of these overarching sectors have adopted standards and forms of production and/or distribution that are anathema to the core principles we suggest should govern society. In fact, these operating systems as presently constituted are entirely compatible with the same fundamental values as the larger globalizing forces we have already described. They are all part of a single integrated structure that is the global economy, extended right down to our nations and communities.

**A. Energy Systems** There is no domain of global economic activity that does greater social, environmental and political harm than the presently dominant energy systems, from source to waste. Yet, ironically, there is no area so susceptible to satisfactory, short-run conversion and excellent available alternatives.

Presently, new energy production in most parts of the world, but especially in the western industrial nations, is based on fossil fuels: oil, coal, and natural gas, augmented in some places by large scale hydro, and nuclear power. Production in this field is characterized by an extremely high degree of global corporate concentration.

Currently, most of the technology needed to de-concentrate and localize energy production, achieve a many-fold increase in energy efficiency, and meet the remaining needs sustainably using photovoltaics, biomass, geothermal, mini-hydro, wind, and other renewable energy sources is already available. This includes technologies to convert cars, trucks, airplanes, ships and other modes of transit to hydrogen fuel systems that increase safety and energy efficiency.

None of these technologies are difficult or esoteric; in fact all are already in use in many places. For example, Denmark already gets 15 percent of its total electricity from wind turbines. In Germany, BMW is already operating and selling hydrogen-power cars with conventional engines that are more efficient than gasoline-powered cars. In Japan, Mazda is converting its rotary engine to hydrogen; it will be ready in 2002. Daimler-Chrysler, Ford, Honda, Toyota and GM are also developing hydrogen fuel cell cars. And the Rocky Mountain Institute — a major technology think tank and research institute directed by Amory Lovins — has already completed design and construction of a prototype hydrogen fuel cell “hyper car” that will be inexpensive, has most of the safety and performance features of standard cars, and is claimed to achieve the equivalent of 99 MPG using hydrogen.

**B. Transportation Systems** The global transportation infrastructure, built to service the global economy, brings a multitude of negative consequences. With export production as a central feature of free trade, there has been a massive increase in ocean shipping, highway transport, air cargo transport, rail, etc. with a tremendous corresponding increase in infrastructure development. These latter include new highway construction, pipelines (to move oil to fuel the transport), seaports, airports, canals, often driven through pristine wilderness areas, or built upon coral reefs, or through indigenous lands, or rural communities. Considerable social problems have resulted in some instances, but the environmental problems are also crucially important, not the least of these is the dramatic acceleration of devastating climate change.

Recently, there have been a series of major “ecocity” conferences as urban areas try to gain control of the major transportation systems, and other ecological and social problems caused by the present haphazard “sprawl” design that requires longer distance transport, usually by private car (given the lack of alternatives), and separates life’s functions: jobs are twenty miles from residences; shopping is in another place altogether; convivial public places are largely absent.

It will be helpful in the long run, in order to reduce dependence on the private car, to redesign urban environments so they are no longer spread out “flat” across great distances ala Los Angeles, or London, or Bangkok. There are dozens of new ideas for altering such arrangements, beyond a changeover to the provision of light rail, new dedicated bus lanes and bike paths that can free people from their dependence on cars. The ultimate goal is to reduce the distance that people need to travel — just as we also try to reduce the distance, in other contexts, that goods need to travel from source to market.

**C. *Agriculture and Food Systems*** If globalized energy systems are the primary cause of the world’s environmental and geopolitical crises, the undermining of small-scale, diversified, self-reliant, community-based agricultural systems, and their replacement by corporate-run export-oriented monocultures has been the primary cause of landlessness, hunger and food insecurity in the world. And it is also a major contributing factor to global environmental devastation — soil depletion, water pollution and overuse, loss of biodiversity and many other problems. This conversion to global industrial agriculture is increasing rapidly, as agriculture corporations spend billions of dollars annually in lobbying, advertising and public relations efforts to promote national and global trade policies that accelerate the transition to industrial agriculture systems. Such corporations argue that industrial agriculture is more efficient than traditional farming, and that it has a better chance to feed a hungry world. And yet, all evidence consistently shows exactly the opposite; industrial farming’s so-called efficiencies are sustained only by huge government subsidies as well as high chemical inputs. And it causes far more hunger than it solves.

To maintain a perspective on the scale and importance of this matter, it bares repeating that roughly half of the world’s people still live directly on the land, growing their own staple foods, feeding families and communities. They use indigenous seed varieties developed over centuries. They have perfected their own organic fertilizers, crop rotations and natural pesticide management. Their communities have traditionally shared all elements of the local commons, including water, labor and seeds. They have been exemplary in preserving the biodiversity necessary for community survival, and have fed local communities for centuries. But they are all under assault from the corporate industrial agriculture system.

Many millions of people throughout the world are mobilizing to reverse the globalization of industrial agriculture. Millions of farmers in India alone have protested corporate “biopiracy” of their biodiversity and their seeds, and the eventual commercial patenting of indigenous seed varieties. The movement also includes tens of thousands of farmers in Japan, the Philippines, Bolivia, Germany, France, and, most significantly, the growing international movement of “landless peasants” throughout the Third World, who demand protection for their lands (where they still own lands) and/or a meaningful land reform process. In Brazil, for example, the MST (*Movimento Sem Terra*), a landless peasant movement, has lately won actual title to over 15 million acres of farmland that is able to serve 250,000 families. The work to achieve a reversal in policy must be simultaneously carried forward on the international, national and local levels. It begins with five central convictions:

- ▲ Loss of smallholders’ farmlands to highly concentrated large corporations is a primary cause of poverty and hunger in the world, as well as environmental devastation.
- ▲ Access to land for food-growing is a fundamental human right.
- ▲ Wherever people are still living and working on their traditional lands, all efforts must be made to be sure they can remain in place, working for their families and communities, not the global market. Where communities have been deprived of their lands, distributive land reform is crucial.
- ▲ Society must abandon its bias toward large-scale export-oriented monocultural production, while

re-invigorating indigenous agricultural principles that protect biodiversity devoted to sustainable use for local populations.

▲ All solutions must serve to shorten the distance between producer and consumer.

**D. Manufacturing** (not yet available)

CHAPTER VII  
FROM BRETTON WOODS TOWARD ALTERNATIVES

Strengthened democracy at local and national levels will go a long way toward building sustainable societies. However, in themselves, these changes are not enough. Because giant private corporations are now global, there must be countervailing public and accountable power at the global level. This section of the report offers four different visions of changes at the global institutional level.

First, it argues that part of the chaos and inequity in the world comes from having two conflicting sets of governing global institutions: the Bretton Woods triad and the United Nations (UN) system. We present arguments that global economic governance should be unified under a reformed UN system. Second, we discuss the possible dismantling or weakening of the Bretton Woods institutions. Third, we offer proposals for the strengthening and reform of certain existing UN organizations and the reduction of corporate influence within the UN. Finally, we spell out new institutions that might better fill the gap left by the diminishment of the Bretton Woods institutions.

**A. Unify Global Governance Under a Restructured United Nations (UN) System** Global governance functions are currently divided between the UN system — comprised of the UN secretariat; its specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and its various development assistance funds such as UNDP, UNICEF, and UNIFEM; and the Bretton Woods system — comprised of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO. The UN system has by far the broader mandate, is more open and democratic, and in its practice has given much greater weight to human, social, and environmental priorities. However, in recent years the UN has come increasingly under the influence of the same global corporations, and toward the same ends, as the Bretton Woods institutions. The more secretive and undemocratic Bretton Woods system has invariably taken a narrowly economic view of the world and placed financial and corporate interests ahead of human and planetary interests.

Dividing governance of the global affairs of one world between two competing governmental systems is not wise policy. The time has come to reshape the system of global economic governance under the auspices of a reformed UN — providing it with the human and financial resources to fulfill its original mandate and introducing changes intended to strengthen its function as a democratic governing body. This will require the dismantling of the current structure of Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks that operate as regional clones of the World Bank, moving essential functions relating to global economic governance to the UN, while purging the UN of corporate influence.

**B. Weaken or Dismantle the Bretton Woods Institutions** The goal of a global restructuring of the institutions of economic governance is to create an equitable and democratic global financial and trading system supportive of healthy, secure, sustainable, just, and productive local economies that function

within a cooperative system of international relationships. Such a system would seek balanced and stable trade relationships; minimize financial speculation and international debt; encourage productive investment, local ownership, and local self-reliance; protect poor countries from inappropriate economic pressures and predatory assaults by more powerful countries and global corporations; and create a bias for the poor in international trade and investment relationships.

1. *WTO*: Proponents often argue that this institution is one of many global institutions including the UN organizations, and thus, a check-and-balance is maintained. However, the enforcement mechanisms of the WTO are so powerful and broad that, in effect, the trade and finance agenda it promotes trumps the influence and policies of institutions outside of the Bretton Woods system. In response, many in civil society argue to eliminate or severely reduce the WTO's power. A true balance of power must be restored among diverse actors and institutions such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), multilateral environmental agreements, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and evolving trade blocs. More fluid, pluralistic international institutions with multiple checks and balances allow nations and communities of both the North and the South to live by their values, their rhythms, and strategies of their choice.

2. *World Bank and the IMF*: This section recommends the appointment of international IMF/World Bank Decommissioning bodies to oversee the process and the distribution of their assets. Half of the members of such a body should come from civil society organizations because these are the groups that were instrumental in bringing to light the destructive impact of these institutions. Two illustrative steps that could be taken immediately include:

- ▲ Dismantling of all structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the Third World and the ex-socialist world.
- ▲ Reducing the IMF and World Bank staffs, with commensurate cuts in their capital expenditures and operational expenses.

**C. Strengthen the Countervailing Powers of Other International Organizations** As the Bretton Woods institutions are dismantled, the countervailing institutional power required to reform the global financial system and end global corporate rule can come from strengthened states and a reformed United Nations. We hasten to note that though we believe that the United Nations should be strengthened in its mandate and resources, we also believe that international institutions should have responsibility and authority only for such functions as cannot be reasonably carried out at national and local levels. Wherever possible, the primary responsibility of international institutions should be to support effective and responsive democratic governance at national and local levels. There are strong arguments that the World Health Organization, International Labor Office, and United Nations Environmental Programme should be upgraded to address trade related health, labor, and environmental issues.

**D. Create New Global Institutions** In addition to reforming existing UN bodies, there may be a need to create a small number of new institutions at the global level, most likely under United Nations authority and oversight. Here are five examples of the kinds of institutions that are needed:

1. *Create an International Insolvency Court*: Debt relief rather than the provision of still more debt is the more appropriate response to the over indebtedness of low income countries. A people cannot be both free and in debt. We therefore endorse recommendations to create an International Insolvency Court (IIC) that have come from UNCTAD, the Jubilee 2000 Coalition, and the Canadian government.

2. *Create an International Finance Organization (IFO) under the mandate and direction of the United Nations:* The IFO would work with UN member countries to achieve and maintain balance and stability in international financial relationships, free national and global finance from the distortions of international debt and debt-based money, promote productive domestic investment and domestic ownership of productive resources, and take such actions as necessary at the international level to support nations and localities in creating equitable, productive, sustainable livelihoods for all.

3. *Create Regional Monetary Funds.* Recognizing the legitimate need for access to short-term emergency foreign exchange loans, while also recognizing that finance should be local to the extent possible, we endorse the creation of regional monetary funds accountable to the member countries of their region.

4. *Replace the WTO:* There are three sets of proposals from civil society organizations around the world on what type of trade rules should replace the WTO:

- ▲ Some argue for a return to the original idea of a more comprehensive International Trade Organization that was proposed after World War II. This ITO would embrace goals of full employment and the busting of global cartels. It would also go beyond the original ITO mandate by embracing environmental goals and its structure would be more open, transparent, and democratic.
- ▲ Others argue for returning to the less onerous General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, but likewise transforming GATT to be more open, transparent, and democratic.
- ▲ Others argue for the elimination of a global trade body and the strengthening of regional trade bodies that help mesh production and trade strategies among member nations.

5. *Create an Organization for Corporate Accountability (OCA) under the mandate and direction of the United Nations.* While enforcement authority will rest entirely with national and local governments, the OCA will provide both governments and the general public with comprehensive and authoritative information on corporate practices as a basis for legal action and for investor and consumer boycotts.

The above is a much abbreviated menu of more fully discussed views on how to reform the current system of global institutions; their relationship to one another, to nation-states, and to citizens.

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