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Global Backlash

Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy

Edited by
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Introduction

Of Magenta Hair, Nose Rings, and Naïveté

Why should you read this book? And why did I write it amidst the avalanche of books for and against globalization?

The idea for this book grew in part from my frustration over the simplistic way in which opponents to current forms of economic globalization were being portrayed in the mainstream media. Pick a protest—Genoa in summer 2001, Quebec City in spring 2001, Prague in fall 2000, or Seattle in fall 1999. The same images are projected over and over again in the press: rowdy students, black-masked anarchists—desperately in need of a shower—smashing a window or burning a car. Too many journalists write as if this movement were a composite of a caricature: an idealistic, privileged student with magenta hair and a nose ring who will one day grow up and understand the way things really are.

In fact, typically, both sides of the debate are portrayed in simplistic terms. On one side, the protesters are portrayed as ignorant, or at least naïve, and as opposed to globalization—the "anti-globalists." On the other side are the law-abiding, well-groomed, and mature people who are rational enough to understand that globalization is inevitable and good. As a result, most of the media suggest only two choices: you are either for economic globalization or you are against it. And, if you are in the latter group, you *probably* know what you are against, but you have no real concrete proposals for what you want. Or what you are calling for is presented as a return to the past; your vision is that of a modern Luddite who wants to take away the benefits of civilization and take us back to the stone age.

My vantage point is different. As an academic, I have taught about these issues for more than a decade. As a researcher, I first encountered the impact of trade, investment, and aid in 1977 when I lived with a community of indigenous subsistence peasants in the southern Philippines near the pineapple plantations of Del Monte. As a "public scholar" over the course of my adult life, I have tried to put my knowledge to use in the service of social movements. I know parts of this

movement and individuals within it, but I often hardly recognize them from most of their portrayals in the media.

I am not the only one to notice this deficiency in the mainstream media. Author and environmentalist Paul Hawken, writing of his experiences in Seattle during the 1999 demonstrations, has a telling vignette:

> [O]ne of the two *Newsweek* reporters in Seattle, called me from her hotel room at the Four Seasons and wanted to know if this was the '60s redux.
>
> No, I told her. The '60s were primarily an American event; the protests against the WTO are international.
>
> Who are the leaders? she wanted to know.
>
> There are no leaders in the traditional sense. But there are thought leaders, I said.
>
> Who are they? she asked.
>
> I began to name some. . . .

Hawken goes on to mention at least a dozen and a half individuals and their institutions. His story continues:

> Stop, stop, she said. I can't use these names in my article. Why not? Because Americans have never heard of them. Instead, *Newsweek* editors put the picture of the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynksi, in the article because he had, at one time, purchased some of [anarchist leader] John Zerzan's writings.[1]

The protests and the property damage caused by a decided minority of protesters make global headlines and television news. But little is written about the tens of thousands who attend teach-ins and conferences or about what those giving talks and leading workshops at such events, even at the demonstrations themselves, actually have to say. Unreported in most coverage of the Seattle protests in 1999, for instance, was the fact that a half block outside the area for which the Seattle government declared a curfew, in the Seattle Town Hall, the International Forum on Globalization hosted a very civilized debate covering all sides and it proceeded without incident.[2] And shockingly unreported in most media accounts is the organizational diversity of this "global backlash," now spanning tens of millions of trade unionists and environmentalists, and millions more from organizations of farmers, students, religious activists, women, and indigenous peoples across the globe.

Indeed, the mainstream media seem rather content to keep the image of the protesters simplistic. Perhaps this sells more newspapers and advertisements. Perhaps it is just easier. Or perhaps it is, in some unconscious or conscious way, an attempt to make the protesters less legitimate and therefore less powerful.

But What Do They Want?

Among various media reports, it was an interview I heard on the radio that convinced me of the need for this book. The reporter was interviewing Juliette Beck, a young organizer with the San Francisco–based Global Exchange on the streets of

Washington, D.C., at the April 2000 protests against the World Bank. The coverage began with the usual terrain, with the reporter presenting Beck and her compatriots as against globalization and the institutions that pushed globalization. But then it got better: what exactly, the reporter asked, were they for? As I recall it, Beck gave an answer along the lines of: "Look, I'm an organizer. I can answer that question but you really shouldn't ask me about that. Behind us organizers are lots of brilliant people who have detailed ideas of what should be done. You should talk to them." And she mentioned some specific names—with overlaps to Hawken's list. Just blocks away was another "teach-in" at which those very "idea" people were providing details to an enraptured audience of thousands, but the reporter did not pursue the lead.[3]

What *do* these "idea" people have to say about what the "global backlash" is for? What *is* the backlash for? My students want to know and so do my mother and my mother-in-law. Indeed, my conversations ever since Seattle convince me that a wide swath of people, whether or not they are sympathetic to the backlash, want to know more about the protesters. Recently I attended a dinner party with a rather eclectic mix of people. When asked what I did, I began to describe this book. "But what do they want?" a businessman asked. As someone who made a living consulting for global corporations, he really wanted to know concrete proposals. He continued (now I am paraphrasing): "I keep reading the newspaper articles to find out what they want, but I never can find it." Another guest happened to be a retired editor from one of the United States' top newspapers; he did not disagree. Even the man who is fixing my chimney was curious to discover that the "Seattle protesters" actually had proposals. And others not only want to know, they need to know: As South Africa's finance minister Trevor Manuel—who was chairing an official session of the 2000 meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Prague while "protesters paralyze[d]" the Czech capital—told a journalist: "I know what they're against but have no sense of what they're for."[4]

Many in the mainstream media also portray the fact that the backlash has so many parts as one of its key disadvantages—i.e., the protesters talk of too many things to have cohesion or a concrete vision. The Vietnam-era activists were against the Vietnam War. But the current protests bring up a smorgasbord of issues—from the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, to exploited labor, to environmental degradation, to gender inequality, to indigenous peoples' rights.

There is, however, an overarching umbrella uniting the backlash: opposition to corporate control of the global economy. "What was that all about?" asked a headline in the *Washington Post* the Sunday after Seattle. Under that headline, Tom Hayden, a leader of the student protests in the 1960s, wrote with palpable admiration, awe, and excitement as he tried to explain the complexity of the issues articulated by the protesters:

> I have to say I am glad to have lived long enough to see a new generation of rebels accomplish something *bigger* here in 1999 than we accomplished in Chicago in 1968 with our disruptive protests at the Democratic National Convention.
>
> . . . .

> Seattle will have greater consequences. In Chicago, we were dealing with a single issue: the Vietnam War. The Seattle activists were confronting the very nature of the way economics, environmentalism, and human rights are going to be shaped for the rest of our lives. The so-called new world order has to do with everything: exports, prevailing wages, sweatshops, sea turtles, the price and quality of food. The Vietnam War was going to end eventually, but the new world order will not. You will either be part of it or you'll be frozen out.[5]

These are complex issues. They cannot possibly have one simple solution.

A "Swarm" of "Anti-Globals"?[6]

As Global Exchange organizer Juliette Beck tried to explain, behind the protests are numerous, very sophisticated organizers and idea people (and some wearing both hats) who have visions of different ways for the global economy to work. They come from richer and poorer countries. Their skin comes in all shades. They are women, men, old, young, poor, rich, and in-between. They meet in person and they interact in cyberspace.

They inevitably spend time and energy on a defensive agenda—trying to defeat pro-globalization initiatives such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment or a new "round" of global trade negotiations (the goal of Seattle), both of which would have strengthened corporate rights. But they also have an offensive, proactive agenda. They have proposals for what to do, many of which are actually on-the-ground initiatives and innovations. Not only do they hold every conceivable form of educational forum, but some lobby governments to have their proposals enacted. Others "lobby" corporations. Still others simply start initiatives on their own. They have had notable success in all three.

And, within the backlash, although they share many values and visions, they also debate ideas—often hotly. Indeed, although one can hardly decipher this from most mainstream media coverage, the "citizen backlash to economic globalization" is not a monolith that can be summed up as "anti-globalization." There are differences within and between groups, as should be expected given the size of the movement and of its undertaking, as Hayden explained.

Given the divide between media portrayal and backlash reality, the purpose of this book is to get inside the backlash to some of its visions, proposals, and debates. The book will introduce you to different parts of the movement—not so much by listing who's who but by presenting what they are trying to do to change the way the world economy works. I will share and explore key proposals emanating from different parts of the movement. The book not only will focus on basic proposals for change, but will highlight the innovative parts of the various proposals and ongoing initiatives.

My purpose is not to offer a book explicating the broader debate between the proponents and so-called opponents of globalization (although that is the subject of one part of my book). Similarly, my aim is not to view the resistance through a more theoretical microscope. Both are valid aims (although I often find the dual-

ity between pro- and anti-globalization to be artificial, as argued above). But both have been the subject of enough books.[7]

In part my intention is to provide a framework for thinking about the various responses of the "citizen" or "global" backlash and for understanding the basis of some of the debates. As the reader will discover, parts of the backlash are trying to rewrite the rules of the global economy to strengthen protections for workers and the environment. Others are trying to "stop" or "roll back" aspects of economic globalization, such as the global trade in water or the transboundary flow of speculative investment. As I will argue, that divide—between those who see the goal to be "reshaping" economic globalization or those who strive to "roll back"—is a key analytical distinction in the backlash. But within these two broad backlash groupings there are also debates that I will highlight.

Looking in the Mirror

All of this—the visions, the proposals, the debates—is exciting material. So part of why I decided to edit this book is to uncover what the backlash is and what it wants. I also decided to write this book because, as a result of my dealings with various parts of the backlash, I came to believe that, in order to understand itself better as a movement, the citizen backlash needed to examine closely its various parts.

Take, for instance, the dynamic anti-sweatshop student movement. Since 1998, college campuses in the United States and Canada have witnessed an upsurge in student activism. It all began when some U.S. students traveled to Central America to investigate the conditions under which the T-shirts, hats, and other items sold in their campus stores were produced. They discovered exploited, college-aged (and younger) workers stitching apparel with college logos, and they returned from this firsthand education in the workings of the global economy to spread the word. Their tales were strengthened by those of a nineteen-year-old former collegiate-apparel stitcher from the Dominican Republic who toured U.S. campuses to tell of inadequate wages and abusive treatment.[8] Since then hundreds of campuses have been abuzz with anti-sweatshop advocacy and action to try to ensure that collegiate apparel becomes "sweat-free."

For me, it is a welcome change in the academic environment. Many students' grasp of the global economy grows alongside their organizational efforts. The 1998 establishment of the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), with chapters across the United States and Canada, turned into rallies and sit-ins at Duke, Notre Dame, Brown, Georgetown, and elsewhere. Students demanded that college administrators do something to ensure "sweat-free" merchandise. Soon their demand became more specific: join a new organization called the Worker Rights Consortium. And then they merged their global concerns with local realities: In 2001, students took over the administrative offices at Harvard and refused to vacate until that well-endowed university agreed to study paying workers a "living wage." A new generation of student activists, in joining the quest to

change the way the global economy works, have become a vigorous and potent component of the citizen backlash.[9]

But, as USAS student leaders themselves admitted before their annual meeting in 1999, they are experts on one aspect of the work to change economic globalization.[10] By and large, however, they are not experts on other arenas of related backlash initiatives such as attempts to change the way the World Trade Organization works. And the parts of the backlash that work on the World Trade Organization, by and large, are not experts on alternative trade organizations (ATOs) such as Equal Exchange, which markets its environmentally and socially responsible "fair trade" coffee outside the dominant corporate-controlled trade routes. And those who are involved in making ATOs viable may have few free moments to follow backlash attempts to press apparel corporations like Guess or Liz Claiborne to voluntarily enforce "codes of conduct." And those who innovate ways to enforce and monitor such corporate codes may not be aware of the movement to stop the privatization of municipal water systems. And, whatever they work on, unless they are old enough to have been active in the 1970s, the majority of backlash members are unaware of the fact that their work in the twenty-first century builds on a foundation of related work on corporations and aid institutions in the 1970s, never mind that there is a history of resistance to economic integration going back hundreds of years.

Overview of This Book

Given that the purpose of this book is to insert the reader inside the citizen backlash, only Part I is devoted to presenting the broader spectrum of views on economic globalization. While that broader debate is the focus of much of the literature that exists on globalization, this first part presents some nuances in the "pro" and the "anti" positions. There are, I argue using the readings as evidence, not simply two views on the subject.

The rest of the book concentrates on the backlash itself. I chose to center this book on what I see as key backlash proposals to change global economic integration, by which I mean changing the way in which corporate-controlled trade, investment, and financial flows are pulling parts of the world together and in which the global (multilateral) institutions that manage the world economy are finessing an increase in corporate control.

Part II reminds the reader that economic integration through trade, investment, and financial flows is not something that started in the 1990s with the growing popularity of the term "globalization." Nor did resistance to this integration erupt only recently. These twenty-first century visions and proposals have important historical roots and precedents—some as far back as over 500 years ago and some from the 1970s—many of which are little known today. As someone very involved in the 1970s efforts to use the United Nations to curb abuses of transnational corporations once remarked to me, the current resistance is "a movement that does not for some reason recognize its own history."[11]

Moving from the full spectrum of views (Part I) and the historical context (Part II), the next two parts of the book zero in on proposals to "change the rules" of the world economy—that is, backlash responses that attempt not so much to fight globalization but rather to reshape the rules under which its corporate actors operate so as to reduce its environmental and social costs. Part III begins with readings investigating the "social clauses" on labor and environment that the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States eventually agreed to attach to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It then moves to a key debate within the backlash at Seattle and elsewhere, with backlash proponents debating the pros and cons of creating binding labor and environmental protections in the World Trade Organization and other subsequent trade and investment agreements. In that section, I try to dispel the myth that "Northerners" have one view on this subject and "Southerners" another. Once again, the reality proves to be far more complex—and interesting.

In a second "changing the rules" section (Part IV), we move from the regulatory world of trade agreements to proposals that rely on "voluntary" corporate initiatives—notably codes of conduct for corporations and certification schemes. This section explores how the backlash has prodded corporations such as the Gap to set up their own voluntary environmental and social rules and then to "monitor" those codes through various mechanisms. The section also looks in more detail at Rugmark, an anti–child labor labeling initiative that came out of South Asia, and the Forest Stewardship Council, an environmental certification scheme for wood based in Mexico. Here is where the book will cover the debate over how best to make the global apparel sector, including collegiate apparel, sweatshop-free.

Parts of the backlash argue that economic globalization is not inevitable and that aspects of it should—and can—be stopped or rolled back. This is the subject of Part V. As will be seen, some of the backlash "stop" campaigns focus on what is sometimes called the "global commons"—goods such as water, virgin forests, endangered species, seeds, and other life forms. The case studies presented in Part V focus on backlash proposals to localize food systems, to give peasants (and not foreign corporations) the intellectual property rights to their rice seeds, and to stop the control of water by transnational corporations. As will be highlighted, other parts of the "rollback" movement focus on stopping the global flow of pernicious or immoral goods and services such as the debt repayments that are hemorrhaging out of poorer countries and the speculative short-term capital that is wreaking havoc on vulnerable economies.

Caveats

I am currently based in the United States, and that influences my analysis. I have, however, spent many years of my life overseas, notably in the Philippines, where I have lived and researched off and on since 1977. I have worked hard to project varied voices in the excerpts reprinted in this book. More often than not, the backlash speaks eloquently for itself. My role, therefore, is to provide the overview

chapters that stitch the excerpted material together. But as much as possible, you will read original documents, assessments by participants, and proposals by participants. I have tried to choose readings that are "seminal" in some way or that do an excellent job of explaining complex realities and proposals.

Each of the book's five sections begins with an introductory essay by me. These introductions are meant to provide a foundation—facts, chronologies, concepts, and analysis—to explain why I have selected each reading and how the individual readings fit together. You can read my introductions and not the excerpts, but you will miss the real voices.

Semantics around globalization are important. I have chosen to follow *Business Week*, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and C. Fred Bergsten (former U.S. assistant secretary of the treasury for international affairs, now director of the Institute for International Economics) and use the term "backlash." Some in the backlash may not be happy with that term, as it connotes a defensive posture of being in response to something. But I do think that is the reality—the citizen backlash grew to its current stature because of the adverse ramifications of the current stage of global economic integration, which has come to be known as economic globalization. (For those who prefer a more positive image, I encourage you mentally to replace my "backlash" with Princeton professor and international law expert Richard Falk's "globalization from below.")[12]

On another question of semantics, when I write of the citizen backlash, I am referring to civil society. "Nongovernmental organizations" (NGOs) is an umbrella term for the organized part of civil society—encompassing the range of citizen groups from grassroots "popular organizations" to membership groups like unions to more amorphous groupings of citizens.[13]

By and large, I have tried not to take a position among various parts of the backlash. This is not difficult for me as I truly do not believe that one part of the backlash or another has all the answers. Where there are debates or differences, my goal is to present and analyze these disagreements, not to insert myself.

There exist no terms with which I am comfortable to label the "richer" countries of the world or the "poorer" countries of the world. At times, I use these inadequate terms. Likewise, at times, I fall back on other easy but unsatisfactory terms: "North" versus "South" albeit a geographical misnomer, and "developed" versus "less developed countries" or "developing countries" even though they may in fact not be "developing" economically or socially. Poorer, South, Third World, less developed, developing—these are all short cuts for what should read "countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin American and the Caribbean, and the Middle East," but that is a wordy mouthful.

A note on the editing of the readings: In order to keep this book to a manageable length (and a reasonable price), I have had to cut back the length of the original readings in many cases. My cuts are indicated by three different possible markings: (1) three periods ("...") if the deletion is within one sentence; (2) four periods ("....") if the deletion includes the period at the end of one sentence; and (3) three periods within brackets ("[...]") if more than one sentence is deleted. Ellipses indicating deleted material at the beginning and ending of articles have

been omitted. I have striven to find readings that maintain their integrity even when only a portion is reprinted. And, as much as possible, I have opted to reprint whole sections and minimize the number of deletions.

Where the original excerpts included notes, these have also been reprinted. So as not to confuse the reader who might want to find the longer original document from which an excerpt has been culled, I have maintained the original numbering of those notes even when I deleted text accompanied by notes. In a few cases in which the original text is available in full online but has extensive notations or citations, I have deleted notes that are either explanatory or give information of the "for further information" variety. This I have done rarely and only due to the exigencies of space and book price. Anyone who wants the full text or the complete set of notes for these readings can consult the original sources using the information provided in the citation at the bottom of the first page of each excerpt.

In Brief

The backlash to economic globalization may not be powerful enough yet to win all the time or to become the prevailing view. But, as a collectivity, its members are certainly too powerful simply to be relegated to the current media caricature. Nor is the backlash going to disappear in the wake of the terrorism of 11 September 2001, as some pundits have suggested. The citizen backlash is no longer simply a "fringe" movement that governments, international institutions, and private corporations can ignore. It has provided the pressure to achieve some debt cancellation and has defeated certain trade agreements. It has the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization on the defensive; so too with pharmaceutical, apparel, biotech, and other transnational firms. Take it from a vice president of Business for Social Responsibility, a U.S.-based group with more than 1,400 corporate members or affiliates ranging from Stonyfield Farm Yogurt to L.L.Bean, Wal-Mart, and General Motors: "The protests in the streets of Seattle were both an illustration of current opinion and a harbinger of things to come. The protesters, though derided by many in the U.S. media, got the clear attention of major U.S. corporations. There may be some immediate impact as well as long-term changes."[14]

So: who are they and what in fact do they *really* want?

Notes

1. Paul Hawken, "N30 [November 30] WTO Showdown," *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures* (Spring 2000): 51.

The specific names mentioned by Hawken include "Martin Khor and Vandana Shiva of the Third World Network in Asia, Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South, Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians, Tony Clarke of Polaris Institute, Jerry Mander of the International Forum on Globalization, Susan George of the Transnational Institute, David Korten of the People-Centered Development Forum, John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies, Lori Wallach of Public Citizen, Mark

Ritchie of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Anuradha Mittal of the Institute for Food & Development Policy, Helena Norberg-Hodge of the International Society for Ecology and Culture, Owens Wiwa of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Chakravarthi Raghavan of the Third World Network in Geneva, Debra Harry of the Indigenous Peoples Coalition Against Biopiracy, José Bové of the Confédération Paysanne Européenne, Tetteh Hormoku of the Third World Network in Africa, Randy Hayes of the Rainforest Network."

2. Moderated by *Business Week*'s Paul Magnuson, the six-person debate included Ralph Nader, and, for the globalists, Columbia University professor Jagdish Bhagwati. A video tape of the debate can be ordered through the IFG (see web site bibliography).

3. For a more detailed story on Beck, see William Finnegan, "After Seattle: Anarchists Get Organized," *The New Yorker*, 17 April 2000, 40–51.

4. Trevor Manuel's quote is from William Drozdiak and Steven Pearlstein, "Protesters Paralyze Prague" *Washington Post*, 27 September 2000, A16, as is the phrase on events in Prague.

5. Tom Hayden, "The Battle in Seattle: What Was That All About?" *Washington Post*, Outlook section (5 December 1999), B1, B5.

6. The term "anti-globals" is from Sarah Delaney, "A Tense Silence Blankets Genoa," *Washington Post*, 20 June 2001, A22. "Swarm" is from "NGO Swarm" which was coined by David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla in a study they wrote for RAND. See www.rand.org/publications for their work. For a quick summary of their work, see "The Non-Governmental Order," *The Economist*, 11 December 1999, 21.

7. See the "For Further Reading" section of Part I for more specific references.

8. See Bob Herbert, "Sweatshop U.," *New York Times*, 12 April 1998. Herbert's piece, on the *Times*' Sunday op-ed page, certainly helped spread the word.

9. See Part IV for more details on this.

10. Various formal and informal comments by students attending the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), in "Leveraging Student Power in Anti-Sweatshop Organizing," 1999 preconference to annual USAS conference, Washington, D.C., 7–8 July 1999.

11. Harris Gleckman, personal communication to author, July 1999. Gleckman was chief of the Environmental Unit at the late UN Center on Transnational Corporations. (The UNCTC is discussed in Part II.)

12. "BACKLASH: Behind the Anxiety over Globalization" announced the cover of *Business Week* regarding its 24 April 2000 cover story by Aaron Bernstein (pp. 38–48). See also Kofi Annan (Reading 1.2); and C. Fred Bergsten, "The Backlash against Globalization," speech delivered at Trilateral Commission Meeting, Tokyo, 9 May 2000, reprinted in Trilateral Commission, "Tokyo 2000," *Trialogue* 54 (2000): 48–53.

For Richard Falk's early use of the term "globalization from below" (which was then picked up by author Jeremy Brecher and others), see Richard Falk, "The Making of Global Citizenship," in *Global Visions: Beyond the New World Order*, ed. Jeremy Brecher, John Brown Childs, and Jill Cutler (Boston: South End Press, 1993). See also Falk's "Resisting 'Globalisation-from-above' through 'Globalisation-from-below,'" *New Political Economy* 2 (1997): 17–24.

13. For more on NGOs and the flowering of civil society, see Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 50–66; and Alan Durning, "Mobilizing at the Grassroots," in *State of the World 1989*, ed. Lester R. Brown et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989): 154–73. David Korten's *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda* (Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1990), 91–132, provides a useful typology of NGOs.

14. Aron Cramer, "Ethical Sourcing: The Indicators of Serious Intent," in *Visions of Ethical Sourcing*, ed. Raj Thamotheram (London: Financial Times Prentice Hall for Shared View Social Responsibility Ltd., with financial support from Société Générale de Surveillance [SGS], 2000), 26. For more on BSR, see "Frequently Asked Questions," www.bsr.org/faq/index.asp, pp.1–3, accessed 15 February 2000.