

# Before Seattle: the historical roots of the current movement against corporate-led globalisation

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**ABSTRACT** *The purpose of this article is to enrich the understanding of the precursors to today's global citizen movement against corporate-led globalisation and to draw on that history for its relevance to the contemporary period and movement. In doing this, we provide snapshots of three dynamic waves of economic integration that provoked cross-border resistance: 1) the period of European colonialism, with case studies of the anti-slave trade and the international workers' movements; 2) the early post-World War II period (1940s–60s), when a vibrant debate erupted about how developing countries should relate to the world economy; and 3) the 1970s, when Southern governments banded together to pose alternative rules and institutions, and when popular resistance to different aspects of economic integration spread in many nations.*

As an expert on transnational corporations bemoaned to one of the authors, the current movement to alter globalisation is 'a movement that does not...recognise its own history'.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to 'recognise' that history and to examine its relevance to the contemporary period and movement.

Economic integration through trade, investment and financial flows is not simply a phenomenon of the 1990s, even if that decade popularised the term economic 'globalisation'. Nor, this article argues, did resistance to this economic integration erupt only recently. By some accounts, the resistance appears to have grown magically from nothing to the 40 000–60 000 on the streets of Seattle. Indeed, thanks to widespread media coverage, the 1999 'Battle of Seattle' brought this resistance to living rooms around the world. But today's resistance and the alternative proposals have important roots and antecedents that not only precede Seattle and the 1990s; they also precede Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl and the neoliberal consensus (also known as the Washington Consensus) that came to monopolise economic development thinking and policy in the 1980s and 1990s.

To explore the historical roots of the movement against corporate globalisation, the article provides snapshots of three dynamic waves of enhanced economic

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integration that provoked transboundary resistance by civil society, by governments or both: 1) the period of European colonialism, with case studies of the anti-slave trade and the international workers' movements; 2) the early post-World War II period (1940s–60s), which saw the creation of public institutions to manage the world economy and also marked a period of vibrant debate over the role of developing countries in the economic order; and 3) the 1970s, when Southern governments banded together to establish alternative rules and institutions, and when popular resistance to different aspects of economic integration spread in many nations. These case studies will illustrate ways in which today's movement has important antecedents in past popular movements and debates. (Any one of these periods could—and should—be examined in more depth by others; our purpose here is explicitly to employ a broader sweep by combining them.)

For those who think that cross-border citizen movements to confront economic globalisation began in Seattle in 1999, this article is meant to offer another perspective. There are actually several hundred years of movements that, with varying degrees of success, made international linkages on specific issues related to economic integration. Today's movement can learn lessons from these earlier cross-border organising forays. In addition, the particularly rich period of cross-border organising in the 1970s is interesting for yet another reason. As we will detail below, there are some threads that tie today's movement directly to that period. Notable, for instance, is the fact that several leaders of the current movement cut their teeth on related scholarship and activism during the 1970s. Although their earlier work is not necessarily widely known by today's movement against corporate globalisation, these individuals carry links and lessons into their current work

### **Origins of global integration and resistance**

Trade across borders is at least as ancient as the Book of Genesis, which tells of Joseph being sold by his brothers into slavery courtesy of 'a company of Ishmaelites [who] came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt'.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the millennia, extensive regional trade took place on all continents, from the Chinese dynasties to the Roman Empire, from the complex society of Great Zimbabwe to the astonishing Aztec markets of Mexico.

Today's patterns of global exchange date back to the period of European colonialism that began in the late 15th century. Before then, most of the regions of the world were largely self-sufficient. But this changed over the next two to three centuries, as a few European powers built fleets and militaries and began to claim large parts of the rest of the world under their rule. During this early era of economic integration, the central driving force was colonialism. Once the colonisers took over a territory, they began to transform economic activity. Indeed, this was at least part of the colonisers' motivation. Listen to the words of Cecil Rhodes, British colonial founder of Rhodesia: 'We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies

would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories.<sup>3</sup> Thus, local and regional trade gave way to global trade, as European colonialism spread to Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Local economies were integrated into the global economy in ways that served the needs of the colonial powers over those of the colonies and the local populace. Library shelves are filled with volumes that detail this brutal creation of a 'colonial division of labour' and its winners and losers. Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, for example, chronicles rapacious colonialism in economic, social and environmental dimensions: 'Latin America is the region of open veins. Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted into European—or later United States—capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power. Everything: the soil, its fruits and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources.'<sup>4</sup> These and similar trade and investment patterns elsewhere were created to serve narrow economic and political interests, invariably sowing the seeds of resistance.

Just as the current system of international trade dates back hundreds of years, so does the resistance to exploitative forms of global integration. Many early expressions of resistance to European attempts at economic integration were individual and small-group acts of non-cooperation or sabotage. In virtually every society the Europeans colonised, people rose up to protest at the cruelty of slavery, theft of land, and plunder of resources. Some communities retreated into less accessible territories rather than submit to the devastation of European colonialism. Many captured Africans rebelled or committed suicide rather than become slaves. Native Americans practised guerrilla warfare in thousands of incidents of armed rebellion. A few Europeans—including Columbus' outspoken contemporary and chronicler Bartolomé de Las Casas—used their power and privilege to protest against the worst abuses of the colonial trade and labour practices.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, out of these isolated incidents, organised social movements developed in an attempt to counter or abolish perceived injustices of international trade in goods and labour. Most of these movements were local and national, but a few were transnational. It is the transnational movements that interest us here as the antecedents of today's international campaigns to alter corporate-driven economic globalisation. Consider two of the most dynamic examples of organised transnational resistance to economic integration between the 1780s and the early 1900s: the movement to abolish the slave trade and the First International Workingmen's Association.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1700s a movement against the Atlantic slave trade gained strength in Europe and North America.<sup>7</sup> At its peak, from 1787 to 1807, the movement was strongest in the UK. Numerous sectors of society were mobilised there—from the textile workers of Manchester to Methodist Church founder John Wesley, from artisans in small Scottish towns to wealthy businessmen in London, from rural housewives to prime ministers. But this was also an international movement that involved significant collaboration among civil society across continents—British,

North American, French, and also people of African origin, including black sailors of various nationalities, sons of African royalty sent to Europe to round out their education, and free European and American blacks. Former slaves from the Americas also played an important role, for example Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiography was a bestseller in the 1790s.

In other contexts, some have argued that the anti-slave trade movement was the first modern social movement and the innovator of social-change methodologies used by virtually every social movement that followed.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the tactics used by the campaign should sound surprisingly familiar to the organisers of and participants in the modern anti-corporate globalisation campaigns: popular theatre, speaking tours and rallies, political poetry, pins, letter-writing campaigns, direct lobbying, petitions, electoral politics, and commercial boycotts. International networking was essential to the success of the movement. For instance, former slaves from the USA conducted speaking tours in the UK, providing firsthand testimonies about the cruelties of the slave trade and bringing thousands of new supporters into the movement. British religious denominations shared their strategies with their counterparts in the USA, which helped to strengthen the North American movement. Indeed, the religious sector, with its often uncompromising moral core, formed the backbone of the movement on both continents.

The anti-slave-trade movement was certainly effective; not only was the slave trade banned in the UK and the USA, the English Navy was also used to intercept ships off the coast of Africa, search them, and send any Africans found onboard back to Africa. The banning of the slave trade also helped create momentum for the abolition of slavery itself. The movement thus permanently altered the rules of the global economy and set a precedent for social movements promoting the value of human rights above the value of commerce.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of the European workers and the First International Workingmen's Association, the same ideas of justice and equality that had spurred the anti-slave-trade movement also led to an international movement focused on the rights of workers in the economic integration of mid-19th century Europe. In the 1800s, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, an increasing number of Europeans worked in factories under dire conditions: excessive work hours, low wages, abusive bosses, and so on. Economic integration brought in new technologies that threatened jobs and foreign-made goods that threatened domestic production.<sup>10</sup> European labour unions, which had developed out of craftsmen's guilds, began using strikes, work slowdowns, and destruction of machinery to fight for better wages, better work conditions and protective tariffs. In England in the 1850s factory owners fought back by importing workers from poorer European countries to replace striking workers, including cigar-makers, tailors and builders.

In response, some European workers developed a strategy that combined international solidarity with self-interest. Their unions, along with their intellectual supporters and associations of non-unionised workers, formed the First International Workingmen's Association in 1864. The First International successfully intervened in 1866 to prevent the bosses of striking tailors in England from hiring strike-breakers from Belgium, France and Germany by convincing

workers overseas not to become scabs. In 1867 a delegation of striking Parisian bronze workers visited London to seek support for their right to unionise; the First International subsequently sent financial support from British unions and contributed to the success of the Paris strike.

While the First International lasted only until 1872, it played a key role in the development of national labour unions and working-class consciousness in Europe. In turn, these new unions and new ideas made significant changes not only in labour conditions, but also in national policies, from freedom of speech laws to the extension of voting rights to people who did not own property. Many union activists, recognising parallels between the exploitation of workers in Europe and the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, also played a role in the eradication of slavery overseas, along with veterans of the anti-slave trade movement.<sup>11</sup> In short, like the current anti-corporate globalisation movement, the international workers' movement was a multi-issue movement that included domestic as well as global goals. And, while its effectiveness might not match that of the movement against global trade in slaves, it certainly laid down a yardstick against which subsequent international movements of and for workers have been and can continue to be measured.

### **Rebuilding the world economy...and restructuring**

With that broad sweep of almost 500 years of economic integration and resistance before World War II, this section moves to the second of the dynamic waves of enhanced economic integration and resistance: the early postwar period. To understand this period, one must put centre stage the public and private institutions that set the rules for the post-World War II global economy.

The Depression years and the world war that ensued were crisis times for the global economy and economic integration—so trying that, while the war was still raging (indeed, before it was at all clear which side would be victorious), some of the leading economic thinkers from the richer countries (including Britain's renowned Lord John Maynard Keynes) began to exchange detailed plans for the public multilateral institutions that would manage the postwar world economy.

From these plans came the well known post-World War II triumvirate. In finance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was created to oversee an orderly exchange rate system and to provide short-term loans for countries which experienced unexpected shocks to their balance of payments. To stimulate production and the rebuilding of war-ravaged nations, the World Bank (officially the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) was created to offer long-term, low-interest loans for the 'reconstruction' of Europe and the 'development' of the independent Third World countries. To complement these 'Bretton Woods twins', the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was set up in 1948 to oversee the reduction of tariff barriers to trade in manufactured goods.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to gearing up production, finance and trade, these post-World War II public institutions created an atmosphere ideal for the growth and global spread of large private corporations, the twentieth century's version of the East India Company. As barriers to trade and investment fell in the decades following World War II, several hundred large private corporations began to weave certain

parts of the globe together even more tightly than before the war through trade and investment flows.

The growth and influence of both ‘multinational’ corporations and the public ‘multilateral’ institutions over the development process elicited debate over other possible routes to development via economic integration. Although originally created to focus on economic growth and job creation, the multilateral economic institutions increasingly took a free-market focus, requiring borrowing developing countries to open up their economies to the world economy through liberalised trade and investment flows.

The controversy surrounding the free-market advice offered by these institutions fed into a debate about how developing countries should relate to the global economy. Likewise, the global expansion and enlargement of modern multinational corporations elicited a related debate over whether they should be allowed to move around the globe freely or whether there should be ‘checks’ placed on them (and who should and how to place those checks). As will be discussed in this section, the first of these debates influenced development thought and practice in the 1960s. The second, as we shall see in the next section, became more operative in the 1970s.

How developing countries should relate to the global economy was considered in Latin America as early as the late 1950s, with a Southern ‘home-grown’, influential critique and alternative economic integration programme: structuralism. The ‘structuralists’ sought to restructure developing countries’ positions in the world economy. Their critique focused not on environmental or social and other distributional issues within a country, but rather on the question of why ‘economic growth’ via global economic integration was disproportionately benefiting richer ‘core’ countries at the expense of poorer ‘periphery’ ones and why the economic gap between the two appeared to be growing rather than shrinking. The answer, according to Argentine father of structuralism Raul Prebisch, was clear: as long as countries in the ‘periphery’ relied on commodity exports and manufactured imports (ie, as long as they were mired in the colonial division of labour), their economies would be exploited to the benefit of the ‘core’ countries. Indeed, Prebisch and others at the Chilean-based UN Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (set up in 1948) professed that the very development of the ‘core’ depended on the underdevelopment of the ‘periphery’—to the extent that periphery countries were actually moving backwards economically as the value of their commodity exports fell relative to the value of their manufactured imports (or ‘declining terms of trade’).

To break out of this bind, Prebisch—along with fellow structuralists Celso Furtado and Hans Singer (among others)—instead suggested temporarily delinking parts of an economy from the world economy to build up industrial capacity and internal markets through a concerted, multi-tiered plan of import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) geared to move a country into ever-higher value-added manufactured goods. Only when a country in the periphery had built up the capacity for industrial exports, according to Prebisch, could that country reinsert itself on an equal basis in the world economy.

This was more than an academic debate. Indeed, Prebisch and structuralism changed both national policies and the global debate. Prebisch became the first

Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) after its creation in 1964. Prebisch's vision led Southern countries across the globe—from Brazil to the Philippines—to try import-substitution over the course of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>13</sup> And it led to a much more vibrant period of divergent national development strategies that continued until the onset of the neoliberal Washington Consensus in the 1980s. Ironically, these ISI strategies were also important in that opponents termed them 'failures' in practice and used that assessment as a springboard for the neoliberal consensus of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>14</sup>

### **The 1970s: resistance to the corporate 'global reach'**

Despite the continuing vibrant development debate, the 1970s witnessed a significant increase in multinational/transnational corporations' 'global reach', as Richard Barnett and Ronald Müller so aptly phrased it in their best-selling book chronicling the expansion of these corporations and the transnational banks that funded them in the Third World.<sup>15</sup> With the rise of transnational corporations in the 1970s came increasing concern over TNCs' economic and political power *vis-à-vis* Third World governments.

A major scandal turned the US-headquartered International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) into the poster child for these concerns. For those involved in this work in the 1970s, the backlash provoked by the ITT case stands out as a key moment of governmental and non-governmental 'resistance' to unfettered global expansion. The ITT case, however, is far less known among more recent critics of corporate practices overseas and thus merits a summary here. In terms of the scandal itself, evidence surfaced in the early 1970s that ITT had offered funds to the US government to prevent the democratically elected, socialist government of Salvador Allende from taking power in Chile in 1970.

Using that incident as a starting point, the US Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under Senator Frank Church, convened a multi-year inquiry into 'Multinationals and United States Foreign Policy', interviewing dozens of expert witnesses to look at the power and practices of US corporations in the developing world. As Church stated in his opening statement to a 20 March 1973 hearing, the subcommittee was charged with moving beyond this one case study to 'undertake a broad examination of the role of multinational corporations...Do the activities of the multinational corporations advance the interests of the people of the United States taken as a whole? Are they exporting jobs which might otherwise be kept at home?'<sup>16</sup> Over the period from 1972 to 1976 the Church Subcommittee hearings covered corporate practices ranging from the 'ITT and Chile', to 'Multinational Petroleum Companies and Foreign Policy', to 'Political Contributions to Foreign Governments'. From that investigation came 17 riveting volumes that offer a more thorough examination of corporate practices overseas than any other inquiry of this (or perhaps any) era.

To say that Church and his staff trod on potentially controversial topics is to put it mildly. And, indeed, in 1976, as this era of willingness to criticise TNCs began to close, the Subcommittee was 'neutered' (in the words of its then staff

director) by being converted into a Subcommittee on International Economic Policy.<sup>17</sup>

Outside the USA in the early to mid-1970s—energised by such public revelations of irresponsible TNC behaviour, educated by Raul Prebisch and his structuralist theory, and emboldened by the economic success in the early to mid-1970s of the oil-exporting nations belonging to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—a number of Southern governments found a collective voice to demand a different set of rules for the world economy and its players. And so it was that structuralist theory was transformed into the core of the ‘new international economic order’ (NIEO) demands that Southern governments, ranging from those of Julius Nyerere in Tanzania to Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, brought to the United Nations in the early 1970s. Centred on proposals to raise and stabilise raw material prices (ie, to mediate the conundrum of declining terms of trade) and to increase Southern exports of manufactured goods (ie, to break out of the colonial division of labour), the NIEO focused on how to get the economic benefits from interaction with the world economy to the Southern nation state. In May 1974 the UN General Assembly ‘solemnly proclaimed’ a ‘Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order’. This stated, among other things, that ‘every country has the right’ to ‘control of the activities of transnational corporations’, that ‘a just and equitable relationship between the prices of raw materials, primary products, manufactured and semi-manufactured goods’ needed to be established ‘with the aim of improving [developing countries’] terms of trade which have continued to deteriorate’ and that ‘the whole international community’ needed to increase its ‘active assistance to developing countries’.<sup>18</sup>

Using the new pulpit and power afforded the South by OPEC’s economic success, Southern governments succeeded in pushing the UN not only to pass the NIEO declaration but also to create a Commission on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC). For close to a decade and a half after its establishment in 1975, UNCTC oversaw an attempt (which eventually failed) to negotiate a UN Code of Conduct on Transnational Corporations, which spelled out norms for corporate ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’. Included in the code’s provisions, for example, is the requirement that ‘corporations shall respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in the countries in which they operate. In their social and industrial relations, transnational corporations shall not discriminate on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, social, national and ethnic origin or political or other opinion’. So too, in this era of 1970s corporate exposés and vociferous Southern demands, did both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) issue their own corporate codes of conduct, in 1977 and 1978 respectively. While providing important precedents in terms of language and reach, these codes were basically non-enforceable documents that most observers agree did little to effect change in corporate behaviour or public opinion.<sup>19</sup>

Thus far this section has chronicled an era in which governments, individually and collectively, attempted to reform the workings of the world economy and its key actors. But the 1970s also saw non-governmental actors push for change. Indeed, catalysed by the ITT scandal, the revelations of the Church Subcommittee



and the new international economic order demands, citizen campaigns for more specific corporate codes grew rapidly across borders to challenge various corporate abuses: corporate support for apartheid, unethical marketing practices by infant formula corporations such as Nestlé, and exploitative marketing practices by global pesticide, alcohol and tobacco companies, to name a few of the key campaigns. Rather than delineating an overall code of conduct for corporate 'rights' and 'responsibilities' in the pattern of the UN code, these campaigns focused on specific instances of egregious corporate behaviour. While some of these campaigns were local and most were less grandiose than the UN code initiative, several were sophisticated global efforts that succeeded in fundamentally changing the public perception of infant-formula and other corporations, if not to alter the on-the-ground realities.<sup>20</sup>

### **The 1970s and resistance to the World Bank and IMF**

On a parallel front, governments and citizen groups began to focus on the World Bank, the IMF and other public institutions. On one hand, as seen in the previous section, Southern governments called, through their NIEO demands, for expanded governmental and multilateral assistance to poorer countries, ie, more aid. On the other hand, a series of exposés over the course of the 1970s began to suggest that aid, be it bilateral assistance from governments or multilateral assistance from the World Bank and IMF, often had more harmful than beneficial effects on supposed local beneficiaries. On the ground, of course, local people had been witness to the impact of these loans in previous decades, but the fact that this criticism became more global in the 1970s reflects both the era and the growth of these institutions over the 1970s. (The World Bank, for example, increased its lending more than 10-fold from 1968 to 1981.)<sup>21</sup>

In essence, these exposés said that when one analyses aid on the ground and listens to what local people have to say, one discovers that loans often coddle dictators and the well-off at the expense of the poor and a country's growth and development. According to these scholars and practitioners, by the 1970s most aid was invariably geared toward pushing a free-market development model that encouraged either 1) expansion of traditional primary-product exports (cementing a colonial division of labour); or 2) entry into labour-intensive, low-value added manufacturing exports such as apparel and electronics (creating what academics termed a 'new international division of labour'<sup>22</sup>). In the latter case, the critics claimed, what a great deal of donor money and concomitant advice promoted was not anything like the structuralist version of developing country industrialisation, but rather 'enclaves' of exploitative, import-dependent manufactured exports that gave the lion's share of the profits to TNCs for repatriation to their home countries. Furthermore, the exposés continued, aid was seldom grants but was typically loans for which repayment would burden vulnerable populations.

This literature combined critiques based in international political economic analysis with specific country and project case studies. Building on structural analysis, in part the literature deconstructed the kind of economic integration pushed by Northern assistance. By looking at who benefits and who loses within countries, however, these critiques went beyond an NIEO focus and,

indeed, foreshadowed the focus of today's citizen backlash on specific sectors (labour and environment, or women and indigenous communities, for example) *within* North and South.

The initial 1970s exposés and critiques that were published in the North are perhaps the most direct forebears of today's movement versus the World Bank and IMF. The authors were mostly female and their books' titles summarise their pathbreaking theses. From Europe in 1971 came Teresa Hayter's *Aid as Imperialism* and in 1977 Susan George's *How the Other Half Dies*. In 1974 Cheryl Payer wrote one of the first critiques of the IMF in her illuminating work *The Debt Trap*. Through detailed country-specific case studies, Payer outlined the devastating impact of IMF policies on poorer nations, locking them into a development model based on debt, which subsequently forced them into more borrowing, more faulty development and more debt.<sup>23</sup>

One of the first critical, in-depth, book-length country case studies of World Bank lending was that of the Philippines (a World Bank 'country of concentration'<sup>24</sup> and one of its top 10 loan recipients at that time). Over the late 1970s to early 1980s Filipino scholar/activist Walden Bello and a group of his colleagues (including one of the present authors) amassed a wealth of evidence to provide a detailed case study of how World Bank aid bolstered dictator Ferdinand Marcos while restructuring the Philippine economy to serve the interests of global corporations and the global market. While research in the Philippines was crucial to this documentation, much of the evidence also come from 'confidential' documents supplied by increasingly disillusioned World Bank employees.<sup>25</sup>

When these exposés began to appear, their audience and the number of protesters in the North were still small. It was the impact of this World Bank lending on indigenous communities around the world that brought environmental issues into the critique and Northern environmentalists into the protests. One of the first large-scale infrastructure projects to jump from being protested against by indigenous, local inhabitants to capturing international attention was also in the Philippines: the Chico dam project in the north of the country. This project, partially funded in the initial stages by the World Bank, provoked local, national and international outcries by and on behalf of the indigenous communities in the Cordillera mountain region, whose ancestral land was to be inundated by the Chico dam project.

In fact, in 1975, some of the affected indigenous communities wrote to the then World Bank president Robert McNamara, beseeching him to stop the funding: 'We, the [indigenous] Bontocs and the Kalingas affected by the Chico River Basin Development Project, object most strongly to any assistance from the World Bank...to the Philippine government for this project. The reason is simple: the project would wipe us out as a people! At least ten Kalinga settlements and six Bontoc settlements will be devastated as a result of this dam project.'<sup>26</sup> And five years later in Antwerp, Belgium, a so-called 'Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on the Philippines' not only rendered judgement on dictator Ferdinand Marcos but, upon hearing testimony from a local indigenous leader against the Chico dam project, also held that the multilateral financial institutions were culpable:

the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank ... are playing a crucial role in sustaining, supporting and encouraging the Marcos regime, despite its commission of systematic state crimes, and [the Tribunal] calls upon these international financial institutions to terminate these relationships that abet the violation of the rights of peoples and are responsible for disrupting the life and threatening the very existence of such tribal peoples as the [indigenous] Igorot and Kalinga through their support for high-technology hydro-electric projects.<sup>27</sup>

The significance of both the local letter and the international verdict must be emphasised. Unlike the contemporary moment, this was before the days when a World Bank president received such complaints and criticisms regularly. For the local inhabitants the protests against the Chico dam were somewhat successful (the World Bank eventually pulled out of further funding), but extremely risky given the excesses of the Marcos dictatorship. As the testimony at the Tribunal detailed, several local inhabitants were killed, including the community's revered spokesperson Macli-ing Dulag.<sup>28</sup>

The major legacy of Chico, foreign-funded dam projects in India, and other huge infrastructure projects affecting indigenous communities and involving large-scale resettlement of local populations was the awakening of Northern environmental groups to the connections between the aid money and environmental degradation. Starting in the early to mid-1980s, major US-based environmental groups launched campaigns to reform the World Bank in terms of large infrastructure projects. Over the course of the 1980s, development and human rights advocates joined in—in some instances building on Hayter, Payer, Bello and other broader political economic critiques of the 1970s but more often not even aware of them. Indeed, it was not until the 1990s that the resistance grew to encompass more issues and an expanded lens of analysis. It built from a focus on specific projects to reinsert broader political economic critiques reminiscent of Bello, Payer and others, from a concern with environment and development in the 1980s to reinsert social justice, from a preoccupation with aid to include trade and investment, and from a focus on the World Bank to the IMF and then to the GATT's powerful successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO).

This overview of the 1970s resistance is important for another reason. Several of the leading spokespersons for and organisations in the current backlash to corporate globalisation began their work in different parts of the globe during the 1970s. Their thinking was, in part, shaped by this decade. Moreover, these leaders have personal and professional trajectories that are themselves cross-national. And most have actually known, if not worked with, each other over these 30 years, building ties of trust that transcend disagreements.

Take the case of Malaysian Martin Khor (Khor Kok Peng) of the Third World Network, who in the 1970s was active in building international consumer movements that helped push the NIEO agenda at the United Nations and other venues. From France came American-born Susan George, now a leader of the global ATTAC network and of the World Social Forum who, as previously noted, wrote her first bestseller, *How the Other Half Dies*, in the mid-1970s. Institute for Policy Studies co-founder Richard Barnet, who co-authored *Global Reach* during that same period, launched that institute into the centre of globalisation work for the ensuing three decades. And there is Walden Bello, a Filipino who had come

to the USA for graduate studies and remained there in political exile during the Marcos years, now director of the Thailand-based Focus on the Global South. Bello began his investigations into the World Bank in the late 1970s as part of his scholarship and activism on both the Philippines and Chile.<sup>29</sup>

Each of these and several other of today's activists understands the power that citizen movements allied with sympathetic Third World governments can exercise. Each of these individuals, as well as other current activists with roots going back to the 1970s, provides not only continuity between the resistance of the 1970s and the resistance of today, but also a historical frame for the current processes of economic integration. And yet, while Bello *et al* appear to be respected as among the 'wise people' of today's movement, most protesters and observers do not know of their 1970s and 1980s work.

### Concluding reflections

As we move into the current period, we must not forget the threads that link what is new and innovative with what has been said and/or tried before. For example, one sub-sector of today's global backlash focuses on 'reshaping' or 're-structuring' the current rules and institutions of economic globalisation. These 'reshapers' have a constructive agenda centring on a range of proposals from the regulatory world of trade agreements to proposals that rely on voluntary corporate initiatives—notably codes of conduct for corporations, third-party certification initiatives and fair trade to ensure higher prices for commodities. Decades ago, the NIEO and UNCTAD proposals were in essence trying to *reshape* the rules of the world economy to increase the benefits of economic integration to Southern nation states in general—although the policies they promoted most benefited the elite. The Nestlé campaigners were also trying to *reshape*, but with a more targeted goal of protecting specific vulnerable populations within the South against Northern corporate power.

For most of today's *reshapers*, the goal is to ensure that globalisation's burden does not fall on workers, communities, the environment, women and other more marginalised sectors of society, while global corporations receive the lion's share of the benefits. But some of today's *reshape* initiatives, such as those focused on market-access via Northern trade liberalisation, bear noticeable similarities to certain of the NIEO demands.

Another sub-sector of today's backlash—often rooted in an environmental critique—is intent on rolling back certain aspects of globalisation (for example, halting the privatisation and export of bulk water or the patenting of indigenous rice seeds) and on slowing down other aspects (for example, reducing the flow of short-term and volatile speculative financial flows). Its constructive agenda prioritises invigorating local economies.<sup>30</sup> So too the 1970s had its *rollback* proponents, including Teresa Hayter and others who attacked the 'imperialist' aspects of foreign aid, as well as indigenous communities who fought the World Bank's funding of huge hydroelectric dams. Their agenda was to *stop* the aid and the projects.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, the current global backlash against corporate-led globalisation has much to learn from the resistance to earlier forms of coercive economic

integration that preceded it. This should be studied further; in some cases, the parallels to today's movements are striking. Take the earliest antecedents that this article has examined. Part of the success of movements like the ones that ended the Atlantic slave trade was the creative use of a broad array of tactics. As noted earlier, the tactics of the anti-slave trade movement and today's movement have pronounced similarities, especially in the way the creative arts were and are used to educate people. The Internet and list-serves play the same role as the thousands of anti-slave trade pamphlets and newsletters that reached the furthest outposts of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as well as the USA and Canada. North–South alliances and multiracial coalitions are common now, as then. Now, as then, activists have had to confront racism within their movement.

Likewise, the workers' movement of the 1860s provides some parallels and some contrasts to union involvement in the globalisation movement of today. As did the First International, the labour movement today uses arguments of self-interest linked to solidarity to promote working-class involvement in anti-corporate globalisation. In both cases, intellectuals in union leadership have worked hard to challenge workers to move from protectionist, nationalist and/or xenophobic perspectives of 'my workplace' and 'my country' to 'our rights as workers everywhere' or what John Sweeney, head of the American Federation of Labor–Congress of International Organizations (AFL–CIO), terms a 'new internationalism'.<sup>32</sup> A dramatic change since the 1860s is the enhanced role of women and people of colour in unions as they join anti-corporate globalisation campaigns. Moreover, the development of vibrant trade unions in countries like South Africa lays the foundation for a different type of internationalism than that of the Europeans in the 1860s.

Beyond parallels and contrasts, there are important lessons for today. Effectiveness depends on creative ways to engage constituencies who have not yet been involved by reaching people where they are, as the anti-slave-trade movement reached people in pubs, at the theatre and during afternoon teas. Another of the anti-slavery movement's most important lessons is less obvious: to create institutional change, one must also engage with the system. Protest alone did not end the slave trade; work to change the laws was also imperative.

Indeed, the current movement would do well to study to the constellation of forces that successfully delivered change in the past. In most cases, fervent resistance from citizen movements was joined to sympathetic leaders in government. Today, movements to *rollback* and/or *reshape* corporate globalisation are strong in many countries and draw forces from many different segments of society. They have found allies in the parliaments of rich-country governments and, beginning in the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle, they have found some allies among poor-country governments. The 2002 and 2003 elections of governments that reject the neoliberal agenda in Argentina, Brazil and Ecuador add strength to momentum for change and reform.

In sum, the anti-corporate globalisation activists, as they work to *reshape* or to *rollback* the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and other institutions of globalisation, should not think that they represent the spontaneous generation of a new protest phenomenon. Certainly, some aspects of the current movement are new—the use of the Internet for informing and organising, mass demonstrations of coordinated

small groups, and a high degree of economic literacy. But the roots of the Seattle/Washington/Prague/Quebec/Johannesburg protests are deep. Changes in technology, innovative protest styles, information politics and analytical advances have been used for hundreds of years by activists seeking to oppose the devastating effects of economic integration on their communities and on communities in other countries and to provide alternatives. Conscious study of the precedents set by earlier activists—of the successes and failures of the past—can help today's movements become more vibrant and effective.

Too many contemporary analysts and activists treat the current cross-border movement to alter economic globalisation as something so new, so novel, so without precedent. As this article has argued, not only is this inaccurate but it also deprives today's movement of the various strategic and tactical insights that incorporating history affords.

The events in Seattle in late 1999 were, indeed, momentous. But they need to be understood as a new stage in a concatenation of historical processes and events, some of which are linked by direct threads, others of which are stitched together through more circuitous and longer historical trajectories.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Harris Gleckman, personal communication, July 1999. Gleckman had been chief of the Environmental Unit at the now-defunct UN Center on Transnational Corporations.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 37: 25.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'The Uruguay Round: gunboat diplomacy by another name', editorial, *The Ecologist*, 20 (6), 1990, p 202.

<sup>4</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973, p 12.

<sup>5</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> This is adapted from Zahara Heckscher, 'Long before Seattle: historical resistance to economic globalization', in Robin Broad (ed), *Global Backlash: Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002, pp 86–91. See Heckscher for other case studies, including the Tupac Amaru II uprising in Peru, the campaign against the colonisation of the Congo, and the US-based anti-imperialist movement.

<sup>7</sup> The main sources for the anti-slave trade movement examples are Seymour Drescher, 'Whose abolition? Popular pressure and the ending of the British slave trade', *Past and Present*, 143, 1944, pp 136–166; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760–1810*, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975; Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1840*, London: Routledge, 1992; Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written By Himself*, Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1995 (first published 1789); JR Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995; Wylie Sypher, 'The African prince in London', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2 (2), 1941, pp 237–247; and Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> This analysis of the anti-slave trade movement as precursor to today's social movements was informed by Margaret Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Without Borders*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> It was in this context that Karl Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto. The examples of the European trade union internationalism in this section are from Susan Milner, *The Dilemmas of Internationalism*,

New York: Berg, 1990; and Henry Collins & Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labor Movement: Years of the First International*, New York: Macmillan, 1965.

- <sup>11</sup> Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-Slavery Cooperation*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
- <sup>12</sup> Note also that today's work on international 'labour rights' has its roots in this period. Indeed, the Havana Charter, the draft document for the ill-fated International Trade Organization (of which the GATT was supposed to be only one part) actually included a workers' rights clause. A small subset of what had been envisioned as an International Trade Organization, GATT was the least powerful of the trio and in 1995 was subsumed by a more powerful World Trade Organization which extended its domain to include agriculture and services, including investment.
- <sup>13</sup> Much of what Raul Prebisch wrote was published in the *CEPAL Review*, the publication of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ([www.eclac.org](http://www.eclac.org)) and of UNCTAD ([www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org)). Prebisch's seminal work is *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principle Problems*, New York: UN Department of Economic Affairs, 1950. Other key structuralist writing includes Hans Singer, 'The distribution of gains between investing and borrowing countries', *American Economic Review*, 40, 1950, pp 473–485; and Celso Furtado, *Development and Underdevelopment: A Structural View of the Problems of Developed and Underdeveloped Countries*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967. For more on import substitution industrialisation to build up domestic manufacturing, see Albert Hirschman's *The Strategy of Economic Development*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959.
- <sup>14</sup> See Robin Broad, 'The Washington Consensus meets the global backlash: the shifting debate over development in theory and practice', paper presented at the International Studies Association, Portland, OR, 28 February 2003.
- <sup>15</sup> Richard Barnett & Ronald Müller, *Global Reach: The Power of Multinational Corporations*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974. See also the pioneering work produced by Frederic F Clairmont for UNCTAD, including *The Marketing and Distribution System for Bananas*, Geneva: UNCTAD, 1973.
- <sup>16</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, 'Opening statement by Senator Frank Church on Tuesday, March 20, 1973', *Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy*, 93rd and 94th Congresses, Part 1: 'The International Telephone and Telegraph Company and Chile', 1970–71, pp 1–2.
- <sup>17</sup> Jerome Levinson to Robin Broad, email correspondence, 10 September 2001. Levinson thought the verb I had originally used—'disbanded'—was somewhat too tame.
- <sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 'Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order', Sixth Special Session, 1 May 1974, UN General Assembly Resolution 3201. Quotes are from the preamble and section 4(e). The NIEO declaration plus its attached 'programme of action' can be found in Karl P Savant & Joachim W Müller, *The Third World Without Superpowers*, second series, Vol 20, *The Collected Documents of the Group of 77*, New York: OCEANA Publications, 1995, pp 337–354.
- <sup>19</sup> The quotation is from Lance Compa & Tashia Hinchliffe-Darricarrere, 'Enforcing international labor rights through corporate codes of conduct', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 33 (663), 1995, p 670. See pp 670–671 for a summary of the OECD and ILO Codes. On the 1970s UN and other external codes of conduct, see also the work of Harris Gleckman (former chief of the UNCTC's Environmental Unit). Harris Gleckman & Riva Krut, *Business Regulation and Competition Policy: The Case for International Action*, London: Christian Aid, World Development Movement, and other NGOs, 1994.
- <sup>20</sup> See Robin Broad & John Cavanagh, 'The corporate accountability movement: lessons and opportunities', a study for the World Wildlife Federation's Project on International Financial Flows and the Environment, 30 July 1997; and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Codes of conduct for transnational corporations: the case of the WHO/UNICEF Code', *International Organization*, 40, 1986, pp 815–840.
- <sup>21</sup> See Barend A de Vries, *Remaking the World Bank*, Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, 1987, pp 13–14; and Robin Broad, *Unequal Alliance: The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Philippines*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988, chs 2 and 3. The latter originally appeared as Broad's doctoral dissertation (Princeton University, 1983).
- <sup>22</sup> On the new international division of labour, work by members of then West Germany's Max Planck Institute stands as a classic. Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs & Otto Kreye, *The New International Division of Labour: Structural Unemployment in Industrialized Countries and Industrialization in Developing Countries*, trans Pete Burgess, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- <sup>23</sup> Teresa Hayter, *Aid as Imperialism*, London: Penguin Books, 1971; Cheryl Payer, *The Debt Trap: The IMF and the Third World*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974; and Susan George, *How the Other Half Dies*, Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun & Co, 1977.
- <sup>24</sup> Michael Gould, then the World Bank's Philippine division chief, in the confidential World Bank document, 'Philippines—Country Program Paper', Washington, DC, 26 March 1976, p 17.

- <sup>25</sup> This group of scholars and activists documented and analysed the Philippine–World Bank case study in two separate books: a collaborative effort by Walden Bello *et al*, *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*, San Francisco, CA: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982; and Broad, *Unequal Alliance*.
- <sup>26</sup> The Bontoc and Kalinga delegates to the Vochong Conference on Development, ‘Letter to Robert S McNamara, President, World Bank’, 12 May 1975, reprinted in Vivencio R José (ed), *Mortgaging the Future: The World Bank and IMF in the Philippines*, Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1982.
- <sup>27</sup> The proceedings and verdict are reproduced in Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal on the Philippines, *Philippines: Repression and Resistance*, Utrecht: Philippines–European Solidarity Centre-Komite ng Sambayanang Pilipinos (PESC-KSP), 1980, p 278.
- <sup>28</sup> Wada Taw-il (pseudonym), ‘We are to be sacrificed: indigenous peoples and dams’, in *ibid*, pp 84–91.
- <sup>29</sup> See [www.twinside.org.sg](http://www.twinside.org.sg), [www.attac.org](http://www.attac.org), [www.focusweb.org](http://www.focusweb.org) and [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org). See also the interview with Walden Bello, ‘Pacific Panopticon’, *New Left Review*, 16, 2002, pp 68–85. See also note 30.
- <sup>30</sup> For more on alternatives and on the World Social Forum, see Teivo Teivainen, ‘The World Social Forum and global democratisation: learning from Porto Alegre’, *Third World Quarterly*, 23, 2002, pp 621–632; and John Cavanagh, Jerry Mander *et al*, *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2002.
- <sup>31</sup> For expansion on the differences and similarities between today’s ‘rollback’ and ‘reshape’ proponents, see Broad, *Global Backlash*, Parts III–V.
- <sup>32</sup> John J Sweeney, ‘The new internationalism’, speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1 April 1998, reproduced in Broad, *Global Backlash*, pp 47–50.



