

WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER "HAVEN'T WE GOT ANYTHING BETTER TO DO?"

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SNAPSHOTS OF GLOBAL RESISTANCE

"Only a global alliance of peoples movements...can defeat this emerging globalised monster." **People's Global Action**

Over the past few years the people cheering on Global Capitalism United have declared victory. With their corporate tentacles all over the world, the long path of human evolution seems to be reaching a conclusion - the world as one big 'free' trade shopping centre.

Life in this global village is measured in terms of growth. How much we consume equals how much we are happy. And *what* a success it's been. World trade has increased by twelve times since 1950 and economic growth has increased fivefold. **Forget** that more than a billion people live in absolute deprivation, go to bed hungry each night, and live without the minimum of adequate shelter and clothing. **Forget** about our forests being overlogged, agriculture lands overcropped, grasslands overgrazed, wetlands overdrained, groundwater's overtapped, seas overfished, and the world polluted with chemical and radioactive poisons. **Forget** that we are changing the climate of the planet. Don't worry because those that write the economic scriptures reckon that when growth has made people wealthy enough, we will all have the funds to clean up the damage done by growth!

All of this of course is the economics of the mad-house, but to read the newspapers, or watch TV you'd be forgiven for thinking that there are no real voices of dissent to the way our world is being run. Which isn't surprising really seeing as the business leaders, politicians and media tycoons are the ones that benefit the most from this global free for all.

Last February SchNEWS went to Geneva for a conference organised by Peoples Global Action. Here we met people from grass-roots organisations from half the countries of the world. As we sat down and chatted the reality hit us that all those struggles in far off places are exactly the same as ours. That globalisation, progress, free trade, whatever you want to call it, means misery for millions. We decided that somehow SchNEWS had to make this murky world sexy and relevant. So to celebrate our two hundredth issue here's a snap-shot of resistance from around the world, of people fighting back against the global monster.

"In almost every country today people's solidarity with each other in the form of vibrant grass-roots organisations enables a form of democracy to function in spite of and in parallel with oppressive power often dressed up as democracy. The anarchist Colin Ward called this 'the seed beneath the snow'." **John Pilger**



Basta!

"They are going to have to kill off all of us, and even so, the trees will continue to be Zapatistas, as will the rocks and dogs."

While the Mexican rich toasting 1994 celebrated their new status as a "First World" country, thousands of Zapatista freedom-fighters came out of the jungle and highlands in the previously forgotten state of Chiapas. Timing their uprising with the first day of NAFTA, the rebels quickly stripped away the official mask of economic well-being and exposed the reality of worsening hunger, malnutrition and repression. With agricultural production shifted to export and animal feeds, the Zapatista army called the treaty a "death sentence" for the indigenous population.

Hundreds of Zapatista communities have organised themselves into 38 "autonomous municipalities" to regain control from big business, landowners and the 70-year dictatorship of the ruling party. In these liberated zones, villages elect their own community representatives, teachers, and indigenous councils - creating political and social structures firmly rooted in their Mayan past. The Mexican government continues to wage an intensive propaganda and military campaign to undermine the Zapatistas and destroy the autonomous municipalities, failing to comply with the peace accords it signed in 1996. On March 21st this year, 5000 Zapatista women and men will travel throughout Mexico as part of a national consultation on the recognition of the rights of Indian peoples and for an end to the war of extermination. According to recent communiqués, resistance is stronger than ever. For more info: www.ezln.org and www.flag.blackened.net/revolt/zapatista.html. Recommended reading: "First World, Ha! Ha! Ha!"; E Katzenberger, City Lights San Francisco, 1995.

Countries that have signed free trade agreements, are now increasingly finding that erecting *any* barrier to trade is illegal, and that their environmental and social laws can be easily brushed aside. Welcome to the world of the multinationals wet dreams...

The **World Trade Organisation** - whose president once famously said "*we are writing the constitution of the single global economy*" - recently ruled that the US government ban on shrimps caught in nets without turtle excluders breached international fair trade rules. 150,000 turtles, an endangered species, drown each year in shrimping nets so in 1996 America banned the import of shrimps that were caught without the excluders. The WTO said it was against free trade. Tough shit, turtles!

In July last year the Government of Canada settled a claim brought by the **Ethyl Corporation of America**, the company which gave the world leaded petrol. The Canadians had imposed a ban on Ethyl's fuel additive, MMT, which causes nerve deterioration leading to attention deficit and memory loss in kids. *So what?* The Ethyl Corporation said it had been mistreated and took the claim to a tribunal at the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Here, a panel whose decision is final, would decide behind closed doors. There is no right to appeal. The Canadian government, realising its chances of winning were approximately nil, settled with Ethyl for \$13 million, allowed them to resume sales and announced the additive posed "no health risk".

In Mexico the **Metalclad Corporation of Canada** has a case before the NAFTA tribunal in which it claims the State of San Luis Potosi stole its future profits, after the state closed down a toxic waste facility that had a history of contaminating the local water supply. The site is part of an ecological zone - but what the heck, the Mexicans now face a \$90 million bill.



"So-called modern technology has worked against the natural resource-based community, undermining self-reliance and creating vulnerability through dependency on pesticides and fertilizers, and on the market. They can't stand up against the corporate sector. Protests by farmers make the politicians agitated because, if the farmers rise up, that is 70% of India's population."

Medha Patka, 'Alternative Nobel Prize'

In the name of 'development' and 'economic progress', the Indian Government have welcomed the investment of large corporations in an attempt to compete in the global economy. Yet this process of rapid modernization is leaving over half the population dispossessed from their homes and their subsistence lifestyles, destroying their natural resources and increasing their dependence on western corporations.

In defiance, rural India has waged a grass-roots war of resistance against globalisation. They are sending out the message world-wide that the people of India are prepared to fight the corporate re-colonization of their country by international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund.

Last year over 50,000 farmers gathered outside the Karnataka state government offices and spent all day laughing at their policies!

In November, the first test site of Monsanto's genetically modified cotton was pulled out, piled up then burnt. 'Operation Cremate Monsanto' has become a popular pastime with Indian farmers, "We send today a very clear message to all those who have invested in Monsanto in India and abroad: take your money out now, before we reduce it to ashes."

Mass occupations of dam sites have halted construction, as the schemes are flooding villages, ruining irrigation and polluting the environment. Fishing Unions have struck in resistance to the dams and to industrial over-fishing, taking such diverse actions as mass fasting through to blockading harbors.

The farmers realize that their struggle is international, that their resistance is part of a wider struggle against globalisation. This year 500 members of the Karnataka State Farmers Association (KRRS-a movement that claims a membership of 10 million!) will be visiting Europe to hold discussions, take part in direct action and to bring their message to the boardrooms of the companies that are destroying their homeland.



I looked at the professionals and I was getting angrier and angrier and angrier and I said 'All you, you're paid at least 25 grand a year to look after us and you're not doing it.' I said 'Right you're not doing it, we'll do it ourselves.'

Mary Smith

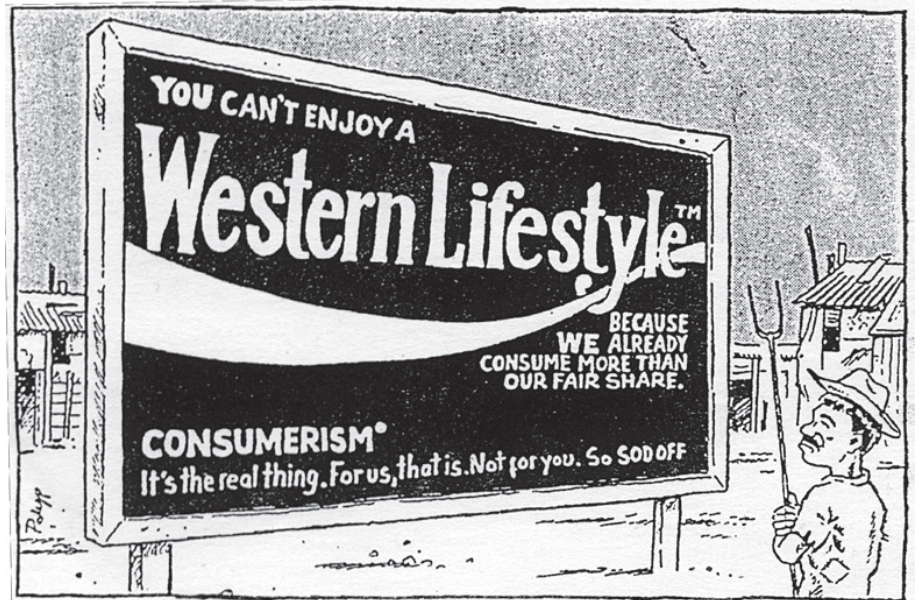
It's a familiar story – every now and then the politicians talk about the next big scheme to re-juvenate our inner-cities, they spout the jargon, like 'grass-roots', 'bottom-up', 'partnership regeneration' but their actions don't match their words.

Mary Smith was an ordinary working mum on an estate in Bristol when her house was searched by the police after they'd arrested her son. Drawing up a hit-list of about twenty people such as the head of social services, head of police, councillors and headmaster of the local school, she soon realised. "They were professional people who knew the right answers to the questions, but they didn't really know what was going on." Convinced she could do better, she set up a meeting of local mums whose kids were on drugs. Out of that meeting was born Knowle West Against Drugs

which gave themselves four goals: To get a needle exchange; to educate the people of Knowle West; to set up a support centre; and to set up a support group for parents and families. Within a few years all these were achieved.

Then in 1995 a Development Trust appeared waving cash at the estate. However, the group realised that as soon as the money ran out, the professionals would be gone and it would be back to square one. Mary continues "after two years I decided 'enough is enough...they should all go, all the experts...I asked that they would all go away and leave us alone so we could learn and make mistakes and grow on our own.'" They then set about creating their own sustainable projects, committed to local employment by local people for local people.

As Mary points out, they want "Experts on tap, not on top!" It is only local people who know best what the local needs are and have the determination and self-interest to improve their own back-yards.



"At every point Ontario Coalition Against Poverty is looking for the best way available to engage the enemies of the unemployed, to cause them pain, to hurt their cash flow, or disrupt their workings and, in this way, force concessions out of them. We actually demonstrate to people effected by poverty and social cutbacks that we can make a difference in their lives and that we can resist in a way that hurts those who attack them. In this way it is possible to inspire them and offer some hope that mobilizations is not simply a waste of time."

Jon Clarke

Learning lessons from the mass unemployed struggles of the 1930's the Coalition has developed an effective hands-on approach to welfare cutbacks. Realising that making a difference actually means defending people under attack, their Direct Action Casework has led to the occupation of welfare offices to get harsh and unjust decisions reversed; the picketing of a welfare managers house whose antics threatened a family with eviction, and disrupting a senior welfare bureaucrat's business lunch.

Unable to stop work-fare (where you work for your welfare cheque) they have instead targeted the agencies involved. Officials have admitted that this has created a 'climate of intimidation' that has deterred agencies from accepting work fare placements on a large scale.

They have stopped a by-law being passed that would have banned squeegeeing and panhandling (begging). Took over an empty hospital getting a commitment from the council to open the facility as a homeless hostel. Demanded a Use it or Lose it by-law occupying empty buildings and defending squatters facing eviction, and also defended homeless people forced to sleep in public parks from being removed by cops. One night, they even held a park for the homeless through to the morning despite being outnumbered by riot cops.

The Coalition, by not giving themselves impossible targets, but gaining lots of small victories, they have increased their numbers becoming a serious thorn in the side for the authorities. As one activist John Clarke says "The point is that we are fighting to win and not bothering with the politics of empty gestures."

Contact Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, 249 Sherbourne, Toronto, Ontario, Canada email ocap@tao.ca



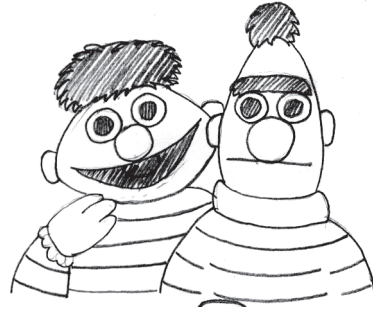
The **Movimento Sem Terra (MST)** is Brazil's largest and most important social movement, which since 1984 has organised land occupations on a massive scale. The MST has no membership, anyone

who is landless and does something about it is part of MST. By 1997 there were approximately 50,000 families illegally squatting 244 tracts of unused land. Once occupied, a judge (eventually) decides whether to expropriate the land and give it to the peasants. So far 150,000 families have secured legal title to the land they have invaded.

In addition to the occupations the group has taken direct action, like a thousand strong camp outside the offices of the Brazilian government's land reform agency, and hijacking food trucks to feed landless peasants!

As you would expect this hasn't made them very popular. Over 1,600 peasants and activists have been killed in land conflicts since 1984 - but only two convictions have been secured against the killers. In May this year the Minister of Agrarian Reform, read the names of 40 alleged MST leaders out on TV. Already two are dead.

However, this has not intimidated them, with up to 50 land invasions a month! Movimento Sem Terra, Rua Ministro Godoy, 1484 CEP 05015-900 Sao Paulo, Brazil. Messages in Portuguese only please. Visit: www.sanet.com.br/~semterra



On the same day that **Reclaim The Streets (RTS)** occupied the Head office of London Underground, tubeworkers fighting plans for privatisation had their one-day strike called off after management threatened the union with anti trade union legislation. RTS issued a statement arguing that tube workers needed to consider their tactics. "Understandably workers often feel that only by taking legal official action can they be safe. But their only real safety lies in sticking together. If strikers respect the union laws they are unlikely to win, that is what the laws are all about." They went on to point out the highly successful 'unofficial' action

by over 700 electricians and plumbers working on the Jubilee extension line (y'know - the line that has to be ready in time for the Millennium Dome opening...)

Reclaim The Streets, PO Box 9656, London, N4 4JY Tel 0171 281 4621. Three years ago some workers on the Jubilee Extension set up 'The Shop' a work-place run union organisation. Because their contract of employment does not include sick-pay they set up a £2 a week hardship fund to ensure members received payment during illness. This fund was also used to support other workers in struggle. Slowly the Shop grew in numbers, so when 100 electricians returned to the surface after working underground to find that the site had been evacuated and was swarming with fire-fighters, they refused to work until the fire-alarms were fixed. 12 workers were sacked. All 500 working for the contractors Drake and Scull went on strike and were also sacked. Two hundred electricians working for other companies on the Jubilee line, refused to cross the sacked workers picket line. A week later all those sacked were reinstated.

'The Shop' is now 500 strong and covers 15 sites in central London. And while the official electricians union seem to prefer to "talking to managers rather than to those who pay the wages", the electricians have shown that by sticking together, by building a strong grass-roots organisation, by ignoring anti-trade union laws and the union bureaucracy, they can win and improve working conditions. None of this of course is new. As their strike bulletin pointed out, they are merely "carrying out the activities that unions were originally built for."

Contact The Shop c/o AEEU Strike Fund, 249 Thorold Rd., Ilford, Essex, IP1 4HE

According to the United Nations Human Development Report (1998) the state subsidized environmentally damaging industrial activities - energy, water, roads, agriculture - worldwide to the tune of at least \$710 billion (thousand million) every year. To put this in perspective, \$710 billion is 14 times what is required to eradicate absolute poverty.



The people of the Nigerian Niger Delta are showing the way in the fight against multinationals. The Ogoni are one of the few indigenous people to have forced a multinational, Shell Oil, out of their lands.

But the trouble for Shell doesn't end there - the Ijaw have so far managed to cut Nigeria's oil output at times by over a third, and at a recent meeting they gave multinationals an ultimatum: cease production or face the consequences.

The Nigerian military reacted with the usual ferocity to this, with thousands of troops, tanks and even two naval battleships brought into the Delta. Dozens of people have been killed and hundreds injured while a state of emergency was declared for several days.

DELTA: News and background on Ogoni, Shell and Nigeria: Box Z, 13 Biddulph Street, Leicester LE2 1BH, UK. tel/fax: +44 116 270 9616 web: www.oneworld.org/delta

JUNE 18TH 1999 - TELL YOUR CHILDREN YOU WERE THERE...

In May last year the leaders of the eight most industrialised nations of the world - the "G8" - met in Birmingham. With the aim of a single economic unit, they hoped their meeting would pass unnoticed and unopposed. This was not to be - with Reclaim The Street parties taking place in 30 locations in over 20 different countries, whilst thousands were on the streets in Hyderabad, India and Brasilia.

This year the G8 will be meeting in Koln, Germany - and this time we will be taking our action to the heart of the capitalist beast - the financial and banking districts and the multinational corporation power bases of the world!

Autonomous, yet co-ordinated, actions will be taking place simultaneously across the planet. Groups as diverse as Earth First!, Campaign Against the Arms Trade and Reclaim the Streets will be amongst those in the UK, whilst Chikoko in Nigeria, Green Action in Israel and the North Sumatra Peasants Union in Indonesia will be targeting their own financial centres. Actions as diverse as strikes, pickets, hacktivism, occupations, sabotage, carnival and blockades will be taking place across the globe - transforming centres of profit & plunder into sites of protest & pleasure.

In the UK there are plans to transform the City of London... however, to maximise the potential of this action we ALL need to begin organising NOW!

Regular open networking meetings are taking place in London each month. On February 27th there will be a conference for self-education on the global economy - and global resistance to it. More details from Reclaim The Streets. More info: www.gn.apc.org/june18 - or join the e-mail discussion list - listproc@gn.apc.org For international info and contacts email pga@agp.org or frank@aseed.antenna.nl.

Meanwhile, back in the real world...

1999 marks five years since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and USA. At the time many people feared the effects that it would have on jobs and livelihoods.

The defenders of the treaty (including ex-Mexican President Salinas who is in Ireland, enjoying the wealth accumulated during his period in office) argued that these fears were unfounded as the result would be a win - win situation in which Mexico, as the smallest and poorest partner, stood to benefit the most. In order to get the USA politicians to approve the treaty, it was argued that rapid growth of the Mexican economy offered the solution to the "problem" of illegal migration.

But five years on there is a very different story. The beleaguered Mexican economy is already legendary at international level, as are the increased levels of poverty, crime, armed uprisings and great fortunes that have been amassed by a few. However, the story that's hardly ever told is that of people having to adjust their livelihoods according to the whims of capitalism.

Take Topiltepec in the mountains of the state of Guerrero. This village of 302 families, have survived a mixed economy involving migrating to work in the coffee harvest, then moving to a neighbouring state to work in a large sugar cane plantation. Then when it was time to start planting maize, the families would return to their village and remain there until harvest, with a pittance coming in from weaving a locally grown palm. This allowed people to live a simple but dignified life. Only a few families had relatives that had gone to the USA, but the majority were happy to stay, as the life in the village was good and allowed them to live with their traditions and customs.

Then came mass privatisations carried out in preparation for NAFTA. The sugar mill was one of over 900 industries to be sold off to the private sector, and the change for the villagers could not have been more drastic. Before the privatisation, there was a doctor available to take care of wounds, many a result of chopping down the sugar cane with a machete. Now - if anyone is hurt - they have to go all the way to the village, which is miles away. The teacher was fired. The garbage collection has stopped. The wages fell by over 50% and at the same time a regular sack of food provisions which used to be given to each family was withdrawn. The

last two factors have devastated the villagers' chances of survival.

The villagers tried to protest and organise themselves into a union, but those seen as being the leaders were beaten and sacked. The rest were threatened with losing their jobs if they persisted. At the same time the rest of the economy was shrinking, thousands of small and medium size industries had collapsed, unable to compete in the free market. On a visit to the village last year it was obvious that many had found an alternative: migration to the USA. However this is extremely expensive, not just because of the long trip involved, but also the cost of paying for the "coyote" (name given to those that make a living from taking immigrants across to the USA) and for the fake IDs that are now needed to work in the USA.

The implications are that many families are now split up most of the year and in some cases for ever. A young woman had married just as the economy started to turn sour. Her husband failed to find work and when she got pregnant decided to go to the USA. He wanted to be able to give his daughter clothes, food and a chance to be educated. His daughter is just over 5 years old now and has never met her father. His picture is shown to her on a regular basis and her mother talks about him. Yet, as time goes by this becomes harder, since there has been no news since he left. Nobody knows what happened to him. It could be that he has found a new life in the USA or that some day he will return... but it is also possible that he is one of the over 300 that die every year at the hands of the USA immigration police, whose extreme violence the USA government turns a blind eye to.

These people have not been asked if they wanted to enter the treaty, yet their livelihoods and for many their lives, have been shattered. They do not want to migrate to the USA. Their lives before were not easy, but they could stay together and lead a dignified life, even if in conditions that 'westerners' would find unbearable. The defenders of the treaty say that it is too early to really evaluate the results, that at least 10 years need to go by before it can be said if it has been a success or not... 5 more years of towns like Topiltepec having to endure even harsher economic conditions and being forced to stand by and watch as livelihoods and lives are destroyed by decisions taken by distant politicians, where people don't figure in their economic dreams.



The Inter Continental Caravan

In the run up to the G8 summit, activists from deprived countries across the globe are coming to tour Europe, uniting North and South in the fight against corporate power, finance and global free 'trade'. Last May saw 200,000 on the streets of Hyderabad for the global day of actions; in October Indian Farmers began "Cremate Monsanto"; this Summer they're doing it over here! The 'Caravan' will be 500 Indians and 100 from other countries and continents, and they'll reach the UK at the end of May. To get involved: 07970 896 736.

...and finally...

• Corporate Watch, Box E, 111 Magdalen Rd., Oxford, OX4 1RQ; 01865 791391; www.oneworld.org/cw

• The Ecologist, Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Rd., London, SW10 0QJ; 0171 351 3578; ecologist@gn.apc.org

• Do or Die - voices from Earth First!, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, E.Sussex, BN2 2GY (£2.50)

• Earth First! Action Update, Cornerstone Resource Centre, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, Chapeltown, Leeds, LS7 3HB; www.ecoaction.org/efau/

• Peoples Global Action - website www.pga.agp.org

• New Internationalist, Tower House, Lathkill St., Market Harborough, LE16 9EF; 01858 439616; www.newint.org/

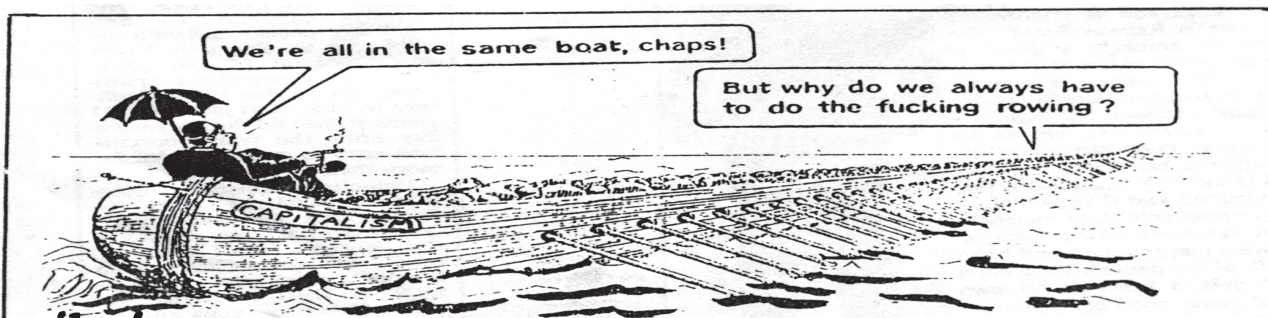
• Multinational monitor - website www.essential.org/monitor

• 'The Case Against the Global Economy' edited by Jerry Mander & Edward Goldsmith (Sierra Club Books 1996)

• 'Hidden Agendas' by John Pilger (Vintage 1998)

• Global Vision - beyond the new world order - Brecher, Childs & Cutler (Black Rose Books)

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