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**GLOBAL SHIFT**

*There were students, labor union members, greens, farmers, religious leaders, and human rights activists. They came to Seattle by the thousands to shut down the World Trade Organization, one of the most powerful institutions pushing globalization. The most dramatic confrontations took place on November 30 (N30), when thousands of protesters blocked WTO delegates from reaching the meeting. Author Paul Hawken was among them*

# N30

## WTO Showdown

by Paul Hawken



Dana Schuerholz

Bette Lee / Impact Visuals



Virginia Hunter / Impact Visuals



**W**hen I was able to open my eyes, I saw lying next to me a young man, 19, maybe 20 at the oldest. He was in shock, twitching and shivering uncontrollably from being teargassed and pepper-sprayed at close range. His burned eyes were tightly closed, and he was panting irregularly. Then he passed out. He went from excruciating pain to unconsciousness on a sidewalk wet from the water that a medic had poured over him to flush his eyes.

More than 700 organizations and between 40,000 and 60,000 people took part in the protests against the WTO's Third Ministerial on November 30th. These groups and citizens sense a cascading loss of human and labor rights in the world. Seattle was not the beginning but simply the most striking expression of citizens struggling against a worldwide corporate-financed oligarchy – in effect, a plutocracy. Oligarchy and plutocracy often are used to describe “other” countries where a small group of wealthy people rule, but not the “First World” – the United States, Japan, Germany, or Canada.

The World Trade Organization, however, is trying to cement into place that corporate plutocracy. Already, the world's top 200 companies have twice the assets of 80 percent of the world's people. Global corporations represent a new empire whether they admit it or not. With massive amounts of capital at their disposal, any of which can be used to influence politicians and the public as and

when deemed necessary, all democratic institutions are diminished and at risk. Corporate free market policies subvert culture, democracy, and community, a true tyranny. The American Revolution occurred because of crown-chartered corporate abuse, a “remote tyranny” in Thomas Jefferson’s words. To see Seattle as a singular event, as did most of the media, is to look at the battles of Concord and Lexington as meaningless skirmishes.

But the mainstream media, consistently problematic in their coverage of any type of protest, had an even more difficult time understanding and covering both the issues and activists in Seattle. No charismatic leader led. No religious figure engaged in

people of faith, steel workers, and farmers. They were forest activists, environmentalists, social justice workers, students, and teachers. And they wanted the World Trade Organization to listen. They were speaking on behalf of a world that has not been made better by globalization. Income disparity is growing rapidly. The difference between the top and bottom quintiles has doubled in the past 30 years. Eighty-six percent of the world’s goods go to the top 20 percent, the bottom fifth get 1 percent. The apologists for globalization cannot support their contention that open borders, reduced tariffs, and forced trade benefit the poorest 3 billion people in the world.

Globalization does, however, create the concentrations of capital seen in northern financial and industrial centers – indeed, the wealth in Seattle itself. Since the people promoting globalized free trade policies live in those cities, it is natural that they should be biased.

Despite Friedman’s invective about “the circus in Seattle,” the demonstrators and activists who showed up there were not against trade. They do demand proof that shows when and how trade – as the WTO constructs it – benefits workers and the environment in developing nations, as well as workers at home. Since that proof has yet to be offered, the protesters came to Seattle to hold the WTO accountable.

### **This is what democracy looks like**

On the morning of November 30th, I walked toward the Convention Center, the site of the planned Ministerial, with Randy Hayes, the founder of Rainforest Action Network. As soon as we turned the corner on First Avenue and Pike Street, we could hear drums, chants, sirens, roars. At Fifth, police stopped us. We could go no farther without credentials. Ahead of us were thousands

of protesters. Beyond them was a large cordon of gas-masked and riot-shielded police, an armored personnel carrier, and fire trucks. On one corner was Niketown. On the other, the Sheraton Hotel, through which there was a passage to the Convention Center.

The cordon of police in front of us tried to prevent more protesters from joining those who blocked the entrances to the Convention Center. Randy was a credentialed WTO delegate, which means he could join the proceedings as an observer. He showed his pass to the officer, who thought it looked like me. The officer joked with us, kidded Randy about having my credential, and then winked and let us both through. The police were still relaxed at that point. Ahead of us crowds were milling and moving. Anarchists were there, maybe 40 in all, dressed in black pants, black bandanas, black balaclavas, and jackboots, one of two groups identifiable by costume. The other was a group of 300 children who had dressed brightly as turtles in the Sierra Club march the day before.

The costumes were part of a serious complaint against the WTO. When the United States attempted to block imports of shrimp caught in the same nets that capture and drown 150,000 sea turtles each year, the WTO called the block “arbitrary and unjustified.” Thus far in every environmental dispute that has come before the WTO, its three-judge panels, which deliberate in secret, have ruled for business, against the environment. The panel members are selected from lawyers and officials who are not educated in biology, the environment, social issues, or anthropology.

Opening ceremonies for the World Trade Organization’s Third Ministerial were to have been held that Tuesday morning at the Paramount Theater near the Convention Center. Police had ringed the theater with Metro buses touching bumper to bumper. The protesters surrounded the outside of that steel circle. Only a few hundred of the 5,000 delegates made it inside, as police were unable to provide safe corridors for members and ambassadors. The theater was virtually empty when US trade representative and meeting



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direct action. No movie stars starred. There was no alpha group. The Ruckus Society, Rainforest Action Network, Global Exchange, and hundreds more were there, coordinated primarily by cell phones, e-mails, and the Direct Action Network. They were up against the Seattle Police Department, the Secret Service, and the FBI – to say nothing of the media coverage and the WTO itself.

Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times* columnist and author of an encomium to globalization entitled *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, angrily wrote that the demonstrators were “a Noah’s ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions and yuppies looking for their 1960s fix.”

Not so. They were organized, educated, and determined. They were human rights activists, labor activists, indigenous people,

co-chair Charlene Barshevsky was to have delivered the opening keynote. Instead, she was captive in her hotel room a block from the meeting site. WTO executive director Michael Moore was said to have been apoplectic.

Inside the Paramount, Mayor Paul Schell stood despondently near the stage. Since no scheduled speakers were present, Kevin Danaher, Medea Benjamin, and Juliet Beck from Global Exchange went to the lectern and offered to begin a dialogue in the meantime. The WTO had not been able to come to a pre-meeting consensus on the draft agenda. The NGO community, however, had drafted a consensus agreement about globalization – and the three thought this would be a good time to present it, even if the hall had only a desultory number of delegates. Although the three were credentialed WTO delegates, the sound system was quickly turned off and the police arm-locked and handcuffed them. Medea's wrist was sprained. All were dragged off stage and arrested.

The arrests mirrored how the WTO has operated since its birth in 1995. Listening to people is not its strong point. WTO rules run roughshod over local laws and regulations. It relentlessly pursues the elimination of any restriction on the free flow of trade including local, national, or international laws that distinguish between products based on how they are made, by whom, or what happens during production.

The WTO is thus eliminating the ability of countries and regions to set standards, to express values, or to determine what they do or don't support. Child labor, prison labor, forced labor, substandard wages and working conditions cannot be used as a basis to discriminate against goods. Nor can a country's human rights record, environmental destruction, habitat loss, toxic waste production, or the presence of transgenic materials or synthetic hormones be used as the basis to screen or stop goods from entering a country. Under WTO rules, the Sullivan Principles and the boycott of South Africa would not have existed. If the world could vote on the WTO, would it pass? Not one country of

the 135 member-states of the WTO has held a plebiscite to see if its people support the WTO mandate. The people trying to meet in the Green Rooms at the Seattle Convention Center were not elected. Even Michael Moore was not elected.

While Global Exchange was temporarily silenced, the main organizer of the downtown protests, the Direct Action Network (DAN), was executing a plan that was working brilliantly outside the Convention Center. The plan was simple: insert groups of trained nonviolent activists into key points downtown, making it impossible for delegates to move. DAN had hoped that 1,500 people would show up. Close to 10,000 did. The 2,000 people who began the march to the Convention Center at 7 a.m. from Victor Steinbrueck Park and Seattle Central Community

College were composed of affinity groups and clusters whose responsibility was to block key intersections and entrances. Participants had trained for many weeks in some cases, for many hours in others. Each affinity group had its own mission and was self-organized. The streets around the Convention Center were divided into 13 sections and individual groups and clusters were responsible for holding these sections. There were also "flying groups" that moved at will from section to section, backing up groups under attack as needed. The groups were further divided into those willing to be arrested and those who were not.

All decisions prior to the demonstrations were reached by consensus. Minority views were heeded and included. The one thing all agreed to was that there would be no violence – physical or verbal – no weapons, no drugs or alcohol.

Throughout most of the day, using a variety of techniques, groups held intersections and key areas downtown. As protesters were beaten, gassed, clubbed, and pushed back, a new group would replace them. There were



George P. Hickey / Impact Visuals

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no charismatic leaders barking orders. There was no command chain. There was no one in charge. Police said that they were not prepared for the level of violence, but, as one protester later commented, what they were unprepared for was a network of non-violent protesters totally committed to one task – shutting down the WTO.

### The victory that wasn't

Meanwhile, Moore and Barshevsky's frustration was growing by the minute. Their anger and disappointment was shared by Madeleine Albright, the Clinton advance team, and, back in Washington, by chief of staff John Podesta. This was to have been a celebration, a victory, one of the crowning achievements to showcase the Clinton administration, the moment when it would consolidate its centrist free trade policies, allowing the Democrats to show multinational corporations that they could deliver the goods.

This was to have been Barshevsky's moment, an event that would give her the inside track to become Secretary of Commerce in the Gore Administration. This was



to have been Michael Moore's moment, reviving what had been a mediocre political ascendancy in New Zealand. To say nothing of Monsanto's moment. If the as-yet unapproved draft agenda were ever ratified, the Europeans could no longer block or demand labeling on genetically modified crops without being slapped with punitive lawsuits and tariffs. The draft also contained provisions that would allow all water in the world to be privatized. It would allow corporations patent protection on all forms of life, even genetic material in cultural use for thousands of years. Farmers who have spent thousands of years growing crops in a valley in India could, within a decade, be required to pay for their water. They could also find that they would have to purchase seeds containing genetic traits their ancestors developed, from companies that have engineered the seeds not to reproduce unless the farmer annually buys expensive chemicals to restore seed viability. If this happens, the CEOs of Novartis and Enron, two of the companies creating the seeds and privatizing the water, will have more money. What will Indian farmers have?

But the perfect moment for Barshevsky, Moore and Monsanto didn't arrive. The meeting couldn't start. Demonstrators were everywhere. Private security guards locked

down the hotels. The downtown stores were shut. Hundreds of delegates were on the street trying to get into the Convention Center. No one could help them. For WTO delegates accustomed to an ordered corporate or governmental world, it was a calamity.

UP PIKE TOWARD SEVENTH and to Randy's and my right on Sixth, protesters faced armored cars, horses, and police in full riot gear. In between, demonstrators ringed the Sheraton to prevent an alternative entry to the Convention Center. At one point, police guarding the steps to the lobby pummeled and broke through a crowd of protesters to let eight delegates in. On Sixth Street, Sergeant Richard Goldstein asked demonstrators seated on the street in front of the police line "to cooperate" and move back 40 feet. No one understood why, but that hardly mattered. No one was going to move. He announced that "chemical irritants" would be used if they did not leave.

The police were anonymous. No facial expressions, no face. You could not see their eyes. They were masked Hollywood caricatures burdened with 60 to 70 pounds of weaponry. These were not the men and women of the 6th precinct. They were the Gang Squads and the SWAT teams of the Tactical Operations Divisions, closer in training to soldiers from the School of the Americas than local cops on the beat. Behind them and around were special forces from the FBI, the Secret Service, even the CIA.

The police were almost motionless. They were equipped with US military standard M40A1 double-canister gas masks, uncalibrated, semi-automatic, high velocity Autocockers loaded with solid plastic shot, Monadnock disposable plastic cuffs, Nomex slash-resistant gloves, Commando boots, Centurion tactical leg guards, combat harnesses, DK5-H pivot-and-lock riot face shields, black Monadnock P24 polycarbonate riot batons with Trum Bull stop side handles, No. 2 continuous discharge CS (ortho-chlorobenzylidene-malononitrile) chemical grenades, M651

CN (chloroacetophenone) pyrotechnic grenades, T16 Flameless OC Expulsion Grenades, DTCA rubber bullet grenades (Stingers), M-203 (40mm) grenade launchers, First Defense MK-46 Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) aerosol tanks with hose and wands, .60 caliber rubber ball impact munitions, lightweight tactical Kevlar composite ballistic helmets, combat butt packs, .30 cal. 30-round magazine pouches, and Kevlar body armor. None of the police had visible badges or forms of identification.

The demonstrators seated in front of the black-clad ranks were equipped with hooded jackets for protection against rain and chemicals. They carried toothpaste and baking powder for protection of their skin, and wet cotton cloths impregnated with vinegar to cover their mouths and noses after a tear gas release. In their backpacks were bottled water and food for the day ahead.

Ten Koreans came around the corner carrying a 10-foot banner protesting genetically modified foods. They were impeccable in white robes, sashes, and headbands. One was a priest. They played flutes and drums and marched straight toward the police and behind the seated demonstrators. Everyone cheered at the sight and chanted, "The whole world is watching." The sun broke through the gauzy clouds. It was a beautiful day. Over cell phones, we could hear the cheers coming from the labor rally at the football stadium. The air was still and quiet.

At 10 a.m. the police fired the first seven canisters of tear gas into the crowd. The whitish clouds wafted slowly down the street. The seated protesters were overwhelmed, yet most did not budge. Police poured over them. Then came the truncheons, and the rubber bullets.

I was with a couple of hundred people who had ringed the hotel, arms locked. We watched as long as we could until the tear gas slowly enveloped us. We were several hundred feet from Sgt. Goldstein's 40-foot "cooperation" zone. Police pushed and truncheoned their way through and behind us. We covered our faces with rags and cloth, snatching glimpses of the people

being clubbed in the street before shutting our eyes.

The gas was a fog through which people moved in slow, strange dances of shock and pain and resistance. Tear gas is a misnomer. Think about feeling asphyxiated and blinded. Breathing becomes labored. Vision is blurred. The mind is disoriented. The nose and throat burn. It's not a gas, it's a drug. Gas-masked police hit, pushed, and speared us with the butt ends of their batons. We all sat down, hunched over, and locked arms more tightly. By then, the tear gas was so strong our eyes couldn't open. One by one, our heads were jerked back from the rear, and pepper was sprayed directly into each eye. It was very professional. Like hair spray from a stylist. Ssst. Ssst.

Pepper spray is derived from food-grade cayenne peppers. The spray used in Seattle is the strongest available, with a 1.5 to 2.0 million Scoville heat unit rating. One to three Scoville units are when your tongue can first detect hotness. (The habanero, usually considered the hottest pepper in the world, is rated around 300,000 Scoville units.) This description was written by a police officer who sells pepper spray on his website. It is about his first experience being sprayed during a training exercise:

"It felt as if two red-hot pieces of steel were grinding into my eyes, as if someone was blowing a red-hot cutting torch into my face. I fell to the ground just like all the others and started to rub my eyes even

though I knew better not too. The heat from the pepper spray was overwhelming. I could not resist trying to rub it off of my face. The pepper spray caused my eyes to shut very quickly. The only way I could open them was by prying them open with my fingers. Everything that we had been taught about pepper spray had turned out to be true. And everything that our instructor had told us that we would do, even though we knew not to do it, we still did. Pepper spray turned out to be more than I had bargained for."

As I tried to find my way down Sixth Avenue after the tear gas and pepper spray, I couldn't see. The person who found and guided me was Anita Roddick, the founder of the Body Shop, and probably the only CEO in the world who wanted to be on the streets of Seattle helping people that day.

When your eyes fail, your ears take over. I could hear acutely. What I heard was anger, dismay, shock. For many people, including the police, this was their first direct action. Demonstrators who had taken nonviolent training were astonished at the police brutality. The demonstrators were students, their professors, clergy, lawyers, and medical personnel. They held signs against Burma and violence. They dressed as butterflies.

The Seattle Police had made a decision not to arrest people on the first day of the protests (a decision that was reversed for the rest of the week). Throughout the day, the affinity groups created through Direct Action stayed together. Tear gas, rubber bullets, and pepper spray were used so

frequently that by late afternoon, supplies ran low. What seemed like an afternoon lull

or standoff was because police had used up all their stores. Officers combed surrounding counties for tear gas, sprays, concussion grenades, and munitions. As police restocked, the word came down from the White House to secure downtown Seattle or the WTO meeting would be called off. By late afternoon, the mayor and police chief announced a 7 p.m. curfew and "no protest" zones, and declared the city under civil emergency. The police were fatigued and frustrated. Over the next seven hours and into the night, the police turned downtown Seattle into Beirut.

That morning, it was the police commanders who were out of control, ordering the gassing and pepper spraying and shooting of people protesting nonviolently. By evening, it was the individual police who were out of control. Anger erupted, protesters were kneed and kicked in the groin, and police used their thumbs to grind the eyes of pepper-spray victims. A few demonstrators danced on burning dumpsters that were ignited by pyrotechnic tear gas grenades (the same ones used in Waco).

Protesters were defiant. Tear gas canisters were thrown back as fast as they were launched. Drum corps marched using empty 5-gallon water bottles for instruments. Despite their steadily dwindling number, maybe 1,500 by evening, a hardy number of protesters held their ground, seated in front of heavily armed police, hands raised in peace signs, submitting to tear gas, pepper spray, and riot batons. As they retreated to the medics, new groups replaced them.

Every channel covered the police riots live. On TV, the police looked absurd, frantic, and mean. Passing Metro buses filled with passengers were gassed. Police were pepper spraying residents and bystanders.

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The mayor went on TV that night to say, that as a protester from the '60s, he never could have imagined what he was going to do next: call in the National Guard.

## Lawlessness

This is what I remember about the violence. There was almost none until police attacked demonstrators that Tuesday in Seattle. Michael Meacher, environment minister of the United Kingdom, said afterward, "What we hadn't reckoned with was the Seattle Police Department, who single-handedly



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managed to turn a peaceful protest into a riot." There was no police restraint, despite what Mayor Paul Schell kept proudly assuring television viewers all day. Instead, there were rubber bullets, which Schell kept denying all day. In the end, more copy and video was given to broken windows than broken teeth.

During that day, the anarchist black blocs were in full view. Numbering about one hundred, they could have been arrested at any time but the police were so weighed down by their own equipment, they literally couldn't run. Both the police and the Direct Action Network had mutually apprised each other for months prior to the WTO about the anarchists' intentions. The Eugene Police had volunteered information and specific techniques to handle the black blocs but had been rebuffed by the Seattle Police. It was widely known they would be there and that they had property damage in mind. To the credit of the mayor, the police chief, and

the Seattle press, distinctions were consistently made between the protesters and the anarchists (later joined by local vandals as the night wore on). But the anarchists were not primitivists, nor were they all from Eugene. They were well organized, and they had a plan.

The black blocs came with tools (crow-bars, hammers, acid-filled eggs) and hit lists. They knew they were going after Fidelity Investments but not Charles Schwab. Starbucks but not Tully's. The GAP but not REI. Fidelity Investments because they are large investors in Occidental Petroleum, the oil company most responsible for the violence against the U'wa tribe in Columbia. Starbucks because of their non-support of fair-traded coffee. The GAP because of the Fisher family's purchase of Northern California forests. They targeted multinational corporations that they see as benefiting from repression, exploitation of workers, and low

wages. According to one anarchist group, the ACME collective: "Most of us have been studying the effects of the global economy, genetic engineering, resource extraction, transportation, labor practices, elimination of indigenous autonomy, animal rights, and human rights, and we've been doing activism on these issues for many years. We are neither ill-informed nor inexperienced." They don't believe we live in a democracy, do believe that property damage (windows and tagging primarily) is a legitimate form of protest, and that it is not violent unless it harms or causes pain to a person. For the black blocs, breaking windows is intended to break the spells cast by corporate hegemony, an attempt to shatter the smooth exterior facade that covers corporate crime and violence. That's what they did. And what the media did is what I just did in the last two paragraphs: focus inordinately on the tiniest sliver of the 40-60,000 marchers and demonstrators.

It's not inapt to compare the pointed lawlessness of the anarchists with the carefully considered ability of the WTO to flout laws of sovereign nations. When "The Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations" was enacted April 15th, 1994, in Marrakech, it was recorded as a 550-page agreement that was then sent to Congress for passage. Ralph Nader offered to donate \$10,000 to any charity of a congressman's choice if any of them signed an affidavit saying they had read it and could answer several questions about it. Only one congressman - Senator Hank Brown, a Colorado Republican - took him up on it. After reading the document, Brown changed his opinion and voted against the Agreement.

There were no public hearings, dialogues, or education. What passed is an Agreement that gives the WTO the ability to overrule or undermine international conventions, acts, treaties, and agreements. The WTO directly violates "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" adopted by member nations of the United Nations, not to mention Agenda 21. (The proposed draft agenda presented in Seattle went further in that it would require Multilateral Agreements on the Environment such as the Montreal Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Kyoto Protocol to be in alignment and subordinate to WTO trade policies.) The final Marrakech Agreement contained provisions that most of the delegates, even the heads-of-country delegations, were not aware of, statutes that were drafted by sub-groups of bureaucrats and lawyers, some of whom represented transnational corporations.

The police mandate to clear downtown was achieved by 9 p.m. Tuesday night. But police, some of whom were fresh recruits from outlying towns, didn't want to stop there. They chased demonstrators into neighborhoods where the distinctions between protesters and citizens vanished. The police began attacking bystanders, residents, and commuters. They had lost control. When President Clinton sped from Boeing airfield to the Westin Hotel at 1:30

a.m. Wednesday, his limousines entered a police-ringed city of broken glass, helicopters, and boarded windows. He was too late. The mandate for the WTO had vanished sometime that afternoon.

### Media myths and legends

The next morning and over the next days, a surprised press corps went to work and spun webs. They vented thinly veiled anger in their columns, and pointed guilt-mongering fingers at brash, misguided white kids. They created myths, told fables. What a majority of media projected onto the marchers and activists, in an often-contradictory manner, was that the protesters are afraid of a world without walls; that they want the WTO to have even more rules; that anarchists led by John Zerzan from Eugene ran rampant; that they blame the WTO for the world's problems; that they are opposed to global integration; that they are against trade; that they are ignorant and insensitive to the world's poor; that they want to tell other people how to live. The list is long and tendentious. Outstanding coverage came from Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now* on Pacifica radio and *The Nation*.

Patricia King, one of 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: 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 Confederation Paysanne Européenne, Tetteh Hormoku of the Third World Network in Africa, Randy Hayes of Rainforest Action Network...

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 Kaczynski, in the article because he had, at one time, purchased some of John Zerzan's writings.

Some of the mainstream media also assigned blame to the protesters for the meeting's outcome. But ultimately, it was not on the streets that the WTO broke down. It was inside. It was a heated and rancorous Ministerial, and the meeting ended in a stalemate, with African, Caribbean, and some Asian countries refusing to support a draft agenda that had been negotiated behind closed doors without their participation. With that much contention inside and out, one can rightly ask whether the correct question is being posed. The question, as propounded by corporations, is how to make trade rules more uniform. The proper question, it seems to me, is how do we make trade rules more differentiated so that different cultures, cities, peoples, places, and countries benefit the most. Arnold Toynbee wrote that "Civilizations in decline are consistently characterized by a tendency toward standardization and uniformity. Conversely, during the growth stage of civilization, the tendency is toward differentiation and diversity."

Those who marched and protested opposed the tyrannies of globalization, uniformity, and corporatization, but they did not necessarily oppose internationalization of trade. Economist Herman Daly has long made the distinction between the two.

Internationalization means trade between nations. Globalization refers to a system where there are uniform rules for the entire world, a world in which capital and goods move at will without the rule of individual nations. Nations, for all their faults, set trade standards. Those who are willing to meet those standards can do business with them. Do nations abuse this? Always and constantly, the US being the worst offender. But nations do provide, where democracies prevail, a means for people to set their own policy, to influence decisions, and determine their future. Globalization supplants the nation, the state, the region, and the village. While eliminating nationalism is indeed a good idea, the elimination of sovereignty is not.

### Globalization's winners & losers

One recent example of the power of the WTO is Chiquita Brands International, a \$2 billion dollar corporation that recently made a large donation to the Democratic Party. Coincidentally, the United States filed a complaint with the WTO against the European Union because European import policies favored bananas coming from small Caribbean growers instead of the banana conglomerates. The Europeans freely admitted their bias and policy: they restricted imports from large multinational companies in Central America (plantations whose lands were secured by US military force during the past century) and favored small family farmers from former colonies who used fewer chemicals. It seemed like a decent thing to do, and everyone thought the bananas tasted better. For the banana giants, this was untenable. The United States prevailed in this WTO-arbitrated case. So who won and who lost? Did the Central American employees at Chiquita Brands win? Ask the hundreds of workers in Honduras who were made infertile by the use of dibromochloropropane on the banana plantations. Ask the mothers whose children have birth defects from pesticide poisoning. Did the shareholders of Chiquita win? At the end of 1999, Chiquita Brands was losing money because it was selling

bananas at below cost to muscle its way into the European market. Its stock was at a 13-year low, the shareholders were angry, the company was up for sale, but the prices of bananas in Europe are really cheap. Who lost? Caribbean farmers who could formerly make a living and send their kids to school can no longer do so because of low prices and demand.

Globalization leads to the concentration of wealth inside such large multinational corporations as Time-Warner, Microsoft, GE, Exxon, and Wal-Mart. These giants can obliterate social capital and local equity, and create cultural homogeneity in their wake. Countries as different as Mongolia, Bhutan, and Uganda will have no choice but to allow Blockbuster, Burger King, and Pizza Hut to operate within their borders. Under WTO, even decisions made by local communities to refuse McDonald's entry (as did Martha's Vineyard) could be overruled. The as-yet unapproved draft agenda calls for WTO member governments to open up their procurement process to multinational corporations. No longer could local governments buy preferentially from local vendors. The WTO could force governments to privatize healthcare and allow foreign companies to bid on delivering national health programs. The draft agenda could privatize and commodify education, and could ban cultural restrictions on entertainment, advertising, or commercialism as trade barriers. Globalization kills self-reliance, since smaller local businesses can rarely compete with highly capitalized firms who seek market share instead of profits. Thus, developing regions may become more subservient to distant companies, with more of their income exported rather than re-spent locally.

On the weekend prior to the WTO meeting, the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) held a two-day teach-in at Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle on just such questions of how countries can maintain autonomy in the face of globalization. Chaired by IFG president Jerry Mander, more than 2,500 people from around the world attended. A similar number were turned away. It was the hottest ticket

in town (but somehow that ticket did not get into the hands of pundits and columnists). It was an extravagant display of research, intelligence, and concern, expressed by scholars, diplomats, writers, academics, fishermen, scientists, farmers, geneticists, businesspeople, and lawyers. Prior to the teach-in, non-governmental organizations, institutes, public interest law firms, farmers' organizations, unions, and councils had been issuing papers, communiqués, press releases, books, and pamphlets for years. They were almost entirely ignored by the WTO.

### A clash of chronologies

But something else was happening in Seattle underneath the debates and protests. In Stewart Brand's new book, *The Clock of the Long Now – Time and Responsibility*, he discusses what makes a civilization resilient and adaptive. Scientists have studied the same question about ecosystems. How does a system, be it cultural or natural, manage change, absorb shocks, and survive, especially when change is rapid and accelerating? The answer has much to do with time, both our use of it and our respect for it. Biological diversity in ecosystems buffers against sudden shifts because different organisms and elements fluctuate at different time scales. Flowers, fungi, spiders, trees, laterite, and foxes all have different rates of change and response. Some respond quickly, others slowly, so that the system, when subjected to stress, can move, sway, and give, and then return and restore.

The WTO was a clash of chronologies or time frames, at least three, probably more. The dominant time frame was commercial. Businesses are quick, welcome innovation in general, and have a bias for change. They need to grow more quickly than ever before. They are punished, pummeled and bankrupted if they do not. With worldwide capital mobility, companies and investments are rewarded or penalized instantly by a network of technocrats and money managers who move \$2 trillion a day seeking the highest return on capital. The Internet, greed, global communications, and high-speed

transportation are all making businesses move faster than before.

The second time frame is culture. It moves more slowly. Cultural revolutions are resisted by deeper, historical beliefs. The first institution to blossom under *perestroika* was the Russian Orthodox Church. I walked into a church near Boris Pasternak's dacha in 1989 and heard priests and *babushkas* reciting the litany with perfect recall as if 72 years of repression had never happened. Culture provides the slow template of change within which family, community, and religion prosper. Culture provides identity and in a fast-changing world of displacement and rootlessness, becomes ever more important. In between culture and business is governance, faster than culture, slower than commerce.

At the heart, the third and slowest chronology is Earth, nature, the web of life. As ephemeral as it may seem, it is the slowest clock ticking, always there, responding to long, ancient evolutionary cycles that are beyond civilization.

These three chronologies often conflict. As Stewart Brand points out, business unchecked becomes crime. Look at Russia. Look at Microsoft. Look at history. What makes life worthy and allows civilizations to endure are all the things that have "bad" payback under commercial rules: infrastructure, universities, temples, poetry, choirs, literature, language, museums, terraced fields, long marriages, line dancing, and art. Most everything we hold valuable is slow to develop, slow to learn, and slow to change. Commerce requires the governance of politics, art, culture, and nature, to slow it down, to make it heedful, to make it pay attention to people and place. It has never done this on its own. The extirpation of languages, cultures, forests, and fisheries is occurring worldwide in the name of speeding up business. Business itself is stressed out of its mind by rapid change. The rate of change is unnerving to all, even to those who are supposedly benefiting. To those who are not, it is devastating.

What marched in the streets of Seattle? Slower time strode into the WTO. Ancient



identity emerged. The cloaks of the forgotten paraded on the backs of our children.

What appeared in Seattle were the details, dramas, stories, peoples, and puppet creatures that had been ignored by the bankers, diplomats, and the rich. Corporate leaders believe they have discovered a treasure of immeasurable value, a trove so great that surely we will all benefit. It is the treasure of unimpeded commerce flowing everywhere as fast as is possible. But in Seattle, quick time met slow time. The turtles, farmers, workers, and priests weren't invited and don't need to be because they are the shadow world that cannot be overlooked, that will tail and haunt the WTO, and all its successors, for as long as it exists. They will be there even if they meet in totalitarian countries where free speech is criminalized. They will be there in dreams of delegates high in the Four Seasons Hotel. They will haunt the public relations flacks who solemnly insist that putting the genes of scorpions into our food is a good thing. What gathered around the Convention Center and hotels was everything the WTO left behind.

In the Inuit tradition, there is a story of a fisherman who trolls an inlet. When a heavy pull on the fisherman's line drags his kayak to sea, he thinks he has caught the "big one," a fish so large he can eat for weeks, a fish so fat that he will prosper ever after, a fish so amazing that the whole village will wonder at his prowess. As he imagines his fame and coming ease, what he reels up is Skeleton Woman, a woman flung from a cliff and buried long ago, a fish-eaten carcass resting at the bottom of the sea that is now entangled in his line. Skeleton Woman is so snarled in his fishing line that she is dragged behind the fisherman wherever he goes. She is pulled across the water, over the

beach, and into his house where he collapses in terror. In the retelling of this story by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, the fisherman has brought up a woman who represents life and death, a specter who reminds us that with every beginning there is an ending, for all that is taken, something must be given in return, that the earth is cyclical and requires respect. The fisherman, feeling pity for her, slowly disentangles her, straightens her bony carcass, and finally falls asleep. During the night, Skeleton Woman scratches and crawls her way across the floor, drinks the tears of the dreaming fisherman,



## Slower time strode into the WTO. Ancient identity emerged. The cloaks of the forgotten paraded on the backs of our children

and grows anew her flesh and heart and body. This myth applies to business as much as it does to a fisherman. The apologists for the WTO want more-engineered food, sleeker planes, computers everywhere, golf courses that are preternaturally green. They see no limits; they know of no downside. But Life always comes with Death, with a tab, a reckoning. They are each other's consorts, inseparable and fast. These expansive dreams of the world's future

wealth were met with perfect symmetry by Bill Gates III, the co-chair of the Seattle Host Committee, the world's richest man. But Skeleton Woman also showed up in Seattle, the uninvited guest, and the illusion of wealth, the imaginings of unfettered growth and expansion, became small and barren in the eyes of the world. Dancing, drumming, ululating, marching in black with a symbolic coffin for the world, she wove through the sulfurous rainy streets of the night. She couldn't be killed or de-

stroyed, no matter how much gas or pepper spray or how many rubber bullets were used. She kept coming back and sitting in front of the police and raised her hands in the peace sign, and was kicked and trod upon, and it didn't make any difference. Skeleton Woman told corporate delegates and rich nations that they could not have the world. It is not for sale. The illusions of world domination have to die, as do all illusions. Skeleton Woman was there to say that if business is going to trade with the world, it has to recognize and honor the world, her life, and her people. Skeleton Woman was

telling the WTO that it has to grow up and be brave enough to listen, strong enough to yield, courageous enough to give. Skeleton Woman has been brought up from the depths. She has regained her eyes, voice, and spirit. She is about in the world and her dreams are different. She believes that the right to self-sufficiency is a human right; she imagines a world where the means to kill people is not a business but a crime, where families do not starve, where fathers can work, where children are never sold, where women cannot be impoverished because they choose to be mothers and not whores. She cannot see in any dream a time where a man holds a patent to a living seed, or animals are factories, or people are enslaved by money, or water belongs to a stockholder. Hers are deep dreams from slow time. She is patient. She will not be quiet or flung to sea anytime soon.

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