

REFLECTIONS ON STRATEGY FOR LABOUR

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To speak of strategy *for labour* needs some justification today. Class analysis went out of intellectual fashion almost two decades ago; and class politics has been increasingly displaced as the pivot of party political discourse and electoral mobilization. Class, as we have been so often reminded, is not everything.

But nor is class nothing, and the costs of the marginalization of class in the intellectual and political arena are becoming increasingly severe, especially in the context of ‘globalization’—which is another word for the reach of American imperialism, the power of financial markets, the spread of capitalist social relations, the intensification of exploitation and a vast growth in social inequality. An extensive process of what looks like classic proletarianization is taking place in many countries of the so-called ‘developing’ world; and in the advanced capitalist world the decline in the size of the traditional industrial labour force is accompanied by the proletarianization of many service and professional occupations and the spread of more unstable, casual and contingent employment. These are developments that can only be comprehended through a revival of class analysis; and they may also provide the grounds for new strategies for labour which transcend the limits of the old forms of class politics.

The discourse of ‘civil society’ has made a strong bid to displace the discourse of class on the left. It is intended to present a more inclusive and pluralist approach than the old class politics in terms of identifying those social forces which are the fount of political freedom and progressive change. But one of the ironies of this discourse’s claim to inclusivity is that it has often left labour out, having afforded almost no vantage point for observing that arena of non-freedom within civil society, the work-place, where most people, in selling the right to determine what they do with their time and abilities, enter an authoritarian relationship with an employer within which freedom of speech and

assembly are considerably attenuated.¹ Moreover, despite the central importance which the discourse of civil society properly gives to associational autonomy from the state, there has been a remarkable silence in most of the civil society literature regarding state attacks on trade unions over the past two decades—making organizing harder and decertification easier, restricting or removing the right to strike, and so on. It sometimes even appears that trade unions have a better appreciation of what is entailed in securing freedom of association than many contemporary NGOs: contrast the financial dependence on government grants of so many NGOs with the trade unions' traditional sensitivity (famously articulated even by such non-radical labour leaders as Samuel Gompers) to the danger posed by state funding for associational autonomy.

To be fair, the labour movement's capacity to collect dues (often institutionalized in collective bargaining arrangements) is not open to the NGOs and new social movements. Yet this very fact has made some of these movements rely on the labour movement for the funding of various campaigns. It is unfortunately the case that trade unions often use their financial clout to narrow or moderate these campaigns; but this precisely speaks to the need for a new strategy for labour. It is now obvious—it always should have been—that there is nothing inevitable about the working class becoming a transformative agency. Not only reformist and revolutionary, but even reactionary practices have issued from the working classes. But what is also true is that, unless a very substantial part of the labour movement becomes involved, no fundamental socio-economic change is realizable.

This is why even as harsh a critic as Andre Gorz, despite having famously bid 'farewell to the working class' at the beginning of the 1980s, had returned by the 1990s to thinking again about a 'strategy for labour'—as he had originally done in his famous book of that name in 1964. The very success of the new social movements—whose specific campaigns were not only 'mould[ing] the consciousness of a growing number of people' but contained the promise of 'a wider, more fundamental struggle for emancipation'—had brought out the necessity for this:

The fact that the trade-union movement is—and will remain—the best organized force in the broader movement confers on it a particular responsibility; on it will largely depend the success or failure of all the other elements in this social movement. According to whether the trade-union movement opposes them or whether it seeks a common alliance and a common course of action with them, these other elements will be part of the left or will break with it, will engage with it in collective action or will remain minorities tempted to resort to violence.²

A new strategy for labour would mean altering labour movements themselves in fundamental ways, but what Gorz came to see was that the trade unions' indifference or hostility to the new social movements was neither fore-

ordained nor unchangeable. As he put it: ‘The attitude towards the other social movements and their objectives will determine [the labour movement’s] own evolution’.

That this may be an opportune moment to address new strategies for labour is suggested not only by the strikes in so many countries in recent years (as this volume was finalized, in May/June 2000, there were general strikes in Argentina, India, Korea, Nigeria and South Africa); or by recent surveys that show rising class awareness even in the USA where working-class self-identification has historically been very low.³ What is much more important than these instances of conflict and consciousness is the fact that *labour is changing in ways that make it a more inclusive social agent*. The main developments here have been women’s massive (re)entry into the labour force and changing patterns of migration, both of which have recomposed the working classes of many countries and made them into very different classes in both objective and subjective terms than they were even a quarter-century or so ago. Working classes have, of course, always been made up of many diverse elements: what is significant is the way the old labour movements are being changed by the recomposition of the working classes in our time.⁴

The image many people, including many on the left, have of labour is outdated. Feminism and environmentalism, even gay rights activism, have had a visible effect within the labour movement, and the discourse and, in many cases, the practice of unions reflects this. Of course, these changes are very uneven around the globe, and there is substantial variation even within each national labour movement, and sometimes even within each union. Sexism, racism and homophobia continue to be serious problems and hostility to environmental issues among those unions whose members’ jobs are directly affected remains strong. Even among those which have learned to ‘talk the talk’, there is often far to go in terms of the issues to which unions actually assign priority—and tensions can be severe when change goes so far as to induce a clash of priorities. Yet, it is also true, as many of the essays in this volume have demonstrated, that there is far more pluralism in today’s working classes than is allowed for in the perspectives of those who find it convenient to essentialize labour as male, white and straight. This new pluralism is one of the main reasons why new strategies for labour are needed.

The case to be argued here for a new strategy for labour in no way implies that what the new social movements do is somehow ‘less important’. On the contrary, if we concentrate on strategy for labour it is only because, with Gorz, we think the enormous potential of the new social movements for social transformation will only be realized if labour finally takes enthusiastically on board the key emancipatory themes raised by the other movements. But at the same time, the new social movements themselves can hardly ignore their own need for strategy for labour. Many of the essays in this volume have addressed the experience and possibilities of feminism in relation to labour, and the challenge that this entails not only for unions but also for a feminist movement that wants

to speak to immigrant ‘maids’ as well as their professional ‘mistresses’. Nor can the issue of strategy for labour in the environmental movement be ignored: this is seen in the internal debates that go on within environmental groups over whether the priority often attached to high profile campaigns as necessary for fund-raising among the well-to-do comes at the expense of addressing the environment as a matter of public health in working-class communities.

If the working classes of every country have always been diverse, then the fact that they are becoming more so in our time ought to be a source of strength—and it will be the task of new strategies for labour in unions as well as political and social movements to unleash that strength. The notion of solidarity would never have made any sense if the working classes were homogeneous to begin with. Solidarity as process has always been about, not ignoring or eliminating, but *transcending* working-class diversity—and this has meant gaining strength via forging unity of purpose out of *strategies of inclusiveness* rather than repressing diversity. At the core of all the failures of past labour strategies lay the inability to build solidarity in this sense as effectively as possible.⁵ The organization within unions of caucuses, conferences, committees among women or minority members is a healthy development precisely because it allows additional space within the union for capacity-building among those who have suffered most from discrimination or marginalization. The challenge is to discover (and to overcome resistance to attempts to discover) how to build fully inclusive labour movements which are democratically structured in such ways as to encourage the development of the capacities of *all* members of the working class in as many facets of their lives as possible.

II

But to say new strategies are needed, does not get us far in determining what they should be. Social movement activists have rightly been wary that many traditional labour attitudes and old strategies are recipes for failure and that the labour movement’s clinging to them, even if sometimes clothed in new language, is a major factor in blocking social change. The most favoured labour strategies have indeed turned out to be failures, partly due to changing conditions represented under the symbol of globalization, but also partly due to fundamental flaws in the strategies themselves, flaws which were already visible under the old conditions.

In speaking of this, one should not only count the obvious failures of the Communist parties and the insurrectionary left; or the no less obvious limitations of the American ‘service’ model of trade unionism. Many people on the left today take as their benchmark of success the European social democratic labour movements, especially in building the democratic ‘mixed economies’ in the post-war era. But the latter’s own failures, if less immediately obvious, are perhaps for that very reason the most important to come to understand. From today’s perspective of the defeat of the mixed economy by neoliberalism, these failures need to be measured above all in terms of the long-run effects of social

democratic labour movements having lulled themselves into ideological stupor and organizational inertia for three decades with illusions of the humanization of capitalism. In the wake of the post-war settlement and cold war, unions took little or no responsibility for the education of their supporters on the nature of capitalism as a system or for the development of popular democratic capacities for challenging that system and for collective self-government in every walk of life. It was in good part because of this that the neoliberal restoration proved possible in the face of the impasse of the Keynesian welfare state in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The ruthless competitive dynamism of capitalism reasserted itself in the form of free trade and foreign direct investment, the ascendancy of financial capital, and 'lean' production through job 'flexibility' and casualization. Labour movements were unprepared for all this—and, worse, had not prepared their members and supporters with the organizational and intellectual resources to readily understand what was happening; nor had they been encouraged to imagine any alternative. No wonder the bourgeoisie at the end of the twentieth century has once again been able 'to make the world in its own image'.

This is not a matter of hindsight being easy. These failures were evident enough even in the heyday of the 'mixed economy'. They were uppermost in Gorz's mind when his *Strategy for Labour* was first published in France in 1964. Gorz took direct aim against those predominant labour strategies which offered

no other perspective than that of increased *individual consumption*. In other words, they place the workers as a class on the tail end of the "consumer society" and its ideology; they do not challenge the model of that society, but only the share of the wealth which the society accords to the salaried consumer. They consciously bring into question neither the workers' condition at the place of work, nor the subordination of consumption to production; not even ... the diversion and confiscation of productive resources and human labour for frivolous and wasteful ends ... [It] is not that struggles over wages are useless; rather, it is that their effectiveness, in so far as mobilization, unification, and education of the working class are concerned, has become very limited. These struggles by themselves, even if they sometimes succeed in creating a crisis within capitalism, neither succeed in preventing capitalism from overcoming its difficulties in its own way, nor in preparing the working class sufficiently to outline and impose its own solutions ... On the contrary, the working class runs the risk of provoking a counteroffensive ... an attack levelled not only in the economic, but in the ideological, social and political realms; and the working class, because it did not also wage a fight in these spheres, would be unable to respond with the necessary alertness and cohesion.⁶

With the inflationary dynamic which undid the post-war order already on the horizon, Gorz also warned against union adhesion to corporatist incomes

policies, whereby they restrained their members' wage demands to try to stave off the crisis: 'The incomes policy merely expresses the political will of organized capitalism to integrate the union into the system, to subordinate consumption to production, and production to the maximization of profit. The union cannot defend itself against this political will except by an opposite and autonomous political will which is independent of party and state ...'. Corporatist partnerships with capital and the state foreclosed strategies directed at 'the socialization of the investment function', and without being able to challenge the determination of what was produced and how, the main effect of these corporatist arrangements could only be to subordinate union autonomy to social democratic governments which left 'the power of the capitalist state intact'. By virtue of not taking up 'structural reforms' to challenge and change the structure of power in the capitalist order, the post-war nationalizations and welfare reforms would not only be absorbed by the system but increasingly undermined: 'The only way the socialized sector can survive is by limiting capital's sphere of autonomy and countering its logic, by restraining its field of action, and bringing its potential centres of accumulation under social control ... (socialized medicine must control the pharmaceutical industry, social housing must control the building industry, for example), or else be nibbled away and exploited by the private sector'.⁷ Gorz clearly foresaw the main contours of the strategic failures of the labour movement that opened the way to the neoliberal restoration.

Yet as the 'new world order' represented by neoliberal globalization began to take shape, many of those who had earlier showed some indication of appreciating the problems Gorz had identified in European corporatism and social democracy now rushed to defend them as the only actually-existing alternatives to neoliberalism. A great deal of ink was spilled extolling the virtues of the Swedish or German or Austrian 'models' even as unions in these countries were themselves increasingly internally divided by corporatism's effects in terms of unevenly applied wage restraint and the loss of union autonomy. More significant still, given the real structure of power, even these 'models' of corporatism were being abandoned by employers, bureaucrats and politicians who had already redefined the parameters of economic management. In making the containment of inflation, not unemployment, the prime goal of economic policy, they had already given up on the strategy of securing the wage moderation of unions through corporatist negotiations on incomes policies, and had given priority instead to winning the confidence of financial markets with monetary policies designed to break union militancy through unemployment and job insecurity.

Nevertheless, the advocacy of 'social partnerships' between capital and labour has remained the main leitmotif of most 'pragmatic' and 'moderate' labour leaders and liberal and social democratic intellectuals in the new era. Sometimes this has been boldly put forward in terms of 'making capitalism an offer it cannot refuse' whereby unions have been urged to present themselves

in terms of ‘being able to solve problems for capitalists which they cannot solve on their own’.⁸ This attempt to revive a social partnership strategy in the context of globalization was generally guided by the argument that the one thing unions could offer that capital wanted was higher productivity. This ‘supply-side’ form of corporatism—what has been termed ‘progressive competitiveness’ in *The Socialist Register*—had at its core what Bienefeld called the ‘cargo-cult’ of training (‘if we train them, the jobs will come’): partnerships between unions, capital and state designed to ‘train’ workers to become so productive that they could compete with low-paid labour abroad, or at least so innovative that they could sustain the search for ‘niche’ markets.⁹

The problems with this as a strategy for labour were manifold. First of all, there were the obvious ethical ones. It is as though, seeing a man on the street, hungry and homeless, you perceive his problem only in terms of his not being motivated enough, entrepreneurial enough, skilled enough to get a job, rather than seeing that something must be wrong with the system. This kind of logic is applied, in the progressive competitiveness framework, to whole sectors, regions and economies. Even if such a strategy of export competitiveness were successful, its effect would be to export unemployment to the regions that are less successful. But the problems with such a strategy were also practical, embedded in the over-production that must attend a global system where everyone tries to increase their exports and limit their imports through domestic austerity, and in the financial instability that attends capital movements in such a system.

In so far as social democracy by the early 1990s still had any distinctiveness in terms of economic strategies, it was reduced to advocating an active role for states and unions in advancing the export competitiveness of this or that particular capitalist economy. This strategy exaggerated considerably what national capital was willing to do, or could do, to achieve competitiveness, even while, as with the old corporatist strategy, this new one also sacrificed the autonomy of labour to this end. For this reason, the ‘supply-side’ attempt to revive the corporatist approach, masquerading as a new strategy for labour, proved a dead end. With wage militancy and inflation having been broken by monetarism, and with the competitive dynamic of capitalism having already asserted itself in ‘free’ capital flows as well as free trade, the offer of a deal that couldn’t be refused was now usually met with a shrug or a blank stare. And when social democratic governments were elected, usually even before the new measures to implement corporatist ‘training’ strategies were put in place, let alone could have much effect, these governments were quickly overwhelmed by the problems of short-term economic management. Since everything hinged on the goal of co-operating with capital, they invariably placated financial markets by limiting imports and stabilizing the currency through fiscal austerity. Where social democracy went so far as to accede to capital’s insistence that the price of its co-operation was that social democracy jettison its own partnership with the unions what we had left was Blairism—which prides itself on not

conceiving its project as a strategy *for* labour at all, but rather a strategy for explicitly distancing itself from the labour movement.

It is worth noting, especially given this denouement, that Gorz's original *Strategy for Labour* proceeded from the exact opposite premise from that of offering capital a deal it could not refuse—'one which does not base its validity and its right to exist on capitalist needs, criteria and rationales'. The 'structural reforms' he advanced were 'determined not in terms of what can be, but what should be', and he based his strategy on 'the possibility of attaining its objectives on the implementation of fundamental political and economic changes'. These changes could be gradual, but the measure of structural reforms was that they effected 'a modification of the relations of power'—strengthening workers' capacities to 'establish, maintain, and expand those tendencies within the system which serve to weaken capitalism and to shake its joints'.¹⁰ In this way, a continuity could be 'established between the objectives of present mass struggles and the prospect of a socialist society'. The point was to build the kinds of organizations and to engage in the kinds of struggles through which workers might feel—'on all levels of their existence'—that elements of a desirable socialist society were actually discernable within their own world in the here and now. Compromises would still have to be struck, but this needed to be 'understood explicitly for what it is: the provisional result of the temporary relationship of forces, to be modified in future battles'.¹¹

Of course, this was not the approach most unions adopted in the face of globalization. Yet some did: I am aware of no better example of the distinction between offering capital 'a deal it cannot refuse' and Gorz's opposite strategic principle than that adopted by the Canadian Auto Workers union in the early 1980s—just as Gorz was (temporarily) bidding 'farewell to the working class'. The strategic principle the CAW adopted in the face of the big three auto companies demanding concessions from workers to meet the new global competition (leading to its break with its American parent 'international' union, the UAW) was straightforward: 'Competitiveness is a constraint, but it is not our goal'.¹²

III

Even if the 'progressive competitiveness' strategy is more clearly recognized today as a misguided response to globalization, it is nevertheless the case that no adequate new strategy for labour can evolve unless what is to be done about globalization is seriously addressed. It is first of all necessary to clear up some misconceptions. Globalization is not an objective economic process which labour needs to 'catch up to', as so many seem to think. It is a political process advanced by identifiable interests for clear purposes. The failure to see the strategic political nature of globalization reflects an economism which needs to be overcome. Nation states are not the victims of globalization, they are the authors of globalization. States are not *displaced* by globalized capital, they *represent* globalized capital, above all financial capital. This means that any adequate

strategy to challenge globalization must begin at home, precisely because of the key role of states in making globalization happen. But labour's traditional goal of securing a progressive alliance with their 'national bourgeoisie' under the aegis of the state is increasingly *passé*; for 'the state' more and more represents a set of (domestic and foreign) internationally-oriented capitalist classes.

What then is to be done? In order to answer this question we can usefully begin by looking again at the approach Gorz adopted in the mid-1960s to the European Community (as it then was), since it presented problems for European unions that in many ways anticipated those now facing all unions under full globalization. Indeed, one of the most fascinating things about reading Gorz's *Strategy for Labour* now is to see how relevant his analysis of the European Common Market at the time remains to the development of labour strategies in the context of globalization today. Gorz saw the Common Market in the first years of its existence—with its 'yearly average of 1,000 "mergers and agreements" between companies of different nationalities'—as a prerequisite of a new kind of 'monopoly expansion', whereby the nature of competition among big private corporations had shifted to the penetration of each others' interior markets. This entailed rationalization within and across sectors, but it also gave rise to over-investment and over-production, leading in turn to a further 'thrust of industrial and especially financial concentration'. Each state supported or sponsored its own big corporations, and as the financial risks entailed in this competitive mutual penetration of interior markets escalated, a degree of supra-national planning at the European level was needed. Such planning, however, 'obviously has nothing to do with real economic planning' since it was designed only to smooth out the contradictions of the competitive process in which 'the capitalists' freedom of action remains untouched'. If labour's goal was to attach union representatives to such supranational planning, it 'would obviously make a fool's bargain ... Cut off from the working masses ... the workers' representatives are under strong pressure to become technocrats, working out summit compromises which win a great deal less than mass action could have'.¹³

The recent history of European economic integration chillingly confirms this. Capital's room for manoeuvre has been greatly expanded, and so has the 'democratic deficit', embedding even further in the European Central Bank what each state's central banks had already represented in this respect. But as Andrew Martin and George Ross have demonstrated, what the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) saw as its 'breakthrough, beyond anything it could have reasonably expected' when it was suddenly embraced as a negotiating partner under Maastricht's Social Protocol, turned out to be only a breakthrough for the union bureaucracy in Brussels. The embrace 'turned out very different from what enthusiasts had foreseen in the heady days of 1985 to 1990' and left the ETUC 'essentially excluded from more fundamental matters of economic governance'. This was reflected in the sheer weakness of the Social Protocol actually negotiated under Maastricht (especially in so far as matters concerning pay or the rights to organize and strikes were entirely excluded).

Even the much-vaunted subsequent protocol mandating European Works Councils in MNCs (which covered only some ten percent of the European work-force in any case) left so much leeway to employers that it produced 'less than a handful of agreements [which] provide for consultation more meaningful ... than an "exchange of views" after the fact'. Despite some modest success in the area of parental leave benefits, there can be no escaping the fact that 'the EMU macroeconomic policy regime has squeezed social policy between unemployment and convergence/stability pact criteria' to such an extent that capitalist 'supply-side' strategies for greater labour market 'flexibility' have come to take precedence over any positive new strategy for labour.¹⁴

Above all, what is confirmed in Gorz's prognosis is that labour's involvement in European integration has been 'largely a top-down process'. As Martin and Ross put it: 'The ETUC has so far developed largely by borrowing resources from European institutions to gain legitimacy with its own national constituents ... ETUC, in other words, has developed from the top rather than as a mass organization built from below out of a broader social movement'. Moreover, since the promise of substantial gains from elite bargaining within European institutions has not materialized, the result has been that the European unions' position of 'critical support' for Economic and Monetary Union 'has so far put them in an excruciating political bind. It ties them to the particular version of the economic approach to political integration that has been pursued despite its social costs and rising popular disenchantment, including among union members'.¹⁵ Not surprisingly in this context, unions have relied on national collective bargaining and political structures to protect themselves as best they could. But the 'competitive corporatism' they are still oriented to at this level, seen in various new 'social pacts' that have been struck with employers and the state, has mainly to do with competitive adjustment (via the sacrifice of earlier labour market and welfare state reforms as well as wage moderation) to the neoliberalism embedded in European integration.

It is indeed significant that strategies for transnational collective bargaining have made so little headway since Charles Levinson made the case for it thirty years ago in the context of the rise of the multinational corporation.¹⁶ The reasons for this may partly be laid at the door of national-level trade unions bureaucrats, but much more important has been that the very purpose of globalization, from the perspective of business and the capitalist state, has been to bring about competition among workers, not foster centralized bargaining at a higher level. Notably, Gorz, unlike Levinson, did not advocate working 'toward the unification and the centralization of a labour strategy ... besides being impossible at present, [this] would only result in bureaucratic sclerosis'. While it was necessary to try to 'co-ordinate among the various sectoral, regional, or national strategies so they complement, not contradict each other', one had to primarily let each national struggle 'develop according to its own particular qualities' since it was from struggles at this level 'that the labour movement principally draws its strength'. This did not mean the class struggles

ought to be isolated from the international arena; Gorz believed, rather, that it was increasingly possible to ‘trust in the contagious effect of each national victory’. Isolated national victories would not be possible any longer, because in the context of the new international competitiveness, each national government, once forced by its labour movement to undertake a structural reform, would have to advance its adoption at the European level to ensure that the policy labour imposed in one state did not remain ‘a national peculiarity’.¹⁷

IV

These considerations are very germane to the question of how labour should respond to further efforts to extend globalization today. It is time to question strategies—often borrowed from superficial accounts of the European Social Protocol—for securing the inclusion of labour rights in international trade treaties. Along the lines of the NAFTA labour and environmental ‘side agreements’, this strategy is designed to ‘constitutionalize’ minimum labour standards, as well as secure a place for labour representatives in the negotiation and administration of these treaties. Such a strategy may be useful for bringing terrible labour conditions and anti-union policies into public discussions of globalization, but at the same time, the very idea of attaching labour rights to such treaties also means endorsing the free trade and capital flows which these treaties are all about securing. Moreover, apart from what ideological effect they have, the difficulties of enforcing labour rights articulated in such side agreements are notorious.

What is most disturbing about this response to globalization, however, as Gerard Greenfield has especially pointed out, is how often it is used both by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and national union leaders

to justify the abandonment of collective action locally, and even nationally, as ineffective or irrelevant. Based on what they see as the inevitability of capitalist globalization and the weakness of organized labour, they are instead seeking a new set of compromises with global capital. Or to put it more accurately, they are seeking a continuation of the old compromises with national capital at a global level.¹⁸

In so far as this new strategy of global compromise ‘displaces rather than supports militant workers struggles’, Greenfield argues, it is not only misguided, but positively harmful. This is not to say that the institutions of globalization don’t have to be engaged with by unions; the question is what priority they assign to this and what they seek from such engagement. In a discussion document prepared for developing union strategy for the WTO’s round of multilateral negotiations that was supposed to have begun in Seattle at the end of 1999, Greenfield articulated, in direct contrast with the ICFTU’s ‘strategy for inclusion’, a new ‘strategy for exclusion’. This meant that, in terms of the content of international economic treaties, unions and their allies could follow

the principle of immunity ('freedom from') rather than of rights ('freedom to') along the lines of those labour law regimes which established that organizing attempts or strikes were protected from punishment or legal prosecution by the employer. This would take the form of demanding the exclusion of particular sectors, or particular bio-resources (such as seeds), from WTO agreements, and would go along with demands for the immunity of workers' and farmers' organizations from repression when their states face unfair trading practices through the WTO's complaint mechanisms. This defensive aspect of the strategy, designed to limit the damage caused by such agreements, can accompany a more general strategic challenge to the whole process entailed in these negotiations, above all to the secrecy of the negotiations which 'reflects an inherent hostility towards democracy and democratic processes among WTO technocrats, government advisers and the powerful corporate interests they represent'. Greenfield goes on:

This problem is not simply resolved by getting unions a chair at the negotiating table. Whatever is decided will still be decided behind-the-scenes anyway ... Past experience has shown that getting a seat at the table sometimes places far too much emphasis on representing labour, rather than organizing labour ... More important is the task of breaking down walls to these behind-the-scenes deals in a way that organizes and mobilizes our members along with a broader alliance of democratic forces. Clearly this requires a public education and mobilization campaign to achieve what WTO technocrats and TNCs do not want—a critical awareness among working people of *what is being done to them*.¹⁹

The negotiated exclusion strategy advanced by Greenfield was thus explicitly conceived as secondary and subsidiary to a primary strategy of mobilization against the institutions of globalization themselves. This is what actually came to the fore at Seattle, where the initiative was taken away from those trying to get a seat at the table in a such a surprising and stunning fashion that it may be counted as a turning point. To be sure, what happened on the streets of Seattle was not spontaneous combustion—a lot of planning was involved by a great many NGOs and unions. And it followed on the impressive activities already undertaken in the same year by People's Global Action, a new alliance formed in February 1998 by some 300 delegates from movements in 71 countries on the basis of their common rejection of the WTO and other trade liberalization agreements. Their self-described 'confrontational attitude' was based on the perception that lobbying cannot 'have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organizations [as the WTO], in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker'. The Global Day of Action they sponsored in the world's financial centres on 18 June 1999 was an important, if much less noticed, prelude to what took place in Seattle six months later.

The sight of steelworkers declaring solidarity with anarchists on the streets of Seattle was a heady one. The multiplicity of voices and slogans was

bewildering and frustrating to those ‘progressive’ negotiators, whether from the ‘Third’ World or the ‘First’, whose main priority is the strategy of global compromise. ‘Its not clear what they want—they want so many different things’, was the complaint often heard. The mutterings of officials in the French royal court in 1789 must have been much the same. One measure of the truly radical nature of these kinds of protests is just this—they aren’t putting forward a series of demands that can be negotiated within the given institutional frameworks of globalization: they really are building critical awareness among people of ‘what is being done to them’—and are galvanizing a great deal of attention and support as a result.

Unfortunately, immediately after Seattle the political initiative against globalization within the USA swung back to the negotiators in the American labour movement who, by the time of the anti-IMF and World Bank protests in Washington, D.C., four months later, had narrowed the issue down to whether or not the US Congress should endorse China’s inclusion in the WTO. The problem was not so much that of ‘protectionism’ *per se* (any serious attempt to challenge globalization entails ‘protection’ for local and national communities); it was rather what can only be called the *chauvinist* protectionism and *imperial* condescension that lay behind the demand that the American state should not be giving the Chinese masses the ‘benefit’ of access to its markets until ‘labour rights’ were enforced in China. The whole discourse was framed in terms of appealing to the American state to play its ‘proper’ world role as a democratic and benevolent good guy against the Chinese state. The absence of a strong alternative vision, and the danger of not having one, was revealed in the astonishing support which key American NGO leaders gave to the AFL/CIO’s narrowly-conceived campaign against China’s inclusion in the WTO.²⁰ They contributed in this way to legitimating the WTO as something really worth getting into, even as they mobilized for the Washington demonstration against the other institutions of globalization, the IMF and World Bank.

Lost in the rhetoric in the debate on China after Seattle were two main things: first, the enormous concessions China is making to foreign capital to get into the WTO;²¹ and second, the fact that the struggle for labour rights is not external to China but is being conducted within it (as it is in all developing countries), including by the millions of Chinese workers who, by official estimates, undertook over 120,000 strikes in 1999 alone.²² If the AFL/CIO really wants to help Chinese workers, it will campaign for the exclusion of those provisions in the WTO that will result in tens of millions of Chinese workers losing their jobs when public enterprises are robbed of their ‘subsidies’; and it will take direct action itself by providing the level of resources and support to those struggling to build independent trade unions in China that it once provided to Solidarity in Poland (of course it was encouraged in this at the time by the American state—as it will not be regarding Chinese independent unions now).

But can much better be said of those Third World elites who themselves employed the charge of imperialism against those who called for labour rights

to be included in the WTO? We should have no illusions either about Third World leaders and their technocratic advisers who are ready and willing to set aside labour rights in their anxiety to ensure at all costs that foreign capital comes their way rather than leaves them marginalized in the new world capitalist order. It is misleading to speak, as Samir Amin does today, of the ‘political authorities in the active peripheries—and behind them all of society (including the contradictions within society itself)—hav[ing] a project and a strategy’ for national economic development which stands in ‘confrontation with globally dominant imperialism’.²³ He includes in the ‘active peripheries’ China, Korea and India as well as unnamed others in Southeast Asia and Latin America and contrasts these with ‘marginalized peripheries’ which are ‘the passive subjects of globalization’. But while the ruling classes and political elites of India, Korea and especially China are definitely not merely the ‘passive subjects’ of globalization as they actively manoeuvre for a place in the new global order, it is also patently clear that only a major transformation in class relations in each of these countries will lead to anything like a ‘confrontation with globally dominant imperialism’. For Third World leaders who really want to take an anti-imperial stand, a good place to start, rather than clamouring for a seat at the table of the imperium, would be to stop their repression of domestic class struggle and their denial of freedom of association.

A sustained mobilization against the institutions of globalization will have to eventually offer a strategic vision for a different order. Until such a vision gains some currency, legitimacy will continue to be lent to the institutions of globalization by many labour, NGO and Third World elites who see no practical alternative to them. No such vision has not yet emanated from the mobilizations that gave us Seattle. Andrew Ross previously noted that ‘the capacity to organize dissent and resistance on the international scale’ has been considerably enhanced by the ‘undeniable asset’ of the Internet, but the ‘new informational landscape’ has also ‘magnified the gulf between the temporality of activists—based on urgency around mobilization—and the temporality of intellectuals—based around the slower momentum of thought and theoretical speculation. Many forms of radical thought require a patient process of germination that is antipathetic to the new speed of information circulation’.²⁴ To be sure, the contribution that even left intellectuals see themselves as making is mostly limited to offering narrow-gauge policy advice to their states which internalizes the politics of compromise (as such, left intellectuals bear some responsibility for the dead end to which competitive corporatism and progressive competitiveness have led). The seeds of an alternative vision have more often been planted by the activist groups themselves, such as by the People’s Global Action organizational philosophy of ‘decentralization and autonomy’ which implies inward-oriented development strategies (‘localization’) rather than export competitiveness. But for this glimmer of an alternative to make sense to people it needs to be made much clearer what this can mean, and what its implications are for strategy.

V

The key long-term condition for an alternative to globalization is democratic investment control within each state—the opposite goal to that of today’s multilateral international negotiations. This must mean going beyond the type of quantitative controls on the inflow and outflow of capital allowed under Bretton Woods, let alone beyond the Tobin Tax on capital flows now being advanced by many on the left. A campaign for qualitative democratic capital controls is required, one which puts on the agenda what international investment is for and should be for, rather than governments themselves either taking a piece of the action (the Tobin Tax is a version of tobacco and alcohol taxes) or just managing short-term capital flows in relation to currency stability, as they did prior to globalization. Nor can we pretend that controls over foreign investment can be divorced from the need for democratic control over private *domestic* investment. This will not be adequately addressed by notions of ‘pension fund socialism’ or labour investment funds which offer tax breaks to the workers that put their money in them.²⁵ Far from giving the labour movement control over jobs and the direction of the economy, such funds as now exist generally lack even the capacity to control any particular project, and many of them adopt no investment criteria other than profitability, or even require that the jobs created include unionization. Moreover, at the same time as shifting the risk of investment to workers’ savings, these schemes envelop workers in the world of the stock markets and tax accountants (investors *should* be taxed and regulated, not subsidized, which is what accountants seek to achieve). And perhaps most important, approaching the issue of control over investment in this narrow way reinforces the conventional notion that the money in the banks is legitimately the capitalists’ to do with as they please.

But how does the notion of democratic investment control get on the agenda in a world where even pension fund socialism sounds radical? We should not initially approach this in terms of getting it on the *state’s* policy agenda. We need to recognize that the *first step in a new strategy* is to get labour movements to think again in terms that are not so cramped and defensive, to *think ambitiously again*, and then, once mobilized in such frame of mind, to make radical demands on the state of this kind. I have found the following argument effective in talks with trade unionists and social movement activists.²⁶ We now have in Canada directly elected local school boards which are vested with the statutory responsibility of providing everyone under eighteen in their catchment area with a place in the school system; and they are provided by higher levels of government with the funds, or the means of taxation, to accomplish this. Why do we not have directly elected ‘job development boards’ or ‘economic planning boards’ at the local level which are vested with the statutory responsibility of providing everyone in their catchment area with gainful paid employment? They wouldn’t have to provide the jobs directly but could vet and fund proposals for *new projects* (to avoid displacing other workers). They would have to be given, like the school boards

are, the funds, or the taxing powers, to accomplish this. There is no question it would be very costly if it were to be done properly. So how to fund it? The only really effective way to fund it would be to establish such control over the banks and other financial institutions as would allow for a considerable portion of the surplus that passes through their hands (*our own money*) to be designated for distribution to the elected local boards. This should be done centrally and the money distributed by higher levels of governments to each planning board to ensure regional parity.

When I present this argument, because it begins with a democratic reform related to job insecurity, there is usually strong assent by the time I get to the control over the financial system as being the condition for making this happen. It is necessary to make it clear that this is not a matter of ‘socialism in one city’—it is a structural reform (political as much as economic) which needs to be implemented across the board. And there is no sense ignoring the likelihood that unless the mobilization capacity of the labour movement and other social movements is enhanced considerably, it will be real estate agents and property developers who will get elected to the local boards. Moreover, such a municipal scheme for the democratic control of investment would have to be synchronized with sectoral councils bringing together workers and consumers in all industrial and service sectors (in contrast to the notion of industrial democracy at the level of single companies which would leave workers balkanized and sustain competition between them). In the public sector, such councils would include public employees and their ‘clients’, involving thereby the democratization of the services that meet social needs, but are now bureaucratically decided and provided.

At this stage, this proposal is mainly about getting labour movements and working people generally to think about how to develop their capacities to the point where this kind of structural reform could be meaningfully put on the political agenda. This brings us to *the second dimension of a new strategy for labour*—the need for a strategy for *transforming labour itself*. Nor is it only new radical demands, like democratic investment control, that bring this to the fore. Even reforms that are currently on the agenda, such as the reduction of work-time, face limits that are internal to labour. The 35-hour legislation passed in France, for instance, quickly ran into the type of agreement struck in the engineering sector with the bulk of the unions. The goal of job creation was frustrated by offsetting the loss of four hours a week by ‘annualizing’ and raising the ceiling of ‘normal’ time worked over a full year as well as by doubling the limit on annual overtime. In doing this, this agreement not only reduced the likelihood of companies having to hire more workers or pay more overtime as a result of the 35-hour law, but also met employers’ demands for ‘flexibility’—and this aspect of the agreement was incorporated into the second round of legislation, as a way of accommodating capital.²⁷

This only shows that the scandal of work polarization—whereby at one end ‘full-time’ employees are working over 50 or 60 hours a week, while at the

other end, ‘casual’ employees are working under 20 hours—also cannot be overcome without the transformation of unions themselves, from the local level to that of national confederations to the ICFTU. This must partly involve the shift in the balance of union activity more towards ‘organizing’ than ‘servicing’ that many people in the American labour movement are now talking about (although the ability to ‘service’ can never be divorced from any serious organizing drive); and it partly must involve the spread of social movement unionism’ along the lines articulated in Kim Moody’s important book, *Workers in a Lean World*.²⁸ In both respects, the goal must be to make unions more inclusive not only in terms of their members’ racial, ethnic and gender identities, but also in terms of being more inclusive of their members full life experiences as more than ‘just workers’. This will need to be reflected in collective bargaining priorities, but it will also mean thinking hard about the limits of unions in relation to all the spaces and places working people currently interact outside of work, and interrogating the degree of democracy and developmental capacity-building that they might enjoy if such centres of working-class life could be appropriately restructured.²⁹ Unions have a major role to play in this, but this is also where movements conceived in broader social and political terms are still so badly needed, and could still have enormous potential if only they were ambitious and committed enough.

To speak of a strategy for labour, then, is not initially about laying out a detailed set of policies for democratizing the economy and the state but for *refounding, reorganizing and democratizing the labour movement itself* in order to make clear what new capacities workers and their unions need to develop to start to change ‘the structure of power’. In his essay in this volume, Greenfield speaks to the irony of mass mobilizations of workers for militant protests and strikes in East Asia which ‘articulate political demands for democracy and democratic reform in society at large but without promoting democratic processes within the collective action or organization itself’. The same point needs to be made about unions in the advanced capitalist countries, like the American, which have rediscovered the importance of putting more resources into organizing drives, and even active ‘rank and file’ involvement in recruiting new members, but don’t connect this with the issue of internal union democracy. As Mike Parker and Martha Gruelle have put in their Labour Notes handbook, *Democracy is Power*:

The organizing model is a big step forward from the servicing model, but it can have limitations. In practice, some union leaders encourage member *involvement* without member control. They expect to turn member involvement on and off like a faucet. That way, leaders can keep tighter control of a possibly volatile situation. When the rank and file await their marching orders from clever staffers or officials, there’s less likelihood they’ll undertake tactics that step outside conventional boundaries, or threaten deals made elsewhere.³⁰

Of course, there is a deeper union culture involved here—a dialectic between ‘rank and file’ deference and pride in the leader who can talk tough with an employer (or a president or a party leader or a media talk-show host) and the paternalism of even a radical reform leadership which, as Parker and Gruelle put it, ‘may genuinely have the members’ interests at heart, but believe the ranks are best served if the leaders maintain control’.³¹ Which precise constitutional mechanisms are technically best in terms maximizing accountability and democratic decision making is not the issue here; the point is to measure these mechanisms in terms of the contribution they make to developing democratic capacities whereby members overcome deference, leaders pass on expertise (rather than hoard it like their personal capital), and more frequent changes of leadership are made possible. Above all, debate needs to be encouraged, rather than avoided, even over the most potentially divisive issues. The problem of avoiding debate—whether due to impatience, intolerance or avoidance of tough questions—once again emerges out of a dialectic in which members attitudes as much as leaders’ inclinations are entwined. As Bill Fletcher (the most creative and radical staff member brought into the AFL/CIO under the new Sweeney regime) has put it:

The emphasis on dialogue is essential. The aim is not to talk *at* workers, but rather to encourage debate. The object of debate is to promote the consciousness of workers. But here we come up against some fundamental problems. Some in the labour movement argue that workers must come to understand their economic interests as workers and must therefore not be distracted by ‘wedge issues’, i.e., divisive issues around race, gender and the like. Others argue that while economic interests are of critical importance, the working class does not see things only through the narrow prism of economics. Class itself is configured racially, ethnically, and by gender in the United States. So workers cannot be inoculated against divisive or wedge issues. Class consciousness cannot be built unless they deal with such issues and take a position on them. History demonstrates time and again the folly of attempting to live in denial of their centrality to class struggle.³²

This relationship between democracy and class consciousness is, in other words, especially important in terms of those changes in the working class that are turning labour into a more inclusive social agent. Similarly, the most effective way to extend union organization to the unorganized is to identify democratic capacity-building among old as well as new members as the main goal. And what matters for this is the development of leadership just as much as the development of membership. Katherine Sciacchitano, drawing on a wealth of organizing experience, has recently expressed this:

For frontline organizers, then, the crucial link between union campaigns and movement building is not just militancy. As one organizer said, you can take workers through mobilization after mobilization—but if they

play no role in building and debating strategy they won't necessarily learn anything. Movement building requires understanding how learning and organization takes place at the bottom. This means frontline organizers, educators and labour intellectuals alike beginning a process of open reflection about failures as well as successes ... Most of all, it means paying attention to workers'—not just organizers'—accounts of organizing ... It also suggests we need to develop and train staff ... not just to educate leaders and committee members to mobilize co-workers, but to educate them to develop the group as a whole. The development of staff and leaders as educators is the missing link needed to support democratic decision making, participation, and organizing by members.³³

Of course, the type of radical strategy for labour articulated by Gorz, and echoed here for our own time, is unmistakably a socialist one. This is appropriate at a time when the label 'anti-capitalist' is not only commonly attached by the establishment media to demonstrations like those in Seattle and Washington, but is openly embraced by the participants themselves. There is indeed a growing sense of the need to think not only in terms of class once again, but also to think about the question of socialist political organization again. This is heard not just among political activists in the labour movement as well as the other social movements, most of whom have worked together for years in coalition campaigns, but especially among the new generation of young activists who have emerged in the anti-corporate branding and sweat-shop campaigns as well as in the burgeoning protests against the institutions of globalization.³⁴ The alienation from party politics remains, but there is an oft-heard lament that something more than coalitions and campaigns is needed, some sort of organization within which to discuss and develop what an anti-capitalist strategy would seriously amount to. This is the *third necessary element in a new strategy for labour*.

In Canada this has given rise to discussions followed by some tentative moves towards what is being called a 'structured movement' that has clearly touched a nerve among many activists.³⁵ It would not be a party, but it would be more than the kind of coalition among movement activists on a specific issue that we have become familiar with in recent years. Its immediate emphasis, sensitive to this historical moment of uncertainty on the left, would be transitional: to create the spaces and processes for collectively working out how to combine daily activism with the need for a broader alternative politics; and to increase the likelihood, through organizing the impressive commitments to radical change that already exist, that such energies will be organizationally cumulative rather than dissipated. The 'structured movement' would neither take people away from the broad-based coalitions and organizations that concentrate on campaigns against the institutions of globalization, nor would it seek to undermine social democracy's electoral project. It would have a different project, a much longer-term one oriented to developing a genuinely alternative vision and programme to

neoliberal globalization—and a genuinely alternative practice, especially in terms of the kind of leadership qualities and democratic and capacity-building processes discussed here. Social democratic parties today seem incapable of doing this—but the question of whether new ones will be needed or old parties might yet somehow be changed is something best left to the future when some measure of the progress made by the structured movement may be taken. One of those measures will have to be whether the type of strategy for labour sketched here gets enriched and developed and taken up in the unions as well as the other social movements. But no less important a measure will eventually be how many trade-union activists will be prepared to join such a new ‘structured movement’. There was a time when local and even national labour leaders were prepared to risk trying to bring those whose confidence they had earned in the industrial arena with them into socialist political organizations; a significant change in labour movement culture among both leaders and members would have to take place in Canada before this would be likely to happen again on any scale. But there is no alternative but to try.

Of course, in each country the landscape of political culture and organization is different. Those of us trying to build a ‘structured movement’ in Canada will have much to learn from those places like Brazil where the landscape was already such two decades ago that labour leaders could carry many of their members with them in building a party of a new type. The time-scales within which strategies for change are conceived in the North and South may, of course, be very different. For example, in El Salvador after the end of the civil war, one of the main leaders, Fecundo Guardado, expressed his worry that the FMLN had too short a time horizon, regarding the elections that were to take place at the end of the decade (for which Guardado himself would eventually be chosen as the FMLN’s presidential candidate) as the long-term goal for which the party had to prepare itself. In Guardado’s view, this was a mistake. This period up to the next election was really the short-term, and the most the FMLN could hope for was to hold on to the activist base it developed during the civil war and effectively turn it into the membership of a mass party. The medium-term was 2010, when the party might hope to develop that membership politically and gather within it such additional new elements as would establish it as the strongest political force on the Salvadoran political stage. The long-term was 2020, by which point it might be hoped that the FMLN would have established such a hegemonic presence in Salvadoran society that it could get elected with the expectation of really doing something. Notably, however, Angela Zamora, director of the FMLN’s educational programme at that time, reacted to the idea of such a patient strategy with dismay. Indeed, she indicated she would have to think about leaving the party if it adopted such a time-scale. After the sacrifices the people she had worked with had made through the long civil war, they needed immediate reforms and she felt she couldn’t look them in the eye and tell them they’d have to wait another two decades, as Guardado’s strategy implied they would.³⁶

The strategy for labour as discussed in this essay has been conceived, as was Gorz's, in the context of experience in the North. The kind of patient time-horizon outlined by Guardado makes a great deal of sense for the new 'structured movement' in a rich country like Canada, but one can certainly see why by no means everyone would agree it makes sense for El Salvador. Yet at the same time, as Guardado's long-term strategy suggests, and so many of the essays in this volume on working classes in the South also make clear, many of the same problems faced by labour in the North, and which will require a long-term patient strategy to change, are by no means exclusive to it. Sexism, intolerance, fragmentation, undemocratic mobilization processes, the hierarchy built into 'labour aristocracies' in every country, organizational dialectics that reinforce member deference on the one hand and leader egotism on the other—all these problems are as common, and will take as long to change, in the labour movements of the South as in those in the North. To take another important 'southern' example: even in the midst of the general upsurge of working-class militancy and self-confidence that accompanied the liberation from apartheid and the democratic election of the new government in South Africa, the fragmentation in the labour movement was notable. This was seen in the lack of contact—and to some extent even concern—on the part of activists in the metal workers union, NUMSA, not only with the 7,000 black nurses in the Eastern Cape who were fired (by a Communist provincial prime minister) in 1995 for going on strike, but even with the municipal workers on strike in Johannesburg the same year.³⁷ Such fragmentation between public and private sector unions is, of course, notorious in the North; but it is also very significant that it was so evident at such a historic moment even in the labour movement which perhaps more than any other in our time was living proof that solidarity was a viable practice not just a song.

These sobering reflections are appropriate to the conclusions we need to come to about the *fourth strategic dimension of a new strategy for labour: a new internationalism*. But what exactly does internationalism mean for labour in this era of globalization? There is no sense pretending that problems that are deeply embedded in, and reflect the weaknesses of, each national movement will somehow magically be resolved through transnational collective bargaining with the multinationals and international campaigns against the political institutions of globalization. Sam Gindin is right when he says that international labour bodies can

make constructive contributions to our struggles. They are useful vehicles for exchanging information and analysis and mobilizing acts of solidarity and support. But here, too, we should be clear about their limits. Strategic international co-ordination is dependent on the strength of national movements. For example, what kind of internationalism can we expect among the United States, Mexico, and Canada if the American labour movement can't yet organize its own South; if the

Mexican labour movement doesn't yet have a common union across work-places within a single company like GM; if the Canadian labour movement hasn't yet been able to achieve major organizing breakthroughs in its own key private service sectors?³⁸

Nor is there any sense pretending that, in the South as much as in the North, anything other than class struggles of the most trenchant kind at the level of each state can shift the global political terrain. Certainly the notion that without a major shift in the balance of class forces in the leading capitalist states, campaigns to reform the IMF or World Bank or even the ILO can amount to anything significant is nonsensical. The importance of shedding the illusion that globalization displaces the nation state is that we are then able to perceive how states have become responsible for taking charge of the complex relation of international capital to the domestic bourgeoisie; and to appreciate that states do this in ways that still reflect the specific features of class struggle and political and ideological forms that remain distinctively national even as they are increasingly influenced by, and express themselves within, conjunctures determined on a global basis. Hugo Radice correctly notes that 'the asymmetry between labour and capital in their degree of transnationalization makes workers more a passive object of globalization than an active contestant'.³⁹ But if this is so, it is mainly because of the asymmetries of power between capital and labour at the *national* level, and can't be changed without change at this level. Radice also contends that the dead end of 'progressive competitiveness' is yet another instance of 'the failure of progressive nationalism itself'. But here again the main answer can only lie in transformations in the class relations at the national level. In so far as labour remains satisfied with being—and capable of being no more than—a subsidiary partner of a national bourgeoisie, nationalism can be no more progressive than this, as Radice discerns. But in the context of the increasing inability, indeed with very few exceptions the increasing lack of interest, on the part of domestic bourgeoisies to chart a course of development beyond that determined by globally dominant imperialism in this conjuncture, such a partnership is no longer on offer in any case. This is precisely why a new strategy for labour has such importance and promise today.

If internationalism is conceived in a way that is an alternative to, or a substitute for, changes that are necessary at the national level the results can only be negative, if not disastrous. There can be little tolerance for the kind of invocations of global working-class unity that, as was first made so tragically clear in 1914, has always produced more rhetorical heat than effective transnational solidarity and understanding. The most effective internationalism at this stage is for each labour movement to try to learn as much as possible from others about the limits and possibilities of class struggles that are still inevitably locally based. When Mayor of Porto Alegre comes to Toronto to talk about the democratic 'popular budget' the Workers Party runs in that Brazilian city,⁴⁰ we need to see less of the glossy brochures that are designed to convince Coca-Cola to invest

there, and to be given more detail on how it is that workers and not real estate agents and property developers predominate at the community meetings that compose the popular budget process: this is something that we do not know how to ensure in Canada. And when Canadian trade unionists and left intellectuals go abroad and talk about the union and social movement coalitions that organized the successive one-day general strikes across Ontario's cities, they need to be candid about the tensions and divisions that soon brought this exciting mobilization to an end with a whimper.⁴¹

What is needed is the kind of internationalism that reinforces the space for, and that contributes to building the strategic and material resources for, working-class struggles in each country. In this respect labour movements in the North were much indebted to the Workers Party in Brazil and COSATU in South Africa, among others, in the last two decades of the twentieth century for the inspiration and guideposts they provided in developing new strategies for labour. Those of us in the North can try to repay this political debt by throwing all our weight behind campaigns that would commit each leading capitalist state to a policy of cancellation of third-world financial debt: this is the most practicable immediate reform that can be won from the institutions of globalization today. We can repay our political debt even more by working towards a long-term transformation of working-class culture in each of the rich capitalist countries, so that unions can really do more than 'place workers as a class on the tail end of the consumers' society', to use Gorz's formulation. Apart from ecological sanity, what is at stake here is the possibility of developing the kind of internationalism that alone will allow for the massive material redistribution from the rich countries to the poor ones that any progressive alternative to global capitalism must entail.

The world's working classes have changed and the world's labour movements will change with them. There can be no doubt that the greatest challenge will be to learn how to 'reinvent solidarity' in this era of globalization. Winning international support for local struggles is as important, or indeed more important, than ever. But the most open and trenchant discussion of each movement's weaknesses and ongoing problems must also be the focus of transnational strategic discussions. This is especially needed now because advances made—and defeats suffered—by labour and its allies in any one state will have a greater exemplary effect than ever. In this era of globalization, it will be through converging and co-ordinated national pressures that successful new strategies for labour will have significant effects at the international level. A new labour internationalism that appreciates this is what is needed if working people are to develop the confidence and capacity to build a better tomorrow out of the great many popular struggles in evidence around the world today.

NOTES

1. Some of the 'associational democracy' literature does explicitly try to marry the concerns of community groups and unions, although usually in a manner that would tie this 'third sector' to the state in neo-corporatist 'social capital' and 'stakeholding' arrangements. See Alan Zuege, 'The Chimera of the Third Way', *Socialist Register 2000*, esp. pp. 102–105.
2. Andre Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, London: Verso, 1989, pp. 231–3. Cf. *Farewell to the Working Class*, Boston: Southend Press, 1982. Gorz's original *Strategy for Labour: A Radical Proposal*, Boston, Beacon: 1967 was originally published as *Strategie Ouvriere et Neocapitalisme*, Editions du Seuil, 1964. Gorz's 'socialist strategy for structural reform' was set out in his 'Reform and Revolution' *Socialist Register 1967*.
3. For instance, a *New York Times* poll in 1996 found that 55% of Americans defined themselves as working class while only 36% defined themselves as middle class; while Gallup found that the number of people who thought 'there is a class struggle' in Britain rose from around 60% in the early 1960s to 81% in the mid-1990s. Colin Leys and I earlier discussed these indications of growing class awareness in our essay, 'The Legacy of the Manifesto' *Socialist Register 1998*.
4. A personal anecdote may exemplify some of what I mean by this. About 10 years ago, while on a flight returning to Toronto, I struck up a conversation with the young woman seated beside me. We chatted amiably about the differences in growing up in Winnipeg in her time and mine, but when I ventured to ask her what she did for a living, she said 'I'd rather not tell you'. When I assured her that I was quite broad-minded, she eventually laughed and relented, telling me that she was a postal worker, but that she was reluctant to tell strangers about it because it usually led to recriminations about the strikes her union had been engaged in. Since she supported these, she would either get into a fruitless argument with a stranger or have to suffer the recriminations in silence. She then proceeded to tell a fascinating story about how she got active in her union. She had been hired by Canada Post straight out of high school and had been put to work on the 'docks' of the central postal terminal where the bags of mail arrive and are shifted to various sorting stations. She was one of the first women to be assigned this kind of heavy manual work, but she felt comfortable with it, except for the fact that there were no women's toilets in the docks area and she had to make a very long trek to the other side of the terminal whenever she needed to go to the bathroom. She mentioned this to the foreman one day, who responded: 'Well, you'll just have to learn to stand up and pee at the urinal like the rest of the guys'. To this point, she had nothing to do with the union; indeed she came from an anti-union family and refused to go to the union's orientation session for new workers. But this comment from her foreman led her to seek out her shop steward, whose positive support began a transformation in her attitude to the union. She was now chief steward of the Winnipeg local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.
5. There is wealth of outstanding labour history on this: see, most recently, Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland and the Tragedy of American Labour*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999.
6. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, p. 26.
7. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, pp. 17, 99.

8. See Joel Rodgers and Wolfgang Streeck, 'Productive Solidarities: Economic Strategy and Left Politics' in David Miliband (ed.), *Reinventing the Left*, Cambridge, Polity: 1994, p. 134.
9. Fred Bienefeld, 'Capitalism and the Nation State in the Dog Days of the Twentieth Century', *Socialist Register 1994*, p. 115; 'Is a Strong National Economy a Utopian Goal at the End of the Twentieth Century', in R. Boyer and D. Drache (eds.), *States Against Markets*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 429–31; on 'progressive competitiveness', see also the Panitch and Albo essays in *Socialist Register 1994*.
10. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, pp. 7–8.
11. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, p. 181.
12. See Sam Gindin, 'Notes on Labour at the End of the Century' in Ellen Wood et al. (eds.), *Rising from the Ashes*, Monthly Review Press: New York, 1998; and his *The Canadian Auto Workers*, Lorimer: Toronto. 1995.
13. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, pp. 152–3.
14. 'The Europeanization of Labour Representation' in Andrew Martin and George Ross, (eds.), *The Brave New World of European Labour*, New York: Berghahn Books, 1999, pp. 312–39.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 352, 358.
16. Charles Levinson, *International Trade Unionism*, Allen & Unwin: London, 1972.
17. Gorz, *Strategy for Labour*, pp. 187–9.
18. Gerard Greenfield, 'The ICFTU and the Politics of Compromise' in Ellen Wood et al. (eds.), *Rising from the Ashes? Labour in the Age of 'Global' Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998, pp. 180–1. Cf. Peter Waterman, 'International Labour's Y2K Problem', A Contribution to the ILO/ICFTU Conference on Organized Labour in the 21st Century, 15/11/99, unpublished but available on the Internet at <<http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/>>
19. Gerard Greenfield, 'Union Responses to Negotiations on the WTO Agreement on Agriculture: A Strategy of Exclusion', Discussion paper, May 7, 1999.
20. Including Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch campaign: see Moses Naim, 'Lori's War', *Foreign Policy*, Spring 2000, and John Nichols, 'Now What? Seattle is Just a Start' *The Progressive*, January 2000.
21. Within China, an important critique of the negative effects of entry to the WTO in terms of increased unemployment, economic dependence on foreign companies, American 'hegemony' and 'double standards' has been put forward by Dr Han Deqiang. His book, *Collision*, with a print run of 10,000 copies, has reputedly attracted significant attention from concerned officials and academics across China. Another important and influential critique, focusing on the enormous social inequalities that will be generated, has been set out by Shaoguang Wang of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in his unpublished paper, 'Openness, Distributive Conflict, and Social Insurance: The Social and Political Implications of China's WTO Membership', March 2000.
22. See John Pomfret, 'China Reports Big Surge in Labour Unrest during 1999' *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 24, 2000.
23. Samir Amin, 'The Political Economy of the Twentieth Century', *Monthly Review*, June 2000, p. 9.
24. Andrew Ross, *Real Love: in pursuit of cultural justice*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, pp. 26–7. See also Naomi Klein's very perceptive examination of the mode of organizing these types of protests: 'The Vision Thing', *The*

- Nation*, July 10, 2000.
25. See Henry Jacot's critique of Robin Blackburn's proposals in this vein in 'The New Collectivism?' *New Left Review (II)*, 1, Jan/Feb 2000. For the definitive critique of labour investment funds in Canada, see Jim Stanford, *Labour Investment Funds*, Toronto: CAW, 1999; and his *Paper Boom*, Lorimer: Toronto, 1999, esp. ch. 15.
 26. I first set out this argument in 'A Socialist Alternative to Unemployment', *Canadian Dimension*, 20:1, March 1986.
 27. See Robert Graham, 'Unions split over 35-hour week', *Financial Times*, Oct. 14, 1998, and 'Turning Back the Clock', *Financial Times*, July 29, 1999. For a perceptive look at the complex union politics behind work-time reduction in Germany as well, see Stephen J. Silva, 'Every Which Way But Loose: German Industrial Relations Since 1980' in Martin and Ross, *Brave New World*, pp. 99–100.
 28. See Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy*, New York: Verso, 1997.
 29. See my essay with Sam Gindin, 'Transcending Pessimism: Rekindling Socialist Imagination', *Socialist Register 2000*, for a fuller discussion.
 30. Mike Parker and Martha Gruelle, *Democracy in Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up*, Detroit: Labour Notes, 1999, p. 26.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 32. Bill Fletcher, Jr., 'Labour Education in the Maelstrom of Class Struggle' in Wood et al., *Rising from the Ashes*, p. 119.
 33. Katherine Sciacchitano, 'Unions, Organizing, and Democracy: Living in One's Time, Building for the Future', *Dissent*, Spring 2000, pp. 75–81.
 34. See Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Knopf: Toronto, 2000.
 35. See Sam Gindin 'The Party's Over', *This Magazine*, Nov–Dec 1998, and the subsequent debate in various issues of *Canadian Dimension* through the following year.
 36. Both these statements were made as personal communications to me when I was in El Salvador in January and February 1995 to help the FMLN inaugurate a new intra-party educational programme.
 37. These observations are based on discussions with NUMSA activists while I was in South Africa in October 1995 to participate in a series of joint CAW/NUMSA educational seminars.
 38. Sam Gindin, 'Notes on Labor at the End of the Century' in Wood et al., *Rising from the Ashes*, p. 202.
 39. Hugo Radice, 'Responses to Globalization: A Critique of Progressive Nationalism' *New Political Economy* 5:1, March 2000, pp. 14–15.
 40. For an account of this visit, and of the popular budget process, see Judy Rebick, *Imagine Democracy*, Stoddart: Toronto, 2000, ch. 2.
 41. For sober assessments, see Marcella Munroe, 'Ontario's "Days of Action" and strategic choices for the Left in Canada', *Studies in Political Economy* 53, Summer 1997; Marsha Niemeijer, 'The Ontario Days of Action—the beginning of a redefinition of the labour movements' political strategy?' Paper presented to the Fourth International Working Conference of the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE) on 'The Building of a Labour Movement for Radical Change', Cologne, March 16–19, 2000; and Janet Conway, 'Knowledge, Power, Organization: Social Justice Coalitions at a Crossroads', *Studies in Political Economy* 62, Summer 2000; see also 'Forum: Assessing Seattle' in the same issue of *SPE* (pp. 5–43).