

Interview Date: November 10, 1999

MD Mike Dolan
SP Steven Pfaff
GM Gillian Murphy

MD I'm Michael Dolan. I'm the Deputy Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch and the Field Director of the Citizens Trade Campaign.

SP Hello. I'm Steven Pfaff. I'm the Assistant Professor at the University of Washington in the Department of Sociology. It is the 10th of November, 1999 at 5:15 pm.

GM And I'm Gillian Murphy, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, University of Washington.

SP So let's get started right away since it's so nice of you to give us your time. The first question we had was what is Citizen Action and People for Fair Trade been doing here in Seattle to mobilize the protest and raise public awareness about globalization issues in connection with the WTO conference?

MD Sure. One correction. Citizen Action is not my group. It's Public Citizen, founded by Ralph Nader over 26 years ago. And, again, I wear two hats, and I'm wearing two hats as part of this effort here in Seattle. I am the Deputy Director of Public Citizens Global Trade Watch, the Ralph Nader group. I am an in-kind contribution from Public Citizen to the national coalition called the Citizen's Trade Campaign, which was formed back before the North American Free Trade Agreement, the NAFTA fight. It is a national coalition which includes organizations from labor, environmental groups, family foreign groups, consumer organizations like Public Citizen, as well as faith-based groups, religious groups whose agendas principally relate to human rights and the impact of corporate-managed so-called free trade agenda on human rights issues. Obviously, the labor interests representing the expectations of working families the world over in an increasingly globalized economy and the environmental and consumer concerns relating to standards of protections and the impact of free trade policies in the corporate agenda on those issues.

It's important to understand, because so much of the organizing that I do looks like herding cats, because all those different kinds of constituencies have their own separate agendas on other issues relating to social and economic policies, but on the trade and globalization agendas, their interests are the same, so that national coalition was formed, as I say, prior to the NAFTA fight. Two things: one, the labor unions that are within the Citizens Trade Campaign, are the industrial sector unions - Teamsters, Steelworkers, United Auto Workers, UNITE which is the Union of Needle Trades and Industrial Textile Employees that takes on apparel manufacturers, those are the unions, and also Machinists and Longshoremens. But those are the unions that are most heavily impacted by trade policies; those are the unions that see their rank and file jobs being exported under NAFTA to the Maquiladoras in Mexico, but generally under the free trade paradigm to lower wage areas and also areas where there is less of those basic labor rights, rights of collective bargaining, freedom of assembly and so on that we take for granted in this country.

The second thing that I should mention about the national coalition in this country is that I did not mention the right wing. I didn't mention the protectionists. I didn't mention the reform party, the Buchananites, the fair trade militias and the trade patriots, and the right wing. Nevertheless, they are part of this movement in this country. They are not part of the Citizens Trade Campaign, because the Citizens Trade Campaign, the CTC, is fundamentally a coalition of progressive groups. Nevertheless, those other groups that the right wing are part of, you know, how should I say this? The ad hoc grassroots mobilization against the corporate-driven free trade policies...

SP Movement broadly speaking...

MD Movement small and broadly speaking; no formal coalition structure. But I should confess that I do use them in terms of exerting grass roots pressure on, especially, Republicans in the House of Representatives,

especially the Class of '94, the right wingers, the little Gingrich, young Turks, ax swinging, you know what I'm talking about,

SP Sure.

MD ...and I could name names about the Congress members who will not return the call of the local Labor Council, will not return the call of the Sierra Club representative or others who care about these things, but will return the call of the United We Stand America; the Perotistas, the Reform Party, will return their call. And I have used to very, very good affect those networks to exert grass roots pressure on Republican Congress members.

Alright, most of our work traditionally has been of a legislative temper. We fight NAFTA expansion. We fight Fast Track, Fast Track negotiating. It was one of our biggest victories, and an enormous kick in the groin of the ruling class beating Fast Track in the 105th Congress. And we have, traditionally, what we're about is those legislative campaigns in exerting grass roots pressure, local grass roots pressure, the local allies and affiliates, the little microcosms of the larger Citizens Trade Campaign on swing members of Congress. The Senate is more Corporatist. The House is more Populist. We win, when we win, in the House of Representatives for that reason.

SP It's not about lobbying as well as...

MD It's grass roots lobbying. Right.

SP Routine. It's a non-routine kind of lobbying...

MD Well, sure. The district office meetings. When Fast Track, for example, to give a very good example of our effectiveness in the past... Summer of 1997, Clinton spent the August recess, Bill Clinton, spent the August recess golfing on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. We were, at that time, knowing that the Fast Track showdown was going to come, that Clinton wanted Fast Track negotiating authority in order to expand the flawed and failed NAFTA, we were mobilizing in the Congressional districts of swing members of Congress all over the country, really in every state. We have CTC affiliates, local organizers who are under contract to meet to pull together those constituencies that I mentioned, to go in from district office meetings with those swing Congress critters.

So you get a bunch of them in the room. Here's the Sierra Club guy. Here's somebody from the Teamsters and the Steelworkers and UNITE. Here's somebody from the local faith-based community, human rights, a consumer....

SP These faith-based groups are predominantly liberal protestant denominations?

MD Correct. That's right. The consumer groups. And they all come in and they're all in one meeting. And the Congress member comes in and says, "What are you all doing here in one meeting? Look at this. Why are you altogether? I usually have to deal with you one-on-one, one-by-one. And yet here you are altogether." And the answer is, "We're all here because we are mobilized and galvanized and together on trade issues." The effect is that the whole of that lobbying is greater than the sum of its parts, and the Congress members are impressed by that.

One other thing I want to say about that before we move to Seattle is that the distinction between Republicans and Democrats is not so helpful on these issues, on trade issues. The more helpful distinction is between Populists and Corporatists. And there are Populists and Corporatists in both parties. There are free traders who are Democrats; there are free traders who are Republicans, inveterate purblind, myopic free traders. Your own in this state says we start to bring it on home to Seattle. You have a very good liberal Congress member in Jim McDermott. He's right on so many issues – single payer healthcare. Right? He's a champion, but his blind spot is trade.

So, as I say, liberal, conservative, Democrat, Republican, not so helpful. It's about Populist versus Corporatist. Populists are looking at Main Street values. Corporatists are looking at Wall Street values, mainly the bottom line.

The announcement was made in January that the World Trade Organization was going to come to the United States. We knew that the cities that were under consideration when you got down to it were San Diego, California, Honolulu, Hawaii, and Seattle, Washington. And I waited breathlessly in my office in Washington, D.C., waiting, waiting. It came down to pretty much Seattle or San Diego. I alerted the activist base in both communities that it could happen at any moment. The shoe was going to fall. We were going to hear it drop. It was going to be San Diego or Seattle. I was equally prepared to go to either city like that.

SP Did you have a preference? Do you think one would be more favorable?

MD I didn't have a particular preference. We have good organizers in both communities. I in a way favored San Diego because of its proximity to the border, and the experience of the Maquiladoras. And, frankly, I like San Diego. We've got a good base down there. I also like Seattle. I was here organizing. In even number years I go out on the road; I do electoral organizing. Public Citizen builds a wall around me. I take a leave of absence. I've got to go Cobra on my insurance because, of course, as a tax-exempt organization, Public Citizen can do nothing to influence the outcome of a federal election.

I was here in Seattle in the '98 cycle. I did Jay Inslee's get out the vote. I did his field operation. It was one of several Congressional races that I did. I do close races, because I do field organizing, so I did his get out the vote. We knew that the Rick White/Jay Inslee fight was going to be close; I did at the request of Neighbor to Neighbor and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, I did Jay's field operation and did a bang-up job; precinct-based, volunteer-driven organizing. We got out the vote. He won by more percentage points than he was predicted to win by, and the reason was balls to the wall organizing.

And so I like Seattle. I know about the activist base. I know that they are strong labor, strong environment, strong progressive sensibilities which animate the activist base here, and so I was prepared to come to Seattle.

When the call was made, when I found out where it was going to be, my first call, I made two calls. One was to Sally Soriano, the coordinator of the Washington Fair Trade Campaign. I also called a good friend, David Korten, author of the best-selling When Corporations Rule the World, Hyperion Press, 1995. And I called him and I said, "Okay. It's you. It's your backyard. Get ready. It's going to be a long nine months. Here I come." And I booked a flight the next day to come out here.

January 20, a Saturday, our first rally, Labor Temple. We used all of Sally's lists, some union lists, whatever it took and we had 80 people on a very nice Saturday morning over at the Labor Temple. Eighty people turned out. We spent an hour doing just introductions around the room. "Who are you? Why are you here?" A lot of people had never met each other. It was January the 20th. It's now November 10th.

A great opening session. Eighty people from all different activist walks of life and different levels of ideological commitment and indignation. Different message; different action; different tactics; different people. It was a great first meeting, and that was our kick-off.

SP Did you have the Spanish? I mean, people representing more grass roots, kind of radical grass roots type groups and also the people representing, say, the established, more routine kind of social movement organizations like Labor Council?

MD Sure. Like AFL-CIO. Like Sierra Club. Like Friends of the Earth. The mainstream groups like the Humane Society and the Animal Welfare Institute.

SP Did they come with the willingness to work together? Did you sense mistrust, or...?

MD They came not knowing who else was going to be there. I said let's everybody meet everybody, and I facilitated that meeting. And using my particular organizing style, which is not the organizing style that characterizes a lot of what happens in the Northwest, which is all about consensus and process. I'm not about consensus and process; I'm about hierarchy and product. And I don't know if any of their questions addressed this, but it has been a learning experience for me, the organizing ethic of the Northwest and Seattle in particular.

But, everybody got to meet each other. We self-selected a steering committee at that time. We began to meet on Wednesday nights. I was here for a lot of them. I have been here a month on and a month off since January. A month here; a month in D.C. A month here; a month in D.C. I have other duties relating to the legislative calendar that NAFTA for Africa bill, has been winding its way through Congress, as you know, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Jim McDermott's baby. So I had other things going back East that I had to deal with, but I knew that the WTO was going to be my responsibility as the Field Director of the Citizens Trade Campaign to mobilize the international movement on these things.

I mentioned Fast Track a while ago as one of our major victories, that we've enjoyed some political space. This is clearly more international than Fast Track, which was peculiar to the United States Congress; indeed, it's peculiar to the United States Constitution representing, as it does an abdication by Congress to the executive to negotiate and close trade deals.

We have another victory under our belts recently that's given us momentum; it's given us political space. And that was the MAI campaign against the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment in that obscure form, the OECD in Paris, France. We won that, too, using some organizing techniques that we may be talking about relating to the use and abuse of the Internet and so on. But that was a very important campaign and involved a lot of international movement building. And so there was that international component that I knew that again we, the activist base, the fair trade activist base in this country, would be responsible for hosting, , this global movement in Seattle.

So I've been dealing at local levels, national levels, and international levels since January through a variety of different techniques.

GM Who were some of the people who were in this organizing corps that came out of that first meeting?

MD Well, let's see. Sally Soriano and myself, obviously. Because it was a self-selected steering committee, I didn't get precisely the cross-section, I guess, that I was looking for. But LELO; Ben White with the Animal Welfare Institute was in that group, Sierra Club showed up for some meetings, some nice people from Olympia self-selected – what's his name, Jimmy Madsen and Forrest from Bainbridge Island... Tom Vorhees, Bill Aal, just activists with not enough to do. All the activists who had too much to do weren't really available and didn't self-select.

Who else was in there? Devon, who's a bus driver. And you notice that I'm using this past tense. The steering committee eventually became more trouble than it was worth. It self-selected. It met on Wednesday nights. It didn't do a whole lot. But it seemed like there ought to be some structure, and that structure was called the steering committee. And a lot of the original – we spent several months just deciding on the name for this effort. Some people wanted it to be called People for Fair Trade and to reach out to the moderate middle that needed to be educated about the WTO, and People For Fair Trade sounded innocuous and harmless, but some people wanted the more militant, No2WTO, which stands for Network Opposed to the World Trade Organization.

And back and forth and back and forth... Who are we? What's our identity? I'm not about that, but I want Seattle to have its own identity, its own consensus.

The result was by late June that the group called itself People For Fair Trade/No2WTO, the ultimate wishy-washy compromise was determined. "Okay. This is what you're called." All right. That's fine.

SP What kind of a split did that reflect? Was that reflective from the people who were most interested in direct action...

MD Yes.

SP ...and militant strategies versus those interested in a more moderate campaign designed to earn public approval, or...?

MD Correct. Except I'll add this, that it's not just about action; it's also about message. No2WTO is all about destroying corporate capitalism in general, that the WTO is an illegitimate institution and we must destroy it. Some of the message of People For Fair Trade is incorporate core labor standards, environmental and consumer protections, into the agreements negotiated under the auspices of the WTO and you've reformed the institution, especially if you include basic transparency, democracy and accountability into the WTO.

SP Social charter...

MD Right. Social charter stuff. So in other words, I've always wanted this effort locally to be the big tent that we can work together, and it's been a very hard row to hoe.

SP Have you kept everybody in the tent?

MD Yes. Everybody who was in the tent at the beginning is still in the tent. There were some people who were not in the tent who never wanted to be in the tent and who reject the whole notion of tentism. And, of course, I'm referring to the Seattle Anarchist Response. Those guys want nothing to do with reformists like me.

It's so funny. I mean, back in D.C., Public Citizens Global Trade Watch, we're the axe -swinging radicals. I come out here and I am reviled as a reformist. I'm a liberal. I like capitalism – all of which is a crock of shit, but what do you do?

And so the Seattle Anarchists' Response – don't trust me any farther than they can throw me. And my problem with their approach, plus I've got the whole over-30 thing going, too.

SP They had some success as they see it in Oregon and stuff, with some demonstrations and some spontaneous actions, right?

MD Right. During J-18, right. Success. The successful guy is looking at six years in the pokey now, isn't he?

SP Yeah.

MD Right. Big success. He's a martyr. But, yeah, they like torched. They turned over a police car. Rocks got thrown. Windows got broken. None of that is going to happen here in Seattle on N30. None of that is going to happen. I can't guarantee it, but I am confidently predicting that that will not be the story. And I hope it won't, because, and this may be a digression, but one anarchist throws one stone through one window in this town during the WTO ministerial, and that's going to be the story the next day. "Anarchist Throws Stone Through A Window – Details at 11." I don't want that. I want the story to be how the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

SP Like Bismarck in 1886.

MD Right.? Right.?

SP But who remembers that there's strike that brought 300,000 workers into Cook County in the streets. Nobody remembers that. They just threw bottles.

MD Right. And I don't want that. I really don't want that. And by keeping this big tent that includes the Direct Action Network currently – they're not necessarily part of this office, but I work with them. I work with the Direct Action Network, and you know that there are principles of conduct, and that the rules of engagement that they are describing involve nonviolence, a commitment to nonviolence, and I endorse that. That's why I can work with them.

SP Although, we were at this conference a couple of weeks ago down in Olympia at Evergreen State College.

MD Oh, wow. They hate me down there.

SP We saw real – we saw some really sort of radical opinions there that were a bit hostile to labor.

MD Oh, yeah. Thea Lee was there. She hated it. They came up to her – well, this is within a week after the AFL-CIO President John Sweeney signed off on the ACTPN letter. We've all been suffering a little brain damage over that. I still have to work with the AFL-CIO, and, they're doing fine in terms of mobilizing for N30 and this for the big march. But it was a calculated risk that John Sweeney took. It's a gamble by the AFL-CIO that they're going to get something real in return for their signing onto that ACTPN letter. Only the 20/20 hindsight will reveal whether or not this risk was worth it. We'll see. Reasonable minds can differ about it, but yeah...Olympia? Man. I ain't going back there. I got skewered in Olympia for being a pro-capitalist liberal reformist fuck. That's a term of art.

GM This was a campus event your talking about?

MD I was actually at the fair trade store, at the 10,000 Villages store that's down there. Dick Meyer, proprietor, and I went down just to meet with a lot of the activists who worked against the MAI, and they did a great job down there, and Olympia is a MAI-free zone because of their efforts. Another grass roots thing that we have successfully done; also here in King County and in Seattle. And they did a great job.

And I went down to thank them and tell them what we were doing in anticipation of the WTO. And they were all like, "What do you mean, we?" I said, "Well, what I'm working on, the we. The we that's me." And they were like, "We don't have to follow your thing. We're going to do our own deal." I said, "Fine. Do your own deal. If you need any help, don't hesitate to give me a call." But they were just completely – they are just an angry...radicals and humorless to boot, and they don't want to work with us. So they're not in the big tent.

DAN is in the tent. The Sierra Club is in the tent. The AFL-CIO is in the tent. We're in the tent. The Washington Association of Churches is in the tent. The Western Sustainable Agricultural Networks, the organic family farmers, they're in the tent. We've reached out successfully.

MD Yeah, sure. Ron Judd, King County Labor Council, great American. Personal friend of mine. We're working together.

SP It seems like the Fast Track was kind of a home run for us, especially the Fast Track was kind of a home run. What makes you think that this will be a home run?

MD It's already – we've won, I mean, before anybody even gets to Seattle. The only thing that makes it a home run is if we can stop them from beginning a new round of free trade negotiations that will expand the power and the jurisdiction and the scope of the WTO. Our demand is that they should undertake an assessment round to review and repair the damage done so far by the WTO. And that that assessment round must include the full participation of civil society, a completely transparent and democratic process, to review and repair the damage done. That is a complete frustration of the corporate agenda.

See the way I look at this as a strategic deal is on the one side you've got the transnational corporate free trade lobby. On the other side, you've got civil society, all those constituencies that I mentioned. In the middle are the political elites and the international media. This is a fight for the hearts and minds – all right,

at least the minds – of the political elites. That’s the geography of this, the topography, that’s the schematic. We win if we can wean the political elites from the corporate elites teat. I blush. But, basically to peel off enough of the political elites from the slavish devotion to the corporate free trade agenda to deny the WTO its political mandate to move forward with trade expansion according to the corporate agenda.

Now, we’ve created the political space through the Fast Track and the MAI. The challenge here is to fill that political space completely; that’s what that demand does. It fills that political space completely by frustrating the corporate agenda.

I believe that an organizer’s reach should exceed her grasp or what’s a heaven for? By asking for this, it’s a calculation that we’ve made. We fill the space and then a little bit more. We maintain the momentum and add a little bit more to the complete frustration of the corporate agenda. That is our strategic vision at this moment in history, at this historic confrontation between civil society and corporate rule. That’s what we’re going for.

SP Proximately one could say one thing would be that at the actual WTO that no new agenda item is added, right? That could be one of them, that there would not be...?

MD As far as product, no investment, government procurement, competition policy, agriculture, intellectual property, all the areas in which the corporations want to move forward and to expand the reach of the WTO - frustration of those particular agenda items one by one are the proximate victories that I think we can legitimately expect to get here. All of them is the home run. “No New Round – Turnaround” as a slogan, as a sound bite, that’s the home run.

SP And what about on the level of civil society affecting public opinion or influencing politicians?

MD We’ve already won. We won going in. Look at the press. Look at the ink we’re getting. Look at that *Wall Street Journal* article with my ugly mug above the fold on the front page in the middle of July. Huge shot across their bow, and all the ink ever since. *Financial Times*. *New York Times*, which never touches our stuff. It’s so frustrating. We’re getting the mainstream media. We got your usual suspects, Pacifica, but in broadcast and print alike, we are winning.

And the proof is look what the administration is doing, scrambling to their public relations committee. The National Association of Manufacturers, Business Roundtable, the United States Chamber of Commerce, all of them have admitted we’re winning the public relations war. They’re digging deep. They’re going to have \$2 million public relations campaign to educate the American public on the benefits of free trade. They wouldn’t be doing this if we hadn’t already won. We are controlling the debate right now.

SP So getting to the public relations issue which I think raised an interesting point, do you think that’s partially because of something you identified earlier, and that is to say that these trade issues are cross-cutting, that is to say, they cut across the traditional sort of lines and liberal and conservative, Republican and Democratic, so has the possibility of generating new alliances or new...?

MD Well, yes. I mean, sure. I believe that the trade and globalization debate cuts across the traditional ideological lines more than any other issue today with the possible exception of campaign finance reform, a possible exception. I was interviewed today by the *National Review*.

SP What a day, *National Review* and sociologists.

MD I know, it’s just a rhetorical vacuum I’m in. I don’t know where to go? As I explained to them, the thing is, Pat Buchanan, he’s right on all these issues for all the wrong reasons. His is a nationalism. Mine is an internationalism. I explained to the *National Review* that the workers in this country and the workers in Malaysia have more in common with each other than either does with the corporate elites of their respective countries, more in common with each other. Educating at that level, dare I say it, “class consciousness,” is the challenge of this movement.

SP Although it's true that probably more than a class conscious language is used, more that that kind of rhetoric employed, the greater the risk that some people jump from the big tent, right?

MD That's right. I don't use that rhetoric. It's not hard to explain globalization in terms that people understand in their own lives without resort to class consciousness, with resort to any kind of Marxist-Leninist rhetorical excesses. You don't have to go there, anymore.

Sometimes we refer to the Africa trade bill, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, as the Africa Re-colonization Act. We also call it NAFTA for African Zone, the African Re-colonization Act. That has resonance in sub-Saharan Africa. That has resonance in the African-American community here. We have built such great bridges just in this last year on the Africa trade bill in black churches, right? Not a traditional part of the Citizens Trade Campaign. There issues are so local and so dealing with racism, basic residual aspects of racism in this country and social policy that affects communities and communities of color, that they've never really focused on the globalization stuff. The Africa trade debate has allowed us to build those bridges.

And you know, the other direction – I'm sorry. I wander here. But the other new, interesting direction that the Africa trade debate has allowed us in? The AIDS activists, Act Up. People of Color Against AIDS Network here in this town, POCAAN here in Seattle. They're interested in this WTO stuff. You know why? Intellectual property, pharmaceutical issues, taking on PHARMA, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturing Association. I was in April, Act Up activists were arrested right in front of me in front of the PHARMA headquarters. You know why? Because of AIDS. Because it costs \$1,200 a year to have the cocktail, and people can't afford that in sub-Saharan Africa.

And the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturing Association, they want to hold onto their patents and they don't want to see the parallel licensing of AIDS medicines to make AIDS medicine affordable in sub-Saharan Africa. It relates to the TRIPS agreement, the Trade Related Intellectual Property agreement. Under the GATT Uruguay Round, under the WTO. It is impacting people at the grass roots level.

You don't have to say class consciousness, off the man, ruling class. You don't have to say anything like that anymore. We can talk about these issues in a way that they can relate to personally in their own lives. Consumers, workers, family farmers, Act Up, AIDS/HIV activists, human rights, it's all there. There's something for everybody in globalization these days. That's why this movement is building.

SP Do you see the victories you describe, that you already succeeded in large part in getting the kind of media attention you wanted, putting pressure on politicians, already making the WTO from what I've already read, people are saying, "Well, we'd better not try to be too ambitious in Seattle in terms of what can be negotiated and so on." Do you think any of that has to do with the fact that it's an election year or that Gore and Clinton have to worry about Gore's political future? Does it make a difference? Does it help?

MD It doesn't hurt, but we shouldn't exaggerate the way it's helped. The AFL-CIO has already endorsed the vice-president. Second of all, all of the major candidates are already free traders.

SP With the exception of Buchanan.

MD He's not a major candidate. I'm sorry. Bradley, Gore, Bush.

SP McCain.

MD McCain. I mean, pick 'em. Who's better on these issues than the other? From where I sit, they're all the same. It's like Harvard, Princeton, Yale. "Oh, who do I vote for?" I mean, they're all out of that same East Coast free trade paradigm mentality, this purblind, myopic, inveterate, unseen, free trade boosterism.

SP Although, one could say that it's possible that Clinton has an interest in telling his fellow heads of state and foreign trade ministers, don't push too hard at this round. You're going to put us – don't embarrass Gore. Don't kill our chances here.

MD Right.

SP I mean, this could be sort of an indirect effect.

MD On the negotiations themselves?

SP Yes.

MD Yeah, and what do you say if you're another head of state? "Don't make me laugh. I mean, come on, Bill. You've invited us all to your country to launch a new round of negotiations, and now you're telling us that your boy, Al, needs some political cover? I'm sorry. That's not why we're coming here. All right. We'll give them a little bit of political cover, but you've got to pay us our plane fare for coming out here to do it." That's just not going to fly. I just don't think it's going to fly, and I don't think that Clinton, astute as he is, can legitimately expect that it's going to effect the negotiations.

SP I've asked a lot of questions. Are there some that you want to ask, Gillian?

GM Yes. For you, what have been the most important elements of organizing in Seattle?

MD Well, I really learned a lot about consensus decision-making. We organizers have a saying. "We educate people in order to organize them. We don't organize people in order to educate them." Right? It's a very important distinction. And on stuff like trade policy, which isn't really apprehensible. It's a lot of wonk-ism. It's really been important since January that we've been educating people in order to organize them. Now we're two and a half weeks out. Right? The rubber hits the road. All this education we've been doing; now we pick the fruit.

Alright. We've educated them; now we organize them. And we've organized them to come out during the week and speak truth to power, and I think that's really been the biggest part of it, is to educate the community. Half of the people who are in the street during the week have to come from the community. I mean, the community pretty big. I mean, that includes Olympia. It really, if you want to get big, it also includes Vancouver and Portland.

SP Yes. Vancouver and Portland.

MD Yes. That's the region. We've been working so hard to educate people in order to organize them, and now I think we've done the work and now we get to bear the fruit.

GM What's been missing, if anything, from your organizing efforts?

MD I could use some more money. Ha. Ha. Nothing. Things have really gone well. Let me think.

I've really got to say it's been pretty perfect going. I mean, we opened the office on time, we've been winning the media, labor has been in from the get-go. There are some local environmental groups who we have endeavored to get engaged to who have not done so. They really haven't. Friends of the Earth has a chapter here. Internationally, Friends of the Earth is really strong. Locally, it's like, where the hell are they?

The Toxics Coalition and People for Puget Sound and Washington Environmental Council – their participation has been fitful is sort of the generous way to say it.

GM What do you think the reason for that is?

MD Because their issues are local. They're working on salmon. They're working on local environmental issues, and making that leap from local to global is really hard sometimes.

GM Has there been any tension between local groups and the fact that you have come in from Washington, D.C.? Has there been any of that?

MD Well, yes! That Washington, D.C. NGO guy, right? He's soiled. He's corrupted. He's polluted. Don't let him pollute our activist base out here with his... And the other thing is that my model of organizing is hierarchical. I demand accountability from my organizers. I want numbers. I want updates. And I'm going to get it. I'm going to get all that.

The organizing here is so loosey-goosey, touchy-feely, consensus this, and process that. Always. "Oh, I have an objection to contend." "Is it a blocking objection or not a blocking objection?" Raising hands, all the rest.

I like to go in and say, "All right. Here's what's going to come down. Here's what everybody needs to do. Okay? Pay attention, because I don't want to say it twice." That wasn't supposed to sound like that. And I have learned a lot about this on a civil society organizing according to a different ethic than I'm used to.

I was trained by the United Farm Workers as an organizer. The pedigree of my organizing is UFW. Alinsky model organizing. I was trained in California in the 80's, and I am used to reports and responsibility and clear lines of responsibility in reporting, and that's not the form equals content form of organizing in Seattle. So there has been some brain damage over that. That's not necessarily a Washington, D.C. thing. A Washington, D.C. thing is more of a substantive problem than I'm planning to reform an institution which local activists, to the extent that they understand it at all, understand that it must die – we have to kill it and it's corporate global capitalism and somehow we're going to be able to do this in five days in Seattle.

And I think, "Well, I don't think that we're actually going to be able to accomplish that, and I'd like you to take the longer view and see this as one step in an ongoing process and an ongoing war and campaign."

Excuse me for a second.

GM So?

MD So, I was done with that thought.

GM I have a new question. How did you go about building – bringing Labor into your part of the coalition and working with WTO?

MD Well, mostly because the CTC already includes major labor.

GM Right.

MD I already got Teamsters, Steelworkers, UAW, UNITE, Longshoremen. I already got a sign-off on our fair trade agenda by some significant pieces of the AFL-CIO, specifically the Teamsters which is, of course, the largest international in the AFL-CIO. God bless Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. We're back.

GM How are you able to extend the contacts you already had to local?

MD Well, I went, actually, back in March, I went to Jobs With Justice. Do you know about Jobs With Justice? Do you know who those guys are?

SP Uh-huh.

MD Their annual convention was in Louisville, Kentucky this year. I went on down. Ron Judd was there. I went to Stewart Acuff who's the Central Labor Council head of Atlanta, who I know, and I've done some things with him. And I said, "Stewart, introduce me to Ron Judd. Tell him that I'm okay to work with. I'm a stand-up guy."

And Stewart Acuff took me over and Stewart said, "Ron, I want you to meet Mike Dolan. He's a stand-up guy, really focused. Sometimes you've just got to tell him to back off, but basically he's a good guy." I said, "Thank you very much, Stewart. Hi, Ron." And then I got to know Ron Judd then.

And then I came out here and I was doing these meetings at the local Labor Temple, those weekly meetings that I mentioned? Excuse me, monthly meetings. We had monthly rallies at the Labor Temple. So I developed a relationship with the local AFL-CIO.

SP This is what relation to the steering committee?

MD Steering committees Wednesday night, every Wednesday night. What a nightmare. Because those were a lot of process heads. And then monthly meetings the last Saturday of every month, big meetings at the Labor Temple, and they got bigger and bigger and bigger until they were finally so big the Labor Temple couldn't hold us anymore. We moved over to Kane Hall over where you all are from. UW.

SP Now when you say support or help from these groups, does that include resources like money, personnel, who pays the rent and stuff like that?

MD I haven't gotten really any resource help from the AFL-CIO. All I've ever said to the AFL-CIO is organize yourselves.

SP Deliver people.

MD Deliver, organize, get involved, be a part of this, and they have.

SP This month especially they've sent a number of them.

MD Oh, God, there are like 28 organizers now. Big field mobilization department. It's a lot like what happened on Fast Track. The AFL-CIO didn't get in with both feet until the pressure came from the bottom up. And that's the way you create really good labor mobilizations and you can get the buy-in of the big labor bosses is to get rank and file involved.

And that's really kind of what happened here. And Ron Judd gets it. We were blessed by having a local labor council leader who gets it. And Ron Judd is a quick learn. He was on a fairly steep learning curve, but he went in and he got his head around the issues and he made it all happen. And he's been a wonderful ally.

SP We saw some tension when we got this Olympia meeting. There were a number of people from the AFL-CIO there, and one of the things that would happen was that some people who claimed to be local labor activists – I don't know what their credentials were. A lot of people made claims, and they were very critical of the AFL-CIO saying that they had just gotten to the game late, they had sent these organizers in who had taken over their local committees. They were unhappy about that. They talked like they were getting...

MD That's always going to happen. It's too bad there's brain damage. There's always going to be brain damage. It's too bad. "We're the local labor activists organizing against globalization." Okay. Great. Good for you. Alright. Tremendous. Good job. But this is huge, right? And if the AFL-CIO wants to sink in 28 organizers and half a million dollars on a major national mobilization, either get on the train or get out of the way. And because they have little bent egos – we used to be in charge and now we're not, and so we're going to attack the AFL-CIO? That is so shortsighted. Who's the enemy here? The enemy's not the AFL-CIO. The enemy is transnational corporate rule. And so they are actually going from being the original

good organizers promoting our agenda and our movement to actually being thorns in the ass of progress by criticizing the AFL-CIO and creating divisions. And that plays right into the hands of the other side who want to show divisions in our ranks. "Look. Labor divided," or "The environmental community divided." That's all it takes to take the wind out of our sails and give the corporations and the free traders ammunition to use against us. And it is a lack of strategic sense.

SP And a certain win to Democratic party who say, "Look, you want to have ties with grass roots constituents? Look. They don't want you. Stick with us."

MD Right. Why did NAFTA pass? Because of the Labor and environmental side agreements peeling off Congress members who counted labor and environmentalists among their constituencies. It peeled off five environmental groups, the environmental side agreement: National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, Defenders of Wildlife, The National Resources Defense Council, and the Audubon Society. Five environmental groups who went south on us in the NAFTA debate because of the environmental side agreement.

The administration and the corporate lobby are looking for opportunities to do the same thing here. That's why that big tent, that I described before, is so important to maintain. And if all we lose are the anarchists on the left, that's okay. Our strategy is intact.

SP You talked about local, national and international level of organizing going on. A lot of people talk about that, but how much international organizing is really going on. How many links are there, really, between your groups and international groups?

MD I should show you our budget, just the money we've paid out on international conference calls, monkey wrenching the negotiation process this year. It's amazing. We have genuine international level organizing going on all the time.

SP International Labor Federation, for example?

MD Well, no. The ICFTU, no. The ICFTU somewhat, but that's really up to the AFL-CIO to corral those guys. No, I'm talking about the 1,400 NGOs listed on our website, www.tradewatch.org, signed on to the international sign-on letter demanding an assessment round. I'm talking about the veterans of the MAI campaign, genuine international movement building. I'm talking about the listservs and the networks, the stuff that we've created digitally that have been so great for organizing.

Now I have real reservations about utility of the Internet for organizing. I believe that, and actually there's a very interesting Harvard Business School study that suggests this, that the Internet is perfectly good for basic cognitive interaction, information sharing between anonymous data points. It is not good for the cognitive interaction that is transformational, that between organizers, where people can make commitments to one another and have the follow-up. The Internet's not good for that. Digitally. It's not good for that.

And I have myriad examples from this organizing alone where people are saying things late at night, typing from their desks, with no follow-through, no accountability. Organizing is when the rubber hits the road, really all about the neighborhood meetings, the rallies, the face-to-face interaction. That's when people can make commitments to one another and rely on them. That's not what the Internet is all about.

Nevertheless, internationally we've had to rely on the Internet because of time differences. My God, when we do these international conference calls, just the time difference alone. I mean, it is 7 am in Malaysia, it's 9 pm in Paris, you know, oh God, I've gotten people out of bed on the West Coast in the U.S. at 5 am. I've woken Agnes Bertrand in France at 2 am. "Agnes, we're going to call you at 2 am." Just to do this, to have our international conference calls, to discuss monkey wrenching; how we're going to monkey wrench the negotiations.

We all know that we've got to mobilize in Seattle, but we also know, we're not naïve, we don't think that the negotiations aren't going on. We know the negotiations are going on and that a lot of the deals are going to be done deals when they get to the actual ministerial meeting, so we've got to monkey wrench them beforehand. "What's your government telling you about their position on the free logging agreement?" "Oh, that's interesting, because our government is telling us this is the posture of those negotiations." "Well, if you tell your government this and go to the wire on it, really, go to the wall on it, and we do the same, and tweak our message just a little differently and say, 'Bill, bring in the building trades on the dah dah dah,' we might get our two governments not to be able to agree between themselves." We're monkey wrenching.

We've been doing that. That international organizing is a real deal.

SP Although it's interesting, because the contacts have gone up, mobilization of building solidarity and this sort of thing remains local. That's just interesting. As much as the communications facilitated by the Internet as you're suggesting that in terms of the kind of movement building activities, those are really still being mobile international in scope is what you're suggesting.

MD Yes. No.

SP No.

MD Wait. Are you saying that the movement building isn't international?

SP I'm suggesting that there may be, that what you were saying, it seemed to me to suggest that it's strong on one side, that is to say, communication, exchange of opinions...

MD Oh, on the Internet, right?

SP Right. Through the Internet and through other means. But weaker in terms of the conduct of movement building or solidarity and so on that builds kind of, what we usually think of as movement politics.

MD Yes, I am saying that, but we have to use it. We have to use the Internet. The frustration of the MAI is often, and I think it's a little bit exaggerated, but it is often accredited to the Internet. We exposed the document. We liberated a copy. We put it up on the Internet. We said, "Hey, everybody, check this thing out. Check out the MAI. We're putting it up on our website." We spent a week scanning it. We had only a hard copy. We spent a week scanning this thing onto the Internet and posting it up. The Dracula strategy worked. We exposed it to the sunshine of public scrutiny, and it died. That was the Dracula strategy.

And the other thing that I want to say about the Internet is that we have the same access to the technical tools, facts, Internet, phone, all the rest, as the corporate lobbies have. We don't have the same deep pockets, but we have the same access, basically, to those basic tools of communication.

We're different, though. We're broad and wide. Civil society is broad and wide and "you can kill a revolutionary but you can't kill a revolution" as Huey Newton once said. There are nodes, individual nodes of activism that can be neutralized. But the movement, because we're so broad and wide, and all these different constituencies throughout civil society, you can't really stop us. You can't find where, but the other side is hierarchical, the corporate life. They are like a dinosaur. Little pea brain, great big body, right?

And if you can monkey wrench them and find the nose, you can frustrate their agenda more easily than you can frustrate ours. And, in fact, to that extent, because the Internet is participatory by nature, even though it has its limitations in terms of the effectiveness of the organizing, because it is participatory by nature, it benefits civil society. We have a disproportionate benefit, matrix, or whatever in the language of you graduate students, we have disproportionate – I guess this interview is coming to a close soon. We have a disproportionate advantage by the use and abuse of the Internet.

SP We have two last questions. One I would say is could one characterize the movement against globalization, not just here in Seattle, but generalize, as broad as you describe or relatively thin?

MD Getting deeper all the time. Well, look at the mentions that I made. Look at AIDS, you know that. I mean when you say thin. "Beneath this thin veneer of the mobilization of the enormous civil society apathy?" No. It's getting deeper all the time, and also, I said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And I will say the whole is deeper than the sum of its parts because of Labor, environment, consumer, human rights, faith-based, family farmer, dah, dah, dah. All these constituencies are layers that make us deeper.

But remember, this is arcane stuff, this trade policy, this globalization stuff. And the education is an ongoing process, and I think that in this country, at least, this Seattle moment is going to educate a lot of people.

Other last question? The last question?

GM The last question is, and you've heard the kinds of questions we've been asking and what we're getting at, is there anything that we haven't asked that we should have asked?

MD That question is an outrage. How dare you make me think?

SP What might we miss from the outside about this? What's the really important thing we might be missing?

MD Well, I don't know. There's a couple of things. You might ask me what I'm going to do after this, and the answer is I'm going to Cuba. But that brings up another question that you might be missing. The whole question of extraterritoriality. The whole question, like our sanctions against Cuba. The whole Helms - Burton bit. There are thorny questions here that I don't know the answers to, and the questions that you should have asked that you didn't are the questions that I don't know the answers to because I do know the answers to all the questions that you did ask.

What do you do with extraterritoriality? What do you do with it? And also, what's the vision? What's the dream? What's the alternative that replaces this flawed and failed model? What does it look like? Sustainability. We didn't ever get to questions of sustainable... These are substantive issues that don't relate to organizing per se. How do we build a better world? We get asked all the time, "We know what you're against. You're against NAFTA. What are you for?" And you didn't ask me what I'm for, what the alternative vision is and how you build towards that using the models and so on that I've described.

Fidel Castro is coming to Seattle for this. You heard it here first. He's going to be here. He loves the WTO, because this country is involved in things that are WTO illegal, Helms - Burton being the principal example. And he gets to come here and say, "You fucking hypocrites," whatever that is in Spanish, "because you're talking about a rules-based multi-lateral system and you just go out there and you flagrantly break the rules on ideological grounds. You think that your Massachusetts selective purchasing law has to be struck down because it's based on human rights considerations, and yet you go out and in your vestigial cold war anti-communism, you still have an embargo against this country."

I love Fidel Castro and everything that his revolution represents in terms of the empowerment of the people. And yet he's going to come here and support the WTO, an institution that I hate.

One question that you might have asked is what's up with that? But you didn't, so I guess that will wait until the next one.

SP The last thing. Would you mind giving us your interview after the 30th?

MD Yes, come down and find me in Cuba.

SP Are you going to be available for a follow-up?

MD Well, I'm going to be breaking down this office for a few days afterwards and I'm going to be catatonic, but sure, come try.

SP Thank you very much.

(End of Interview)