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Interviewer: Jaelle Dragomir

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JD David, you've traveled the world.

DK Yes. Fran and I lived three years in Ethiopia setting up a business school at what was then Haile Sellassie I University in the mid 1960s. We lived three years in Nicaragua in Central America where I was the Harvard Business School advisor to the Central American Management Institute. We also lived for ten years in the Philippines and five years in Indonesia. During this time I was first with the Ford Foundation and then an advisor to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). I left USAID in 1988 to work fulltime with the NGO sector and finally established The People-Centered Development Forum as my organizational base.

JD When did you write your book, *When Corporations Rule the World*?

DK I wrote it while living in New York City, where we moved in 1992. It was released in October of 1995 and a revised edition updating the discussion of corporate rule and looking at the implications of the global civil society movements that have emerged in opposition to it will be released in April 2001. Before moving to New York I was devoting my life to dealing with issues of poverty in low-income countries in the South. With time I came to realize that conditions were actually getting worse for most people in terms of increasing poverty and inequality, environmental destruction, and social breakdown. It seemed to relate to the kind of development being promoted by most development aid agencies. Fortunately I was able to take the time to step back to reflect on why "development" was producing such disastrous consequences. This led me to look at the institutional consequences of corporate globalization and how it was shifting power away from people, communities, and governments to global corporations driven solely by their own bottom line. Eventually my colleagues from the Asian NGO community began telling me, "You know, we think you've

really got the analysis down. Now you understand our problem. The best way you can help us is to go back to the United States and educate your own people as to the incredible damage your country is doing to the rest of the world." So that's what I did. In 1992, Fran and I moved to New York City, in the middle of Manhattan, which is what we often refer to as the belly of the beast, right between Madison Avenue (corporate advertising) and Wall Street (corporate finance). That's where I found the inspiration to write *When Corporations Rule the World*. Now, as the resistance to corporate rule and economic globalization builds, many of us are recognizing that we have to move beyond resistance to building awareness of the alternatives.

JD That's your next book.

DK Yes, *The Post Corporate World: Life After Capitalism*, which was released in March 1999. It is what led Fran and I to get so deeply involved with *YES!* magazine and to move to the Seattle area. Whereas Manhattan is the belly of the corporate beast, the Pacific Northwest is the heartland of the sustainability movement, so that was the proper setting and inspiration for our next step.

JD In *The Post Corporate World*, you say that it's the image that we have to establish. We have to get a new image in our head and release the old image. How do we do that?

DK That isn't quite the way I would put it. The reference in *The Post Corporate World* is to Kenneth Boulding's book, *The Image*, which had quite an impact on me as a college student. Our image of the world shapes how we think about human possibilities. This has implications at many different levels. One level is simply getting in mind a different kind of economy that isn't dominated by mega-corporations. At a much deeper level it has to do with our image of the nature of material reality and of life. With time I've come to feel the global capitalist system is a product of the image of a dead worldview that comes from classical Newtonian physics. According to this image only the material is real, life is an accidental outcome of material complexity, and consciousness is an illusion.

JD Man over nature.

DK Man over nature is a piece of it, another piece follows directly from the Hobbsian philosophy that since life is an accident there is no foundation for moral or ethical behavior and the only rational human response is the pursuit of material gratification without particular regard to the consequences. I sometimes think of it as pursuing material diversions to distract ourselves from the terrible pain alienation and loneliness that follows from believing that we live in a dead and uncaring universe. And of course that basically is the values foundation of capitalism, along with the Darwinian theory that tells us progress comes from the

survival of the fittest in a life and death struggle for dominance. So if this is your image of reality, then the materialistic competitive struggle of capitalism is a rational response. Whereas if one embraces the vision of reality that is coming out of the new biology, the new physics, and so forth, one has a picture of the unfolding of a deeply intelligent and spiritual universe in which we are participants in an extraordinary creative journey with breathtaking possibilities. This image of reality leads naturally to a totally different sense of the kind of future we could create and to a great sadness for what we are doing to ourselves and to others.

JD And the old image justifies destroying the earth.

DK Yes, because if life has no meaning, its destruction makes no difference. Indeed, if the destruction of life for immediate material gratification serves to distract us from otherwise meaningless lives, fine. If some people are excluded, that is of no consequence. In a Darwinian world there will always be losers. So that's where the image has implications at a very deep level. For this reason, I believe that change depends not only on a political awakening, but as well, a spiritual awakening. Perhaps the most optimistic news one finds currently is the evidence of a worldwide spiritual awakening. It is in part an awakening to a different image of reality that allows us to break free of what we might look at as a dysfunctional, brain dead cultural mythology that alienates us from the underlying spiritual reality of life. The resulting anger plays into capitalism's self-destructive competition, war, and all of that. It seems humanity may be awakening from a kind of cultural trance, which to me is the ultimate source of hope, because that awakening is essential if we are to change course.

JD In your last book, it seems you feel that the church bears a responsibility for where we are today. Is that correct?

DK In terms of the downside?

JD Yes.

DK That's true. It has been an important part of the problem. It is also an important part of the solution. Just before the WTO meeting I was invited to give a keynote presentation to a regional conference on economic justice organized by the University Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle. In addition to myself, the main speakers were Marcus Borg, a well-known Christian theologian and Anaradah Mittal, from the Food First institute. In preparation I read some of Marcus' books to understand his point of view on justice as a Christian message. His best known book is *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, in which he tells the story of his growing up in the Christian church and becoming disillusioned with the classical Christian doctrine about an old man with the gray beard

watching over everybody and passing out rewards and punishments depending on who pleased him and who did not. Marcus became so turned off that he moved away from the church until he came across a wholly different interpretation of Jesus' message about spirituality and the nature of God.

That interpretation is much the same as what Matthew Fox refers to as creation spirituality. According to this interpretation, Jesus was a great prophet who was in touch with the spiritual intelligence that is the ground from which all creation flows. His central message was not that he was God or the Son of God and that all who believed in him would be redeemed in Heaven. Rather his central message is about social justice and our responsibility to honor the spirit by creating just societies on Earth that recognize the sacred worth of all persons. Marcus lays out how Jesus' social justice message became perverted through conversion into a religious doctrine of a rule making God who lives apart in a far place called heaven from which he rewards those who please him and punishes those who incur his displeasure. This doctrine supports the arrangement of humanity into a hierarchy of goodness or cleanliness corresponding to the prevailing social hierarchy. Those at the top are presumed to be the most favored in God's eyes--the clean and the worthy. The poor and powerless have evidently displeased God and therefore deserve their fate. Thus the doctrine that gives us the image of a personified God who rules from Heaven lends moral legitimacy to the status quo of elite domination and exploitation. It is also interesting how this same religious doctrine aligns with the materialistic, reductionist worldview of Newtonian physics, which lacking any other explanation for how the material universe came into being, suggested that the universe is a great mechanical clockworks created by a God who set it in motion and then left it to run down unattended. You might say that the main argument between classical scientists and theologians was around the question of whether God returned after he took his rest on the seventh day.

Either way, we are left with the notion or image that spiritual intelligence--if it exists at all--is somewhere out there far apart from the material universe, which is basically just a mechanical clockworks winding down as the tension in its spring is released. Together, the combination of the dead universe and the distant judgmental God affirm the legitimacy of social hierarchy, materialism, injustice, and exploitation.

By contrast, the image that all of life, all of creation, is the manifestation of an intelligent spiritual unity, communicates a very different message regarding our relationships and responsibility to one another and the earth. If we start with the presumption of a living universe--which is more consistent with more advanced scientific findings and Borg's interpretation of the teachings of Jesus--it leads us to reject the legitimacy of such a society based on social hierarchy, materialism, injustice, and exploitation.

Although I make no claim to being a religious scholar, the evidence suggests to me that this is the message of the prophet on whose teachings the Christian churches presume to build. A rediscovery of that message through the writings of major Christian scholars like Marcus Borg and Walter Wink could revitalize Christian churches by engaging them in the cause of creating truly just, sustainable, and compassionate societies. For this reason I find hope in the fact that Borg and Wink are among the most popular and widely read of modern Christian writers.

Such rethinking could potentially transform the church from an institution that predominantly legitimizes the status quo to a rediscovery of the Christian mission of social justice. I see signs of that. I wish the signs were stronger, but there's enough happening to be a source of hope.

JD The people in power won't want to give it up, so what can we do to change it?

DK Well, there certainly are many power holders who will not want to give up their privileged status. I'd be careful, however, about making a totally blanket statement because I think there is potential for awakening in every person. At the same time, I don't think the change is going to come from a sudden burst of enlightenment on the part of power holders.

If change does come it will be through an awakening of the mass of humanity, including an awakening to the fact that the institutions that are the agents of the violence and oppression that threaten our collective future have only the power we yield to them. It is a matter of recognizing that these institutions are built on fraudulent premises and have no moral or ethical legitimacy. As that awakening occurs and legitimacy is withdrawn from unjust and undemocratic institutions, the power of those institutions will dissolve, just the way the Soviet Union dissolved once it became clear to those involved it was not a legitimate institution.

Take the case of the protests against the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO. Some people are focused on trying to reform these institutions, but there's a major and rapidly growing group that says, "No, these are not legitimate institutions. They're not useful institutions and reform is not the appropriate agenda. We should delegitimize and ultimately decommission these institutions so that we can fill the space they occupy with institutions that are in fact aligned with human and planetary purpose.

JD Create a vacuum?

DK Not a vacuum. Space. That is different than the call for a descent into chaos, though this may be where global capitalism is taking us. I do feel the institutions

of global capitalism will ultimately collapse under their own weight. The question is whether their collapse will bring down the whole of humanity with them or whether by that time we will have alternative values, structures, relationships sufficiently in place so that we can move through the period of collapse without the disastrous results that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. That's why I'm keen to see us build alternatives to the global capitalist system at the same time as we withdraw legitimacy from them. I think this relates to why armed revolutions have so often failed to achieve the ends to which they are presumably committed, because the focus is on violently capturing the instruments of the state power, not transforming the nature of that power to the end of peace and democracy.

A distinctive characteristic of contemporary progressive movements is that they are not focused on capturing state power through an armed revolution. Rather they seek to transform the institutions and relationships of power. That's a fundamental shift and I think it's extraordinarily important. This process can move ahead even though corrupted institutions remain in place. Learning to relate in new ways that share power is a part of our preparation to create and live in a more just and democratic society. That's a lesson I've been learning from many young people involved in the direct action against the WTO who organize the protests on the basis of affinity groups and consensus decision-making. The idea that the protest actions provide participants with a learning experience in radically democratic decision-making is quite explicit in the thinking of those who lead these actions. The goal is not simply to make things difficult for the powers that be. It is also to build new ways of thinking and relating into the work of those involved in the resistance. It's an educational process, preparing for a different kind of society. I think that's both wonderful and extraordinarily sophisticated.

JD So what you're seeing around the world isn't anti-globalization but corporate accountability?

DK You're correct that the resistance is against corporate rule. It is not against globalization as a process of increasing international communication and exchange. Indeed, the resistance is itself possibly the most truly international and inclusive movement in history. At the same time, the ultimate goal for many of us is far more than simply making global corporations democratically accountable. Our forefathers who fought to replace monarchy with democracy were not simply looking for more benevolent and accountable monarchs. They sought to eliminate the institution of monarchy as we know it. It is now much the same for the publicly traded, limited liability corporation as an institutional form. The larger goal is to eliminate it in favor of more democratic, market friendly forms of business organization.

Actually I think it was a tactical error to allow the resistance movement to be labeled an anti-globalization movement. It happened because the term globalization, as used by corporate globalists, was a code word for a process of consolidating global corporate rule. So we became the anti-globalization movement. This was a dream come true for the propaganda machinery of the corporate globalists, because to the general public the term globalization simply means we live in an increasingly interdependent world with more communication among people, more cooperation and increasing international exchange. For most people, including most of those involved in the protests, these aspects of globalization are positive. The issue is whether globalization is going to be rooted in people and living communities or is going to be driven by giant mega-corporations that are de-linked from any kind of human sensibility or accountability. Many of us in the movement are becoming more careful to be clear in our language that our opposition is to *corporate* globalization. In fact, we oppose corporate globalization specifically because it is closing the spaces available for the globalization from below that grows out of a shared consciousness of the ultimate unity of life and humanity. That's an important distinction.

With regard to corporate accountability, the thinking is evolving. The first edition of *When Corporations Rule the World* is focused on corporate accountability as the alternative to corporate rule. Partly that is because in 1995 when the book came out, the immutability of the corporation was taken so much for granted that the timing wasn't right to directly challenge its very existence.

But I think there's a growing sentiment, and certainly one I'm trying to encourage, that the publicly traded, limited liability corporation is an inherently pathological institution that stands in fundamental opposition to democracy. Not incidentally, it also stands in fundamental opposition to a market economy and to an ethical culture. Like the institution of monarchy it has no place in a just and democratic society, because it is by nature a predatory institutional form designed to concentrate power without accountability. That's just not a very good way to organize things. Our longer-term goal must be to eliminate it. Some would claim this is anti-business. For me it is actually a pro-business, pro-market position. If you read Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* you will see that Smith presents something of a tirade against unaccountable crown corporations that created monopolies and destroyed local markets and local enterprise even back in his day.

JD They took his ideas and turned them around.

DK Yes. It's kind of like what the church did to the ideas of Jesus. There seems to be a consistent pattern of taking the ideas of popular heroes who challenge hierarchy and exploitation and twisting them into a defense of that which they abhor. Another example is Adam Smith's *invisible hand*, which has been turned into the

idea that the unrestrained pursuit of greed will be automatically converted, through the magic of the invisible hand, into a social good. Therefore the revisionists argue, you should feel free to go out and trash your neighbor because in the end this will be good for him as well as for you. When you put the revisionist theory in such bald terms it's obviously patent nonsense. Furthermore, it is not what Adam Smith said. First of all Adam Smith wrote two books. In addition to *The Wealth of Nations*, he wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which is his examination of why it is that people seem to have a natural inclination to care about the well-being of their neighbor though it may yield nothing to themselves other than the satisfaction of seeing it. It is also clear that this is the question that most fascinated Smith, because he wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* before *The Wealth of Nations* and he kept revising it throughout his life, producing new editions long after *The Wealth of Nations* was completed.

So one can assume that in writing *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith assumed the presence of an ethical culture as the underpinning of market activity. Indeed, in light of the free trade ideology it is interesting to note that the only place in the thousand pages of *The Wealth of Nations* where Smith refers to the invisible hand is in a sentence that says because the entrepreneur has a natural preference to invest in his community where he can keep track of his investments he serves the general good of his community through no particular intent, as if guided by an invisible hand. Now the way I interpret that, the real market economy is about people finding ways to create their livelihoods through production and exchange of goods and services. Adam Smith was pointing out that in the process of doing so, in most instances the purpose is not community service. Rather it is to find a way to live, yet in the individual's pursuit of his or her livelihood the public good is indeed served. That is the magic of a market comprised of individuals and small firms. A market dominated by globe spanning corporations is quite another thing. Of course in Smith's vision, the pursuit of individual livelihoods is assumed to occur against the backdrop of an ethical culture that creates a sense of obligation to be fair and honest in one's dealings. This is a wholly different thing than the idea that the entrepreneur serves the public good by creating monopolies and trashing his neighbors in the pursuit of unrestrained greed.

JD That's not the same thing.

DK Not the same thing at all. I've become acutely aware that in fact capitalism--which by classical definition is a political, economic system in which the few gain monopoly control of the means of production to the exclusion of the many, including those whose labor makes the capital productive--is both anti-market and anti-democratic. Capitalism is in fact a pathology to which a market economy is subject in the absence of adequate governmental regulation and citizen oversight. That becomes a very key idea in terms of understanding the range of alternatives to the global capitalist system. Although some in the protest movement come out



of a classical leftist or socialist background, very few are committed to the vision of a huge government owning all means of production in the name of workers. Most think in terms of something that comes a whole lot closer to a classical market economy in which ownership is widely distributed and rooted in community. I see nothing in the idea of a market economy that excludes worker owned companies, cooperatives, or even community owned enterprises, all of which give people a real ownership stake in an enterprise that serves their community in a variety of ways that go far beyond simply extracting the maximum short-term profit for its owners.

JD If people are just chattel what would be the purpose in not taking good care of them?

DK Well, in a global economy where you have massive unemployment, if you destroy the health and psyche of one group of people, there are always lots more at the door. It's exactly what happens in the Mexican maquiladoras where docile young women are hired for three or four years until the working conditions leave them with permanent disabilities such as carpal tunnel syndrome, kidney failure, failed eye site and so forth. Once they are permanently handicapped and thus useless to the company, they are discarded and replaced by the new workers who wait in lines outside the company gate because all other means of survival have been denied them and they have no choice other than to accept whatever terms of employment are offered.

JD According to some U.S. Americans that are doing good, they're making upwards of \$100,000 a year, they seem to be feeling that the economy is good. How do you answer to them when they say, "I don't have to think about issues of the WTO or the World Bank or IMF."

DK For myself, I don't waste much time trying to convince people who have actively closed their minds to the larger reality, because there are millions of thoughtful people who are concerned, eager to explore and understand the issues, and are searching for alternatives. This includes many people who are very well to do. You may have heard of the organization, Responsible Wealth. It's organized by United for a Fair Economy with an exclusive membership of people who are in the top 5% of the population in terms of income and assets. Its primary purpose is to lobby for legislation that reduces the tax advantages and welfare payments to the rich in favor of a more equitable society. So it organizes letter-writing campaigns to congress that say, "Us rich people are not taxed enough. And what's this nonsense of doing away with the inheritance tax, which is an essential mechanism of wealth distribution? We demand that you keep the inheritance tax in place so as not to increase our already unfair advantage over the rest of society." It gets attention because it is so far from the norm of greed that we have come to take for granted.

This is just one example. My focus in terms of strategy is to communicate with the people who are searching, who have opened their minds to the need to create a more just world, because there are already far more of those than I can talk to. They are where the energy is. Those who are already questioning the status quo quickly come to realize that simply pursuing material gratification diminishes one's own being and in the end is self-defeating, because you get yourself on the treadmill of chasing money ever faster to buy stuff that doesn't really give you that much satisfaction. It just distracts you from more meaningful and satisfying ways of using your time.

JD Being rich is certainly easier than being poor.

DK Being rich is easier than being poor. And there's no question about which I'd rather be, but the real issues center on equity and economic security. Economic security is so important that I believe everyone should have it. This leads to a substantial focus on equity, as it is virtually impossible to have economic security for all *and* significant inequality. The greater the inequality, the more likely a rapacious few will use their power to expropriate the means of livelihood of the weaker many. In the end, economic security is inseparable from holding an ownership stake in the capital assets on which one's livelihood depends. For this reason I often say that private property is such a good thing that everybody should have some. This is different from the elitist idea that property rights are absolute and that an individual has the right to acquire property without limit, because it requires an equitable distribution of ownership. Having an ownership share in the means by which you create your livelihood--the assets on which your livelihood depends is essentially the same thing as securing your right to live, to your means of living, through an ownership right. It is also a foundation of real democracy, because in the end, it is pretty near impossible to separate political democracy from economic democracy. The further we go toward extremes of economic inequality, the clearer it is that political democracy is rendered meaningless because of the power of big money to bribe politicians to its own ends.

JD So let's move to the WTO protests in Seattle a year ago. What was your part in that?

DK You may not know the story. I was very much a part of the lead up to Seattle. A lot of people feel that *When Corporations Rule the World* made an important contribution to the educational process that lead up to Seattle WTO protests. Also, prior to the WTO meeting, the Church Council of Seattle organized presentations in churches around the area. I was a presenter at a number of those. We were trying to prepare people in Seattle for the time when demonstrations would take place so that if they found themselves in the midst of a demonstration, instead of

cursing the demonstrators they would say, "Oh, hey, yeah, these are the folks protesting in defense of democracy. I' going to park my car and join the parade." I was lined up to give eight presentations during the WTO week. But the prior week I was in South Carolina giving a presentation. The night before I was to get on the airplane to return to Seattle, I came down with a terrible bloody nose that wouldn't stop. I ended up in the hospital for more than a week and missed all of the WTO activities except for my last speaking engagement on the final Friday. As many people said, my spirit was there. But I was not physically there until the last day, one of the great disappointments of my life.

JD Before the WTO week you were trying to mobilize people?

DK I was one of the thousands of people involved in the mobilization. The serious organizers were people like Alli Starr of Art and Revolution, David Solnit of the Direct Action Network, John Sellers of Ruckus, Mike Dolan of the Fair Trade Campaign, Ron Judd of the AFL-CIO, Don Quigley of the Seattle Church Council, and many, many others who did the serious mobilizing that was the foundation of the success of the protest. Many of them traveled the country organizing events to encourage people to turn out in Seattle. I was not involved with that level of energy and had far less impact than those folks did. But I had my role in helping people to understand the issues and I played a small part in encouraging people to come. Everywhere I spoke, I emphasized the importance of the demonstrations.

JD Did you have anything to do with the unions?

DK Actually, my wife, Fran, marched in the Friday afternoon demonstration, which was a union event. The theme that day was ending corporate rule and I made a presentation in the church that morning. But by the time the presentation was over I was feeling so weak that it did not seem wise to join the march. Earlier I participated in a number of events with Ron Judd who was a key player on the union side. We became good friends. There's no question that the labor unions had a very key role. One of the really exciting aspects of Seattle was the sense of breakthrough toward the melding of progressive movements around a shared agenda. Of course the press dismissed this melding as a cacophony of disparate voices. You could see it that way if you had no understanding of what was actually happening, which of course was the case for the clueless corporate press. But the deeper reality was that people who came from an extraordinary array of particular interests found common cause in the resistance against the WTO. Labor unions, churches, youth, and environmentalists formed the core of it and recognized that in many ways their many interests were one interest. The religious groups were rediscovering social justice as a mission of the church. Laborers were discovering that without an environment there would be no jobs and environmentalists were discovering that if people don't have secure jobs there

won't be an environment. The youth were discovering that without all these issues being dealt with they would have no future. So, there was an extraordinary convergence. They were joined by peace groups and the women's movement, gays and lesbians, small business people, small farmers, food safety activists, and organic farmers, and on and on. It was a visible signal that progressive groups are moving beyond identity and single interest politics to a politics of the whole.

JD As in the whole world.

DK Exactly. This was one of the powerful messages of Seattle. I've spent a lot of time reflecting on what it is that brought these people together. What is the unifying issue for which the WTO is a symbol? I've come to conclude it's fundamentally two things, one is democracy and the other is life.

JD Democracy is?

DK Democracy is full and meaningful participation by people in the decisions that affect their lives--in contrast to corporate rule. By life I mean a shared commitment to a society that values life more than money. Those two themes pretty much cover everything else. If they are addressed, then you will likely have justice, decent jobs paying a living wage, clean food, respect for nature, and much else. It has a lot to do with the local versus the global, the idea that economies need to be rooted in place and that democratic rights need to be rooted in people who in turn are rooted in a place. This connection is the foundation of environmental responsibility. It is essential to democracy.

One thing we have yet to address is the question of how the movement names itself. Many of the protestors embraced fair trade vs. free trade as a defining issue of the Seattle protests. I think that was a tactical mistake. The distinction has little if any meaning to those outside of the activist community. Furthermore, trade is not in any sense the defining issue for most of us. It is similar to the mistake of characterizing ourselves as anti-globalization movement, which makes us sound to the broader public like a bunch of crazy, retrograde, xenophobia, no-nothings. In fact the protestors, and especially their leaders, are among the most informed and international people you will find anywhere. Making explicit that our resistance is against corporate globalization is a step forward, but we must go further. Ultimately we must name ourselves in terms of what it we are for, rather than what we are against.

As I noted, the defining themes if the movement are democracy and life. Vandana Shiva has noted that in India the movement calls itself, "The Movement for Living Democracy." This is the name that Frances Moore Lappe chose for her Living Democracy Institute. I find that very attractive and expressive.

JD Was Seattle the pivotal point for changing things or was that just the culmination of several years of work before?

DK It was an expression--an icon. In some ways it is curious that Seattle received so much attention, because on the very day of November 30<sup>th</sup>, there were estimates of upwards of a million people demonstrating simultaneously in various parts of the world. There have been even larger numbers of people demonstrating around the same issues in other nations before and since. Seattle probably got such special attention because it occurred in the United States, which is where most people in the world would least expect it. It did have a huge impact on awareness among the American public. The fact that the business of the WTO was effectively brought to a halt also attracted a lot of attention. In the end a few broken windows and the police riot were what captured the press attention. Of course the police riot alone would have gotten the notoriety without the broken windows and it would have been much better, because the broken windows obscured the fact that all but a few dozen of the protestors were committed to nonviolence, in contrast to the police who went berserk. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels outrage every time I hear the press portray Seattle as though the protestors were rioting and the police were simply responding. This is an instance where the truth should have been self-evident even to the corporate press, which raises the question of intentional bias.

JD There was an economist at the University of Washington that said that the breakdown of the WTO would have happened without the demonstrators because Clinton didn't want it to continue nor did the UK.

DK I think there is a case to be made that the negotiations might have broken down anyway, but the claim that they broke down because Clinton and the UK wanted it to breakdown strains credulity in the extreme. The U.S. was the foremost proponent of the negotiations and the new round of trade negotiations that Seattle was supposed to launch. There were, however, some serious misperceptions even among some of the participants. I was in India shortly after the Seattle demonstrations at the invitation of Vandana Shiva. We were told there that India's trade minister had returned from the WTO meeting with a story that Clinton had actually orchestrated the demonstrations to push his agenda for putting labor and environmental standards into the WTO as a US protectionist measure. The idea that Clinton orchestrated the demonstrations is absolute nonsense, but at least one can understand, from the Indian Minister's particular perspective, how he might misread the situation in that way.

There is a plausible argument that the talks may have broken down even without the demonstrations, but not because Clinton wanted them to. It wasn't just the demonstrators who brought the meeting to a halt. It was a combination of demonstrators and a number of official representatives, particularly from Southern

countries, who were very uneasy about some of the proposals being put forward, especially by the United States. Some of my very well informed, plugged-in Third World colleagues believe the demonstrations gave the Third World delegates the confidence and sense of empowerment to stand up for their interests. If thousands of US citizens were out on the streets protesting the actions of their own government, then they felt easier about protesting too, from within. And so they began to get their backs up and refused to play the usual game of rolling over and buying in to whatever the US imposed on them. Of course you also had differences between the US and Europe on such things as agriculture policy. That involved another set of issues that hadn't been worked out ahead of time. So there were lots of barriers to reaching an agreement. Now whether any one of these circumstances would have been enough to destroy the negotiations by itself, we'll never know.

JD It usually isn't that simple.

DK Exactly. I believe it was the interplay of the demonstrations and dissident officials. This has led some of us to recognize the importance of looking for every opportunity to build alliances between the civil society movements and the members of the G77. The intersect of interests between activists and the G-77 also came up with regard to the April 10, 2000 demonstrations against the World Bank and the IMF in Washington DC. Spokespersons for the Bank and the Fund were saying the demonstrators were spoiled children of privilege who are attacking the very institutions that are working to end world poverty. It was a real setback for the Bank and the Fund when representatives of the G-77 issued statements from their meeting in Cuba saying that they supported the demonstrators and their cause.

The G77 is the group of unaligned or Southern countries. There's actually something like 120 country members, but they still call it the G77. It turns out that there were very strong points of convergence between the protestors' issues and the interests of G77 countries. The demonstrations centered on calls for debt relief for Third World countries and the elimination of IMF structural adjustment conditions that serve international financial institutions and corporations at the expense of people and the environment. It would be pretty hard to find a government of a Third World country that is going to say, "We love the debt and these IMF conditions."

Of course there are also important points of divergence. Many civil society groups are talking about a very deep economic transformation to eliminate the dominator model of society. This kind of change is quite unattractive to most political and elites of Third World countries whose interests are in general well served by the elitist agenda of neoliberal economic theology. Some truly believe it will lead to prosperity for all. The Third World grassroots groups are quite another matter.

Many of them were well versed in the destructive nature of the neoliberal capitalist economic model long before those of more conservative backgrounds, such as myself, came to understand it. They have become increasingly clear that the institutional dynamics of corporate globalization do not work for Third World poor, or for the poor and powerless anywhere. The awareness varies, but in general it is growing.

It is also true, as some of my friends in India point out, that it is very easy for poor people to buy into the glitz and promise of the consumer society without realizing that it is an empty promise that will remain forever out of their reach. The message of the consumer utopia has a powerful appeal. The message is endlessly communicated through all sorts of advertising media telling people that those who buy into the capitalist system will have all these neat things they see Americans have on television. They're quite unaware that even for a great many Americans much of what they see on TV as a life of leisure and luxurious consumption is forever far beyond their reach. Nor are they aware that the earth simply will not support extravagant consumption for more than a small minority of the world's people because the planetary life support system will collapse long before.

JD Having just recently taught in Nepal, I saw people who were so desperately poor that they struggled to feed their family each day and they couldn't possibly think of the IMF or the World Bank, they probably haven't even heard of them actually.

DK Well, it's amazing how the word is getting around about the World Bank and the IMF--even to places that don't have the Internet. (laughs) Literally millions of the world's poorest people have taken to the streets over the past few years protesting these institutions. Of course there are those who are so desperate they can do nothing more than concentrate on getting through the day. There are also those who have been captivated by the glitzy images of the consumer culture communicated through advertising to the most remote villages. This is a terribly insidious destructive process. The educational curricula of even the most remote schools systematically depreciate the traditional local cultures and values in favor of modern, industrial, materialism. I don't know if you're familiar with the work of Helena Norberg-Hodge on Ladakh.

JD Yes, I've interviewed her.

DK Then you know that story she tells so well, including in her wonderful video documentary.

JD In the background is a huge Coca-Cola advertisement and the young man drinking.

DK Yes, and the images of the youth of Ladakh buying into Western music and dress.

JD So, what is it that in cultures that we look to be fairly entrenched in their spirituality, that the youth look at US television and say "Yes, I want the car, I want the girl, I want the clothes."

DK Well, the rewards of spiritual experience are deep and enduring, but often subtle. The rewards promised advertising messages of corporate globalization are more visible and immediate. Also, no matter what the culture, there's a dynamic of rebellion in adolescence. Power also plays a role. Youth in more traditional cultures see Westerners on television, in ads, and as tourists. They all seem to have so much power, so many things and freedoms that local people and cultures don't have. It sends a strong message. Of course those to whom these messages are communicated don't see the homeless and the slums, to say nothing of the spiritual alienation and empty lives of those with a compulsive addiction to consumption as their primary source of meaning.

JD You seem very optimistic about the future.

DK Well that would be a little misleading. I come at this not as a scholar attempting to make objective assessments about future prospects, but as an activist committed to creating a world that works. I do not believe the future is foreordained, but rather is a matter of choice. So I'm dedicated to helping people see what happens if we stay on the present course, as well as the possibilities for taking a different course. I encourage people to make more conscious choices. To do this, I must believe that change is possible, even as I hope and pray that it truly is, that we still have time to change before social and environmental collapse progresses to the point that our collective fate is sealed. I certainly have my moments of deep fear that it's already over, but we don't know for sure either way, so we must keep trying. Cosmic creation is infinitely patient. There remains plenty of time for other evolutionary experiments on planet earth should our own species prove to be an evolutionary failure. Even at our worst, it is unlikely that humans will destroy the potential for the future evolution of life on planet Earth. It may take a few million years to recover, but in the cosmic scheme of things that's nothing. I often put it in terms that we are facing a test as a species of whether we're worthy of our privileged place within the web of Earth life. If we're unable to find our place of service to the whole then the same thing will happen to us that's happened to every other species that failed to do so. Still, I have a certain attachment to the idea that it would be a terrible waste if we expire along with the other failures, because our species seems to have so much wonderful potential.

My own deep sense, to which I make passing reference in *The Post Corporate World*, is that the whole of creation started with an undifferentiated consciousness that had an incredible urge to know itself by discovering what it could become. All that we know is a manifestation of its unfolding being. Among the creatures



we know, it seems that the human consciousness has a distinctive quality, which it is our destiny to learn to use to the benefit of the whole, yet exactly how that might actually play out I do not know.

JD Some would argue that Christianity came into our consciousness because we needed to learn individuality, apart from the collaborative societies that then existed.

DK I gather you are talking about some version of the Protestant ethic and its emphasis on individual achievement, which in my view is rather a distortion of what Jesus actually taught. I've been rather more focused on the influence of the reductionist or positivistic world view of Newtonian science, which suppressed our awareness of our spiritual nature, and thereby led us to a dangerously unbalanced focus on understanding material reality. This has contributed to extraordinary technological advances, but has also led us to use our technological powers in irresponsible and deeply destructive ways. If we don't move on to a more holistic view that embraces both the spiritual and the material dimensions of reality, we aren't likely to have much of a future.

JD Back to WTO. Do you see alliances being formed?

DK Yes!

JD Can you name some of those?

DK There are many, not all of them formal. One is the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment, which is comprised predominantly of steelworkers and the environmentalists. Don Keegly, is a leading figure in that. He is a steelworker with an exceptional commitment to both labor and the environment. He is at the cutting edge of a new way of thinking that recognizes that there will be no jobs without a healthy environment, and no environment without secure jobs. Churches are also reaching out to labor, as are youth. You see the youth building alliances across campuses focused on anti-sweatshop campaigns. One of the most important youth alliances is the Direct Action Network, in which David Solnit is a key player. DAN in turn is part of a growing network of international alliances.

JD Is there anything you'd like to share about the WTO or the anniversary of the WTO that happened a few weeks ago?

DK The street actions were an important expression of the energies building behind change. But in a sense they are only one small part of a much larger whole, including countless teach-ins, conferences, seminars and study groups. One of the most important aspects of the WTO protests is the fact that they brought together so many diverse groups. We've mentioned labor, environmentalists, churches, and

youth. But there were also groups concerned about civil rights, human rights, women's rights, indigenous people's, food safety, peace, organic agriculture, economic and social justice, small farms and businesses, and many, many others that are coming to find common cause in the living democracy movement.

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of my energy is devoted to the Positive Futures Network, which has organized a series of retreats that bring together people from diverse segments of the movement to reflect together on what's happening in the world and where we best direct our energy to advance the transformation from societies dedicated to the love of money to societies dedicated to the love of life. Through dialogue and the sharing of our hopes, fears, and experience, we strengthen relationships that facilitate new alliance building, and create a common language that increases the coherence of the whole.

For me, one of the most important insights to come out of these retreats is the importance of building bridges across the racial divide within the United States. The Seattle protests were quite revealing in this regard. Overall there was considerable racial diversity, but it came more from Third World participants more than from the participation of color from our own country. I believe the diversity issue is really coming to the fore in the thinking of many of the movement's leaders.

JD You mentioned the other night at the dinner for *YES!* magazine, that we need to understand what the issues are for people of color.

DK Those of us from the white community who engage in protests against corporate globalization and the WTO see the issues as broadly inclusive in the sense that they bear on the well-being of every person on the planet, regardless of color. Sometimes we feel frustrated that so few people of color from the United States seem to be interested. What we often fail to realize is that people of color have their own issues that are in many ways more immediate to them, like the racial bias of the prison system, violence in the inner city, and a lack of adequate housing. In the end these issues are also linked to corporate globalization. However, if we want a solidarity of the whole it is the responsibility of those of us who enjoy white privilege to reach out not with an invitation to people of color to join "our" movement, but rather with an offer of support for their issues. Solidarity of the whole will follow.

A very interesting thing that is happening right now in relation to the 2000 election, which in some sense is independent of Seattle, yet goes to the heart of the Seattle protests. This is the energy building in the African-American community over the systematic exclusion of blacks from voting by the Republican political machine of Jeb Bush in Florida. Voting rights were the foundation of the civil rights movement. The energy is building toward a major protest

demonstration in Washington on January 20<sup>th</sup> for the Bush coronation. We are seeing the emergence of a pro-democracy movement in the United States, with much of the leadership coming African-Americans. Democracy goes to the heart of everything we are all concerned about. If a U.S. pro-democracy movement emerges from the initiative of Black leaders and the rest of us mobilize behind that leadership it will be an extraordinary breakthrough.

JD Are you going?

DK I doubt that I will be in Washington D.C. on that date, but I hope that there is something closer that I can join in. You know, I'm torn. Do I make my best contribution to the movement by flying across the country to be present in solidarity in a demonstration, or by focusing on my writing--in this instance completing revisions on the second edition of *When Corporations Rule the World*. In my writing and speaking I am increasingly drawing attention to race related issues. We each participate where we can make our greatest contribution.

It is interesting how Seattle made many whites more conscious of an issue of concern to African-Americans. The police riots exposed a great many young white Americans to the realities of the so-called "justice" system in the United States. For a few hours they had a taste of the kind of police brutality, bias, and lawlessness that many young people of color experience on a daily basis. *YES!* magazine is only one of the many progressive publications that have since focused on the racial bias of American justice and prisons, which is understandably a potent issue for people of color in the United States--an incredible blot on our country. That awareness didn't all come out of Seattle, but I think Seattle helped many of us see the reality that we live in a police state and that many of the constitutional guarantees that we have taken for granted are a great deal weaker than many of us had thought.

JD I remember seeing the police in full regalia marching down the streets of Seattle slapping their armor, it was terrifying. We're fortunate that we don't live with that on a daily basis. But it could happen any day.

DK Well, it's always there and now we know it's always there. Are you familiar with the work of Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson on the Cultural Creatives? They've just come out with a new book. Through survey research they have been tracking the emergence of a new culture in the United States. Ray and Anderson conclude that somewhere on the order of 50 million adult Americans embrace the complex of social and environmental values shared by those who led the Seattle protests., There is a subset of this group, somewhere in the area of 24 million people, he calls the core Cultural Creatives, who combine a strong social and environmental commitment with a spiritual practice. The leadership of contemporary progressive causes and initiatives comes almost exclusively from this group.

Paul and Sherry describe what is happening as a kind of cultural awakening that they trace back to the civil rights movement, which awakened many of us to the fact that the relationships between blacks and whites were historically defined by a cultural code that has nothing to do with reality. The process of waking up to the consequences of this aspect of our cultural conditioning opened our minds to recognizing that we have been similarly captive to other cultural codes destructive of our humanity and the well being of society. The women's movement awakened us to the fact that gender relations have also been dictated by a cultural code based on false beliefs. The same happened in relation to the environment, between straights and gays, and now in our relations with corporations and the economy. In each instance we take a look at a set of cultural prescriptions and suddenly it hits us, "Hey, wait a minute, this isn't real. It exists only in our minds. We are captives to an illusion that serves as an instrument of our own oppression. We don't need to live this way."

I used to think about what Paul and Sherry describe as a culture shift. More recently they've helped me see that it is in fact an awakening of cultural consciousness. This is quite a different thing, because once it happens--once a person recognizes the truth--it is very difficult to reverse. The evidence seems to be that the awakening is spreading rather rapidly. In the second edition of *When Corporations Rule the World* I look in some detail at the implications. One implication is that the foundation of the living democracy movement is far more cultural and spiritual than it is political. Thus, the strategies for winning need to take the cultural part very seriously, by which I mean cultural strategies that facilitate the awakening and facilitate the processes by which participants in the awakening recognize themselves and reach out to find one another. Because this phenomenon is not reflected in the press or the political system, those who experience it tend to feel culturally isolated.

JD That's what *Yes!* magazine is all about.

DK That's exactly what *Yes!* magazine is all about. Paul and Sherry have a wonderful story in their book about how a young woman experienced this isolation each time she participated in her family reunions where she found her values so at odds with those of her family that it seemed she must be from another planet .

JD I know the feeling. (laughs)

DK I do too.

Going back to the issues of the WTO, it's very important to remember that the WTO is more a symbol of the dysfunctions of corporate globalization than its cause. Indeed, the protests really aren't about the WTO. The WTO is one of a host

of destructive institutions of corporate rule. Even if it didn't exist, we would still have much the same problem. Exactly how we deal with the institutions of corporate rule is an issue still being worked through in the movement. For example, the labor unions seem inclined to seek the reform of the WTO by bringing in labor and environmental standards. Others of us believe this is the wrong approach for at least two reasons. For one we believe that global governance issues should be dealt with under the United Nations, which is better positioned to balance labor, environmental, and trade interests. Second, we believe that standard setting should to the extent possible be determined at a national or local level where there can be more democratic participation, rather than attempting to impose one size fits all standards from the global level. This is the position of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), of which I'm a founding member.

As you may know, the IFG was convened in 1994 by Jerry Mander under the auspices of the Deep Ecology Foundation, right after NAFTA was implemented,. Founding members included Vandana Shiva, Martin Khor, Lori Wallach, Tony Clark, Sara Larrain, Teddy Goldsmith, Carl Pope, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Maude Barlow, Mark Ritchie, and Randy Hayes. These were all people who were involved in one way or another with the issues of trade and globalization at a time when those issues were totally "off the screen" in terms of the general public.

We came together around the opposition to these forces of corporate globalization, though did not then use that particular term. In the early meetings we spoke of corporate rule and economic globalization. Eventually a decision was made to form an organization and begin a process of public outreach. The IFG first announced itself to the world at a teach-in New York City in November in 1995. This was just after *When Corporations Rule the World* came out. In fact the title was inspired by a presentation at an IFG gathering by Tony Clark from Canada on corporate rule. We'd been struggling for a title for the book and I said, "Hum, when corporations rule the world." That could be the title for my book. We had a party that night and Steve Piersanti, who heads Berrett-Koehler Publishers in San Francisco, was there. I'd been working with Steve on the title, and I said, "How about '*When Corporations Rule the World*.'" He lit up and said, " That's it! You've just doubled the sales of the book."

Anyhow, the first big teach-in came in November shortly after the release of *When Corporations Rule the World*. We were originally planning to have it at Columbia University. Our hope was to draw as many as 450 people. But so many people signed up that at the last minute the event was moved to Riverside Church. Even though it was a cold November day with sleet and snow, we filled the church to its capacity of 1500 people and hundreds more were turned away at the door. It had the feel of an historic event. This was the first of a number of magical IFG events that generated incredible energy with great audiences and inspiring speakers. To

many of us that New York teach-in was the initial defining moment that led four years later to Seattle. It was in New York that we realized corporate globalization was an issue whose time had come. Corporate America had been creating a new public consciousness by downsizing tens of thousands of loyal employees to get a temporary jump in stock price, moving plants abroad, and giving CEOs outrageous pay packages in the tens of millions of dollars while the wages of ordinary workers stagnated. People were getting angry and they were looking for a way to better understand what was happening. That is what the teach-in provided. It is also what *When Corporations Rule the World* has provided for so many people. The most common response to the book is "I thought something like this was happening. You provided the documentation and the words to express it. Now I have a framework that allows me to make sense of the bits of information I get from the media each day."

The thing that is most surprising to me, since *When Corporations Rule the World* presents an essentially depressing message, is that so many people have told me they find it a source of hope and empowerment. "What? Didn't you read it?" They answer, "Yes, but I already knew things were pretty bad. Now I understand why and I know it doesn't have to be this way. We can change it." The realization that things can be changed is a source of hope and empowerment. That's why so much of my energy is committed to helping people understand what is happening, because once they understand it, they can direct their creative energy to the cause of change. The new edition should leave people even more hopeful, because it has such a strong message that change is not only possible, millions of people are mobilizing to make it happen.

Now coming back to the issue of reforming the WTO. The IFG came together around our shared opposition to corporate globalization. Over the last couple of years we've been working seriously on building consensus on the alternatives to global corporate rule. One of the central issues is whether the Bretton Woods institutions--the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, formerly the GATT--should be reformed or decommissioned. The emerging consensus within the IFG--and I think more generally in the citizen movements--is that they should be decommissioned. The argument for decommissioning begins with the fact that we have only one world, but we've ended up with two systems of global governance. One is the Bretton Woods system. The other is the United Nations system. The Bretton Woods institutions are wholly undemocratic, closed, and ideologically committed to corporate and big money interests. The rest is rhetoric.

JD And they probably truly believe it.

DK Most of their staff truly do believe that what they are doing will ultimately end poverty and save the environment. It becomes an article of faith, even against overwhelming contrary evidence. Once you deconstruct the ideological mantra,

however, you find it is all based on an insane illusion wholly delinked from reality--a kind of collective psychosis.

JD Sometimes when people put so much of themselves into something it is hard to shift to see the reality.

DK It also helps that those who work for these institutions are very well paid and enjoy lavish benefits. They have good reason to not look too closely at the reality of what their institutions are doing. There is also the fact that the ideology is grounded in some of the most fundamental beliefs of Western society regarding physics, philosophy, and theology. There's nothing like linking elite self-interest with a legitimating ideology and worldview. Expanding the mandate of such institutions by giving over to them the responsibility for environmental and social health is really not very wise.

Although the United Nations has all kinds of deficiencies, largely because the United States has withheld funding and given all its support to the Bretton Wood institutions, it's far more open, democratic, and holistic in its vision. It is also far more deeply committed to the environment, human rights, labor, health, and education--all the things that growth and trade should serve. By contrast the Bretton Woods institutions treat growth and trade as though they were the sole purpose of human life and they expect people and communities to line up in service to them. This all seems to be obvious nonsense until you realize that the only certain beneficiaries of growth and trade are global corporations--which are the real clients of the Bretton Woods institutions. So, the idea is emerging among civil society groups that we need to decommission the Bretton Woods institutions and focus our attention on building an effective and democratic United Nations responsible for the whole range of global governance functions, including economic affairs--as the UN's founders intended.

When you step back to look at the global governance functions appropriate to a just, sustainable, and compassionate world, you find that in each instance what is needed is exactly the opposite of what the Bretton Woods institutions actually do. Because it is a bank, every action of the World Bank increases Third World debt. Now that's not useful. We need instead to reduce and ultimately eliminate that debt. We need to replace the World Bank with an International Insolvency Court that helps countries work their way out of the debt--starting with the orderly repudiation of odious debts that were never really legitimately contracted in the first place--which means there should be no enforceable obligation to repay them.

The IMF is basically in the business of prohibiting countries from managing their financial and trade balances with the rest of the world. This is a total violation of trade theory. It also leaves countries completely hostage to the excesses of financial speculators who create financial instability and then demand that

governments bail them out when things go wrong to prevent monetary collapse. Then the IMF steps in with money to limit the losses of the speculators. That isn't useful.

JD Not useful to a lot of people.

DK So, decommission the IMF and replace it with an agency that functions under the UN mantle to help countries develop the capacity to keep their economies in balance with the rest of the world and prevent the creation of international debt. The assumption that international accounts are kept in balance is a foundation of trade theory that goes all the way back to David Ricardo. If accounts are not in balance, then the theory of comparative advantage does not apply and it cannot be assumed that trade is beneficial to all parties.

The World Trade Organization is in the business of prohibiting governments from imposing essential regulatory restrictions on global corporations and speculators. What the WTO really regulates is governments not corporations. Again, what the world needs is exactly the opposite. So decommission it and set up a UN organization for corporate accountability that works with countries to deal with issues of international anti-trust, corporate criminality, de-chartering, enforceable codes of corporate conduct, rules about keeping corporations out of politics and so forth.

When dealing with global governance there is an important issue of whether the goal is to create an international system that sets and enforces universal standards at the global level or to strengthen the capacity of national and local governments to carry out necessary regulatory functions. This is where civil society groups from North and South sometimes differ. Northern groups are more inclined to seek strong international regulations and enforcement. Southern groups fear that when the rule making is global the strongest players will make the rules to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of the weaker players. Long experience tells us that such fears are well grounded. Thus, I believe the consensus is moving toward support of the Southern position.

An emphasis on local rule making is also consistent with the ideal of a radical democracy in which people have as direct a role as possible in making the decisions that affect their lives. It is extremely difficult to maintain democracy at a global level without democracy at local and national levels. It should be clear to all following the outcome of the most recent U.S. presidential election that we don't have national democracy worthy of the name even here in the United States. We cannot expect to have functioning democracy at the global level until we have it well established at local and national levels. Democracy has to be built from the bottom up. Without strong local democracy, there is no way that we will have strong global democracy. Many of us thus embrace the principle of subsidiarity,



which means we call for strengthening democratic rule making at more local levels of society and concentrate at the global level on creating a framework that supports the localizing of rule making processes to the extent practical.

JD Thank you, David. It's been very illuminating.

DK My pleasure.