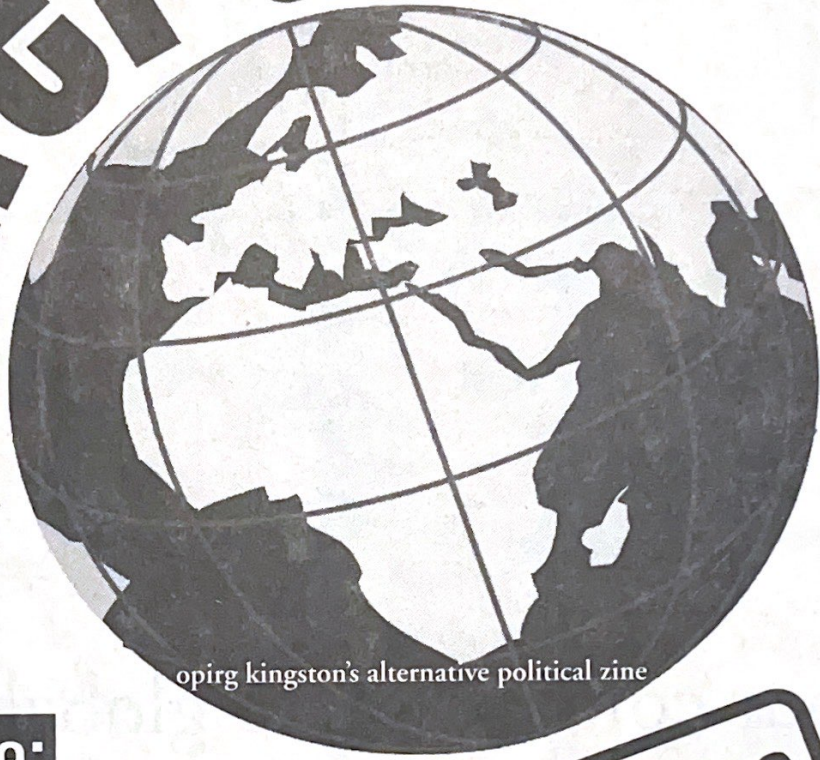


unherd!

WINTER 2000



opirg kingston's alternative political zine

this issue:

unherd
takes on
the world!

**globalization
or bust?**

corporatization of campus/the world
Mac-Corry/Malaysia

the reality of someone's life in the 3rd world
and yours
connected by products

human communities
mediated through
cultural capital

choice governed by companies; how much are we missing out on because Coca-Cola doesn't think it's
a financially viable option?

complacency
apathy
action
passion

read.
learn.
teach.
do.

: your connection to globalization

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Kudos for your help: Paul DJ Anomaly, Clara Ho, E. Macdonald, Steve Stone at Thousand Islands Publishing

unherd publishes as many times a year as the editorial collective sees fit. Generally, twice a year.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of unherd or opirg.

unherd is an opirg working group. opirg is the ontario public interest research group, a rockin' ngo with a mandate for
research, education, and action on environmental and social justice issues.

unherd strives to publish funky, interesting, alternative, radical, politically-aware, rabble-raising voices with social
consciences. But first, we have to find them. You can help us out by submitting your groovy work to:

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Earth Centre, JDUC
Queen's University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

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interactive?

direct action hacktivism, wto & globalization

On threatening to hack into the Indonesian government's computers if the results of the East Timor referendum were not upheld: "I find it a far more moral way of fighting than using the NATO tactic of bombing a country back to the Stone Age."
—José Ramos Horta, *NI Update*, December 1999, #319.

Remember Hackers? The 1991 action-fluff-flick, with It-girl Angelina Jolie and team joining forces with a small and select global on-line teen community of the early nineties, hacking havoc over the environmentally-unconscious and morally-bankrupt cyberbusiness world.

Seriously. My housemate and I love that movie.

So it's no wonder that she started dancing for joy when she heard about it over the radio: on Valentine's Day, a still-anonymous group of people, sitting at over 50 computer terminals around the world, managed to shut down web giants Yahoo!, Amazon.com, CNN.com, E*Trade, Excite, and four other commercial websites on the Net, by overloading their servers with thousands of bogus requests, striking terror into the hearts of CEOs around the world. Mainstream media mags responded by plastering the covers of their news weeklies with *Don't let this happen to you!* headlines, and articles emphasizing the need to secure not just commercial, but also personal websites and computers.

Most blamed hackers, and because there was no apparent profit-motive on the parts of the perpetrators themselves, media and corporate targets dismissed them as joyriding pranksters, and began likening these actions to "kids snapping off car antennae."

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the FBI's continued search for these fiendish villains, nobody seems to want to take the credit (or the rap). 2600, a popular hacker quarterly, has posted a news brief on their website (www.2600.com), denying that this is to be considered in any way a "hacker" scheme. Old-school hackers have been elite group, actually...it seems that the e-commerce shut-down was, in a techie-sense, too brainless, too sloppy, and not truly in the hacker spirit of learning more about the ghost in the machine.



What we have is a new vanguard of hackers, committed to worldwide, on-line rabble-rousing...city-wide e-shit-disturbing in London in 1998...activist-nrd actions to support the East Timor Referendum...whether or not this particular shut-down had a socio-political agenda (and we can only guess at a potential 'fight corporate greed' motive, based on the targets), it is clear that hacktivism — like many forms of direct action tactics — is on the rise, and gaining popularity as an effective and legitimate (if not always legal) form of political protest. Is this the new activism in a world of globalization?

check out... www.hacktivism.com

If we take 'globalization' to mean (in a nutshell) a world which has both the means to connect people, as well as a concentration of power and wealth that enables the world's elite to keep the riff-raff at bay, well, then, yes (okay, I know, just work with me here). Cybercommunications have been immeasurably useful in terms of providing stronger links between spatially-disparate activist communities; find the right listserve, and you can get to-the-minute updates on almost any topic you want. This strengthened connection, combined with an interest in the kind of border-crossing, multi-issue global solidarity that shows we know that numbers do matter.

It seems more and more that activists are going on the offensive, and they're doing it in droves. Stolid standards of the activist toolbox, like petitioning, leafletting, lobbying etc. are increasingly playing second fiddle to more in-your-face tactics that bring conflict to the fore: protests, sit-ins, shut-downs, civil (and uncivil) disobedience.

Of course, this isn't a singular, pan-activist departure, and the trend hasn't occurred overnight; but then, globalization hasn't just come out of left field, either. It's been a long process which, over the last several decades, has gained extraordinary momentum. And somewhere along the line, we began to believe that making profit was going to solve all our problems. The lengthy transition has been key, enabling the neoliberalist agenda for the globalizing world to so neatly and thoroughly taken up residence in how people think of global systems, and the way our world operates.

The emphasis of an economic imperative and the rights of corporations to do business — big business — has occurred *over* the consideration of human rights, labour regulations, environmental standards, fair trade (all of which we can see in the attempted negotiations of global trade agreements like the recently thwarted Multilateral Agreement on Investments).

The bottom line: women, people of colour, queer communities, first nations, environmentalists — and the other 'usual suspects' in activist circles — have for years lamented the fact that those with the power to make institutional change aren't listening. While talking it out nicely with the feds, and trying not to look like the militant radicals that the 'people in charge' inevitably think them to be, activists begin to get the feeling that they have to shout in order to be heard. And using direct action tactics,

like hacking into computer systems or like the thousands protesting the WTO in Seattle, seems at times to be the best (or only) way to be heard.

What we saw at the WTO as been hailed by some as the 'new activism,' characterized partly by the widespread use of organized, direct action forces, and partly by the joining of forces and causes in a resistance which has typically been divided by perceived and actual differences in geography, politics and passions. Thousands converged on the city to find an impeccably-organized activist infrastructure awaiting: on-going workshops on civil disobedience, a media/email centre, food enough for all. And activists can chalk one up for having successfully shut down the trade talks, with delegates the world over leaving Seattle with no agenda set for the next meeting.

But where do we go from here? We're moving in an exciting direction that encourages quick, direct, loud action, using tactics with satisfying (and nearly instantaneous) results. The idea of an allied activist front appeals to me enormously, as a staunch believer in recognizing the connections between local/global, environmental/political/social justice issues. Shutting down existing systems and trade talks, thwarting corporate sales for a few hours can be great stalling tactics...and here come the 'buts': but what will we have in place of the WTOs, IMFs, NAFTAs of the world? The evil cynic in me is waiting to see which issues of the 'allied front' will be the first to fall (or be shoved) off the bargaining table. I'm not saying it's hopeless; I'm saying there are important aspects of this movement that we can't afford to lose sight of. And long-term goals are definitely one of them.

In the meantime, you may find me in a Mac-Corby lab, giving the Queen's computers a political makeover. I'll see you at the next protest or sit-in.

Consider this a call to action.

"Our
luxurious
wealth, not just
our values, is
sometimes
implicated in
the unfreedom
of others."

- William
Greider, "Global
Agenda" in *The
Nation*, January
31, 2000.

The forces of globalization are upon us. Everywhere we turn we are bombarded by media, by technology, by progress. Even in the sphere of equality rights we are forced into the trap of efficiency in our attempts to do more with less. Hence, we see the emergence of "umbrella" groups and offices - offices that are backed with the best of intentions in these financially strapped times. Yet, the "safe-space", free-speech, politically-correct era, and the formation of organizations to combat systemic discrimination on all-levels and all fronts have not furthered us in our efforts to achieve true equality. Rather, we cling to the semblance of equality believing it to be of substance, believing it to be progress, believing it to be enough. But is it?

Legally and politically speaking, equality matters but we must question why this is. Our governments pay lip-service to change. To point to a direct example of such change - recent amendments to provincial and federal laws regarding same-sex rights. Since the decision of the Supreme Court in *M v. H*, rendered in the fall of 1999, government response has been in line with the ruling of the highest court of our country. The Ontario government

groups want equality? Why is it that those who occupy the fringes, the outside circles that surround the status quo groups (i.e. those with "power") want to gain equality in the first place? Is it truly because we all believe that we should be vying for our deserved place in the "center" as part of the status quo?

Maybe, and this is pure speculation, that the route to true equality is not through the granting of rights. Maybe the only way to achieve the kind of equality we all are striving for and believe to be worthwhile is to understand that those who are relegated to the status of marginalized or oppressed groups - women, people with disabilities, people of colour, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered - desire equality because they are conditioned to think and feel this way. Systemic discrimination only exists and thrives if and when there are individuals who are oppressed; individuals who are being oppressed. Perhaps the only way to end systemic discrimination is to reach the understanding that the equality these marginalized groups are being offered is not the equality that they should desire. The underlying statement simply being: "My equality is not yours. The equality that you are offering me in the

equity in global times

by darah o

responded to the decision with, "An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *M. v. H.*", also known as Bill 5. Further amendments are being considered by the Federal government. Should equality rights advocates be applauding such progress? Our general inclination is to be glad that we live in such enlightened times where our highest courts are liberal-minded enough to recognize that equality means that no one should be discriminated against; that we should not be nasty and call other people names; that we should be fair and equal to all oppressed groups and grant them all the equality that they deserve.

My proposition, however, and the backbone of this short exploratory article is that the granting of equality through the granting of equal rights is not the means by which we will eradicate systemic discrimination in any of its forms. Why is it that marginalized and oppressed

form of your amendments, changes to legislation, granting or taking of rights, is simply not enough nor what I deserve." And by so doing the logical result is that oppressed groups do not become trapped in the vortex of the status quo power circle.

These ideas I have posed here; these notions that I have presented may hold some merit but require much more thought. Amendments to not rights make. That is the bottom line. In world we live in today, global forces push the social, political and power structures that shape and govern our lives. We must learn to govern with fluidity and comprehend the way these forces work if we are to realize the consequences of what we are doing to others and what we do to ourselves.

oping-kingston's anti-sweatshop working group

WEARFAIR

We are now starting a campaign to encourage the university administration to make Queen's a "sweat-free campus". Our goal is to

see the athletics department, the campus bookstore and oil thigh designs relying on, if they don't already, companies that use legal and fair labour practices in the production of their clothing and other retail items... we believe that it is wrong for the university, a supposed hotbed of political awareness and activism as well as a fountain of learning, to condone and, further, to capitalize on products made under slave-like conditions that should be illegal and enforced in Canada... if you are interested in helping with this campaign or initiating any other campaigns related to sweatshops, please drop into the earth centre, in the JDUC on Wednesdays, at 5:30...come one come all!

wearfair is the group that organized the anti-sweatshop fashion show that was so successful at the "globalize this" conference held in January...

What it means to be a "Citizen of the World" in these times...

As a member of this year's OPIRG community, I've been exposed to new ways of looking at my surroundings, both immediate and at large... And when OPIRG put on the Globalize This! Conference back in January, my eyes opened even more so than usual. Since the conference, I've been wondering exactly what it means to be part of this world, to be a citizen of not just Kingston, Ontario, Canada, North America... but also, a citizen of the North, the South, and of the world. I approach my citizenship in such broad terms since the world really is shrinking and the influence, culturally, economically, politically and socially, of the northern hemisphere on the southern is simply enormous, compared to its influence even 50 years ago. A workshop on the international markets' effects on Canadian farms and where the federal government comes into play in that relationship really brought this issue home to me. Just the fact that what happens with Japanese rice and Russian grain directly effects what we Canadians eat

in the U.S., Japan, Russia, and so on. In spite of the reality that we all go to the supermarket or corner store and buy fruit and vegetables and other food products with labels saying "grown in...<>" or "made in...<insert country other than Canada>", little is being said in protest en masse on the part of the average citizen. Perhaps in 20 years when we eat nothing from this country, if Canada should still exist as the political and social entity we now know it to be, an outrage will spread among the public and direct actions will be taken. But probably it will be too late then.

The farming example is just one of many in which we are being herded willingly into this multinational monoculture (or, as many spin-doctors like to say: "Americanization") of politics, economics, society and culture. As I mull over what I've learned in the past few years, in the build up to the "Battle of Seattle", I've realized that, in the modern sense, being a citizen of the world means holding oneself to social responsibilities, sincerely and actively. "Think globally, act locally" should be followed stringently. What many of us and our peers may see as self sacrifice (going out of one's way to avoid sweatshop-produced clothing, etc; seeking out organic food products that are also locally made; putting in real time with local social interest/nonprofit organizations; and so on), is really simply what we may need to do to survive 25 or 50 years down the road. I'm not talking about Armageddon Time, we've been through that in the past 10 years and it was overkill, and of course, untrue. I'm talking about maintaining our place in this world, and using it, but not abusing it. To wind up, this is a plea, as melodramatic as that sounds, for the so-called silent majority to follow the lead of the vocal minority in Canadian society and politics and start rabble rousing, raising hell, and giving it your all while you're at it!

"In the modern sense, being a citizen of the world means holding oneself to social responsibilities sincerely and actively."

at the table every day (or in the easy chair in front of the television, as it just as often happens). That the Canadian government, over the past 15 years or so, has continually been decreasing or eliminating its built-in protections for Canadian food production and labour to become a bigger player in the global marketplace is a fact taken for granted. But what isn't taken for granted, I believe, by the average Canadian, is that due to federal policies, we are buying and eating less and less of what our farmers are capable of putting on the table and more and more of what is made

Opposing Injustice with a Fork and Knife

by Lori Waller

Every day, multiple times a day, countless people around the world gather at tables and dine on the bodies of dead animals. They wipe their mouths, return to work, and think nothing of the implications of the meal they just consumed. They do not think about where the corpses came from. They do not know who killed their lunch or how, where or how long the animal lived before it was slaughtered, or what kind of tortures it endured in its short and miserable life.

There is perhaps, one might think, reason to avoid considering such questions. Indeed, the fashion in which animals are bred, raised, and killed by the industries that produce "meat," eggs and milk is horrendous in its brutality. Animals are cheap whereas buildings, cages, energy and other resources are expensive. As a result, the large majority of "food" animals are overcrowded, living one on top of each other and in their own excrement. Routine amputations (for example, the cutting off of

egg-laying hens' beaks) and other procedures are carried out without anesthesia. Increased production is the primary concern. Living bodies are manipulated by drugs and hormones to produce more meat, more milk, and bigger eggs, with painful consequences for the animals. Male chicks born to egg-laying hatcheries are useless to them and are killed by decapitation, gassing, or simply being thrown in the garbage to suffocate or be crushed. Dairy cows endure one pregnancy after another through artificial insemination, have their calves immediately taken away to become veal, and are trucked to the slaughterhouse as soon as their milk production declines. Animals are transported to slaughterhouses through freezing cold and unbearable heat, and those that are dead or sick upon arrival are thrown onto the "dead pile." During slaughter, "stunning" is often ineffective and leaves animals to be boiled or skinned while still conscious. Reports of sadistic torment to the animals by slaughterhouse workers are not exceptional, but rather numerous and typical.

"Well, no wonder we don't think about it!" At first glance, this is an understandable reaction. However, it only makes sense to avoid thinking about unpleasant things if they are things that cannot be avoided, or "necessary evils". The horrors inherent in the production of animal foods are by no means necessary. None of us are required to support these industries by buying their products; we can all live healthily on plant foods alone. Medical associations such as the American Dietetic Association have found vegan diets (free of all animal products) to be as healthy or healthier than the typical omnivore diet.

So why do we continue this gruesome practice of destroying and devouring billions of animals each year? It is quite clear to those of us who have gone vegan that there is no good reason to do so. (cont'd on next page...)

Less Meat, More Vegan Facts...

"It takes the same amount of land to get 110 kg of beef as it does to get 10,000 kg of apples. (Joseph Pace, *Changing the World, One Bite at a Time*)

"The majority of Canadian plant crops, like wheat and soy, end up as cattle feed. According to Queen's philosophy prof Michael Allen Fox, we could feed 5 times the number of people we do today if we diverted all the grain used to feed livestock into more vegetarian pursuits.

"The growth of McDonald's, Burger King and other fast food outlets had created and insatiable demand for beef... they could get by on the tougher, lower-grade beef typical of cattle that subsisted on grass alone, since the meat would be ground up anyhow. The free-range 'criollo' cattle of Central America made a perfect fit for this expanding market."

What large-scale cattle ranching (initiated solely for the purpose of supplying North American fast food chains with cheap beef) has done in Central America is bring about an enormous loss of arable land, forestland and land that is cheap and accessible to the peasant and small ranch farmers that formerly owned 25% of the cattle in Central America (now that figure is set about 5%)... a good example of globalization and "development" directed by capitalism in the name of helping the third world countries "catch up" to the rest of us.

[Louis Project, *Canadian Dimension*, February 2000, page 17]

(...cont'd from previous page) We have considered the consequences of eating meat, milk and eggs, and decided that it is just not worth it.

But what are the consequences of going vegan? Is it an effective solution to bring about change, to lessen this terrible suffering? To me, it seems to be such an obvious and simple solution that it is almost ridiculous. Often when terrible injustices occur, the causes are so complex that it seems impossible to determine what, if anything, we can do to make a difference. In the case of animal suffering, the answer is as simple as supply and demand: if we no longer support these industries, then they will no longer exist. The fewer people buying animal products, the fewer animals suffering a terrible existence.

Too often, compassionate people dismiss veganism as being close to impossible, and therefore not a realistic solution. A diet without meat, milk, and eggs is not as restrictive as it might seem at first. Consider these vegan foods which are widely available: spaghetti, baked potatoes, chili, vegetable or minestrone soup, humus or falafel pitas, chips and salsa, salads, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, bagels, cereal with soy milk, fresh fruit, nuts, pretzels, popcorn, candy... It should be pointed out here that if the goal is to lessen animal suffering then veganism is the ideal. But even if total veganism is not embraced, the less meat, milk, and eggs we all eat, the better.

The Vegetarian Awareness Group is committed to spreading awareness about the connection between animal foods and suffering, and providing information and resources to anyone who is interested (for example, our free began starts-up kit). We meet at 7pm on Tuesdays in the Earth Centre (lower JDU), anyone is welcome to come to the meetings, or contact us through email (loriw@kingston.net).

-R.J. Reynolds owns thousands of acres of cattle grazing land in Guatemala Costa Rica (Dai Monte)

... "this powerful American company was also in the process of helping campesinos get thrown off their land and tropical rainforest acreage cut down in order to create grazing land that would be exhausted in a year or two."

Louis Project

... environmentalism and vegetarianism tend to go hand in hand... so does trying to hold a socially-conscious world view, and backing it up with your personal, daily actions... good luck!

compiled by meghan jeczewski & the unherd crew

unherd's do-it-yourself activity

#22:

vegetarianism/
veganism promo:

bacon
double
cheeseburger,
my ass

vegans
taste
better

cut out the templates provided (above), then photocopy onto sticker paper, or make into buttons, and wear with pride!

The United Nations: Imagine the World without the UN!

by meghan jczewski

The other day, I was discussing the UN and its presence in global politics and society over the past 50 years with my father. Being a federal public servant and rather faithful in his belief in Canada's government, he also has faith in the idea that the world without the UN would not be as good a place to be alive now. As for myself, I wonder whether it is truly a viable belief, that the UN has definitely improved life on this planet, despite its flaws as an organization that aspires to serve as a model for democratic government for all cultures and nations the world over. I promptly expressed this objection to my father, and we debated the points back and forth. Since his ideas seem to be the substance of the prevailing opinion among most people who've discussed the UN in my presence, I'm just going to present my side of the argument.

I don't really see how the world is necessarily a "better" place by virtue of the existence of the UN.

Yes, the UN does many wonderful and heartening things for people all over the world, especially children. However, we cannot forget its "peacekeeping force". And I'm not looking for a debate on what "peacekeeping" means, exactly. What I've always perceived that term to mean is "men/women + guns + warfare + international government funding + official approval of the UN parliament = glorified killing in the name of democracy and justice for all". I'm not claiming that I know anything about martial ethics, or even general moral ethics (other than that commandment of ten, numero uno in the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which I've been raised, "Thou shalt not kill", which rings rather loudly in my ears). However, I do know from the overload of information that I glean from daily newspapers and magazines and books and the internet and my superiors and my peers, that "peacekeeping", as a concept is faulty. Of course, when we say we want democracy, we have to include the military, as many have said. Then again there are several voices giving light to the idea that democracy isn't really the ideal political model to aspire too, since the original democracy was never a democracy at all, as we've all learned in first year philosophy, history and politics. So the debate on democracy also calls into question the degree of western thought we seek to implant in other cultures under the banner of the UN. Also, I must question whether the UN itself is merely a newer version of the European colonization, and some may venture, the genocide of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North America.

Obviously, if you, the reader, are looking for 'cold hard facts', I have none. I am merely thinking this over, and formulating my own opinions about the UN. My father, in response to one of my many complaints about the organization, told me to "imagine the world without the UN!" In answer to his suggestion, I could only say, "yes, the world would be different, but how could it be so much worse than it is now?" It isn't as if we are living in an actualization of Utopia. Yes, we have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has inspired the Canadian Charter of Rights and the American Bill of Rights, among other documents. We also have UNICEF, which benefits children all around the world. And

don't we all remember UNICEF's Halloween donation boxes? If you grew up in Canada, which I did, you probably remember the orange and white boxboard box with a little slot for pennies that you wore around your neck when you were out trick or treating. A perfect way to reconcile blatant greed with an international social responsibility and action! I may come across as very cynical by making that connection, but it is there. And I think therein lies my contention with the UN. It is a western organization, based on western concepts of justice, equality and democracy. It is an organization that comes from the wealthy nations to the poorer nations, from the North to the South, and an organization controlled by the "legitimate governments" of these nations. Membership in the UN is the marker by which we determine just how violent a state is, just how poor a state are, and how deeply ingrained injustice is in a state's workings.

Another contention I have with the UN is that since it is a widely respected organization and seen as the key to solving many of the problems that arise from economic and political bonds that are invariably struck between nations. Such bonds as Canada and Mozambique (CIDAs water initiatives) or England and Israel (the establishment of the state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians), illustrate that the UN

seems to operate solely to alleviate frictions in these dealings. The UN has also lent to a false sense of security for North Americans. Generally we use the presence of the UN to reassure ourselves, as Canadians or Americans, that "something is being done", when a situation arises in the international section of our newspapers (something that occurs everyday) and we are faced with the idea that "surely, we can do SOMETHing!" Our tax dollars are doing the work, our government UN liaisons are doing the work: They go to the UN parliament in New York City, they travel to "hotspots" around the globe and they sit on special committees for this and that and then they voice the Canadian governments official position on said matters. Are we really accomplishing anything here, through the UN? Or are we simply denying that such a huge, respected institution that was born out of the tragedies WWI and WWII may simply have been an unwise act of faith and, in some instances an enormous waste of money? The UN and the unquestioning acceptance and respect of the organization has also served to maintain the distance between Canadians and other citizens of this world, the distance between wealth and poverty, and the distance between so-called democracy and so-called fascism. This is all food for thought, so think about it.

* unherd's do-it-yourself activity #274:

* ride a bike. skateboard. scooter.



whatever you do, don't drive a gas-guzzler.

take back the streets!

take action!

So you missed out on Seattle.
Where's the next big protest?

Meeting of the OAS Windsor, June 4-6, 2000

The Organization of American States is a capitalist mechanism for the North to further manipulate and exploit the South in the interest of corporate profit. The OAS works to ensure prosperity and stability for the rich at the expense of the poor throughout the Americas. The OAS parented the FTAA, the extension of NAFTA across the entire hemisphere. These "agreements" aim to eliminate international restrictions, forcing countries to compete against each other in a race to the bottom. This means environmental, labour and human rights policies are deregulated as soon as they threaten corporate profit. Community initiatives, local economies and so-called "democracy" are crushed in the capitalist grip.

SHUT IT DOWN!

Pre-OAS shut-down action:
The Peoples Global Action Conference
Windsor, June 1-3, 2000.

Includes teach-ins and trainings around ways to effectively fight exploitative capitalism.

codename: shut it down (a.k.a. a direct action network)

Organizational/Planning Conference in Toronto
March 25th, 2000. 11am - 7pm

Help organize a strong resistance to the OAS meeting in Windsor.
Want to start a local affinity group in Kingston? Contact OPIRG-Kingston
call 549-0066 or email opirgin@web.net.

For more information, contact Resist! at stopftaa@tao.ca
Resist! is an anti-corporate globalization group established to inject a radical analysis and direct action into organizing against the capitalist agenda

naomi klein's

NO LOGO: TAKING AIM AT THE BRAND BULLIES

reviewed by e. macdonald

No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies provides an excellent survey of the ramifications of globalized production and consumption. Author Naomi Klein nicely balances human interest stories and meaningful statistics to show how brand-names have come to dominate our culture -- indeed, our lives. In this domination, they have also dramatically reduced the likelihood of meaningful work, independent education, freedom in cultural production, and democratic governance. Despite this, Klein is strikingly optimistic. She finds a genuinely dialectical moment in the overwhelming reach and power of the big brands. They have, she suggests, in the precise ways in which they have expanded their market supremacy and productive leverage, made themselves significantly vulnerable.

By attempting to enclose our shared culture in sanitized and controlled brand cocoons, these corporations have themselves created the surge of opposition described in this book. By thirstily absorbing social critiques and political movements as sources of brand "meaning," they have radicalized that opposition still further. By abandoning their traditional role as direct, secure employers to pursue their branding dreams, they have lost the loyalty that once protected them from citizen rage. And by pounding the message of self-sufficiency into a generation of workers, they have inadvertently empowered their critics to express their rage without fear. (pg 441-442)

I applaud Klein's enthusiasm for the revolutionary potential of anti-brand sentiment at the

book review

same time as I find myself still skeptical, even after enjoying all 450 pages of this well-written, spirited, and important book. One part of my skepticism is about the limited alternatives that Klein extends. Public education campaigns, boycotts, the growth of anti-consumerist movements don't seem enough to truly threaten big corporate growth. Curtail that growth, re-channel it perhaps, but produce a dramatically different world -- it doesn't seem so. Another reason I am skeptical is because Klein's critique seems limited in what it seeks to attack. As the book's subtitle suggests, Klein is especially concerned with the brand giants, companies like McDonald's, Shell, Nike. This focus is one of the strengths of the book: the consistency and familiarity of these household names provides a useful focus for the global picture that Klein is describing. It also may be a weakness; in focussing on a few big companies, it is possible to neglect the system of production which requires not just these, but really all companies to work toward the deskilling of labour, the reduction of meaningful work, the displacement of human life with commodification of needs, and so forth.

Despite my misgivings, I would strongly recommend the book. Klein captures and analyzes well an important aspect of contemporary political resistance. There are stories that need to be heard in here, as well as some excellent insights into youth politics. We need this kind of work. In fact, we need more of it.

Corporate Greed Alert! The AOL-Time-Warner Merger

With the recent merging of Time-Warner and AOL, the trend towards one massive media conglomerate is clear. Why should we be concerned? Because the media are the vehicles of communication, the conduit for expression and ideas.

When all the information pipelines are getting reduced to one, no matter how big it is, you've got to wonder what's not getting through.



Corporate Greed Alert! The AOL-Time-Warner Merger

You start to wonder about the world that's outside of the frame of the screen - the screen that's constantly massaging your brain through your eyeballs, whipping up your appetite to consume more in order to fund their bottom line.

Why would we want to be one world united under Time's vision of the way things are? Reality is so diverse - and corporations, in general, by their very top-down, hierarchical nature, work out of a worldview that can only understand people and things in terms of their dollar value. How much a movie makes at the box office is the measure of how good it is. Art becomes an investment. Clothes become walking billboards.

And water comes bottled.

These are the boundaries of our collective imaginations, defined for us by people who inhabit a monochrome monoculture of grey suits and short hair.

We ourselves are defined more and more by the mass-mediated culture we all passively consume, to the extent that we can no longer imagine, much less articulate to others, alternative forms of social organization and institutions, real and human ways of living and loving and laughing that don't necessarily have to be economic and rational. We backpack around Europe for four months in the summer after graduation, then come back home in September and settle down to the business of getting on with our real lives, content that we've seen the world.

The death of the imagination has come about directly out of the death of public discussion and debate. Relentlessly capitalistic and ruthlessly competitive, all talk on any issue, in any forum, through any medium of communication, must take on the language of commerce. Citizens become taxpayers. Citizens may once have demanded well-maintained hospitals, but apparently taxpayers demand value for their health care dollar. Students may wonder if they're really learning anything, but clients want to know if they're really getting their money's worth out of this course.

What's the difference?

Well, what kind of world do you want to live in?

Concentrations of wealth means concentrations of power and resources. The fewer hands media resources are in, the fewer voices that are heard.

- rob rao.

...Welcome to Our World™

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(truth)