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## ***Globalisation and Discontent: Project and Discourse***

The Battle of Seattle will, in all probability, be seen as a turning point in world history. At the last major, international meeting of the millennium, and in a city that, better than any other, epitomised 'corporate control', the underdogs took on those who met to plan the progress of globalisation, and they won. This has inspired a new social movement with global aspirations, which, in the most recent protest, held in Genoa, mobilised some 250,000 people, about five times as many as Seattle. In an academic context, Robin Cohen has suggested that, at least within sociology, Seattle marked a shift from interest in globalisation as a phenomenon that treats people as objects, to a concern with understanding globalisation from below.<sup>1</sup> This essay attempts to make a contribution to this new field of enquiry.

### **Anti-Globalisation and Theory**

Until Seattle, and in common with other sceptics, I treated globalisation as discourse, distinguishing it from the growing internationalisation of capital (Alexander, 1997). But for the protesters as, of course, for their foes inside the World Trade Organisation (WTO) gathering, globalisation is a political and socio-economic phenomenon with important practical implications. From a preliminary survey conducted by John Charlton (2000), it seems that the bulk, perhaps the majority, of the 60-80,000 demonstrators were trade unionists, concerned, in particular, with attacks on labour standards. Many others raised environmental issues (such as WTO rules hostile to the use of turtle-friendly fishing nets). A smaller number, and some of the delegates, were disturbed by the manner in which the WTO was riding roughshod over the interests of the world's poor. Whilst the protesters came from diverse backgrounds, Seattle was much more than a rallying point for single issues. To start with, and as so often happens in struggle, there was some sharing of concerns. One teamster, for example, carried a placard proclaiming 'Teamsters and turtles together at last,' and a semi-naked Lesbian Avenger announced: 'My nipples stand in solidarity with the steelworkers and Teamsters and all the labouring people.' More broadly, demonstrators were united in opposing the WTO, generally linking their action to a desire to counter the increasing power of those unelected and unaccountable bodies frequently labelled 'corporate capital' (Charlton, 2000: 10, 16).

Trade union opinion tends to define globalisation in a similar fashion. For instance, in his address to the 2000 congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Bill Jordan, the organisation's general secretary, claimed: 'Globalisation . . . has seen the privatising of power. Massive concentrations of wealth are now in the hands of unaccountable people running multinationals' (*Trade Union World*, 2000: No. 2). Echoing this assessment, Willie Madisha, President of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, told South African trade unionists: 'globalisation . . . worsens the inequitable distribution of power between the rich and the poor, and between the developed and developing countries' (Madisha 2000: 4). In an educational publication aimed at workers, the International Labour Resource and Information Group, based in Cape Town, had already fleshed out this approach, stating:

For us globalisation is a process of restructuring the world economy. This restructuring process is a response to the crisis in the capitalist economic system which began in the early 1970s. The main purpose of this restructuring is to find new ways for business to maximise profits (ILRIG, 1998: 7).

Some scholars also treat globalisation in this manner. For instance, Noam Chomsky (2000: 14) describes it as Phase Two of post-war capitalism. Dating its onset, once again, from the early 1970s, he argues that it was 'designed to unravel . . . [the] social democratic measures [of Phase 1]', adding that it 'is unabashedly corporate-led and designed in the interests of investors and lenders'. Doreen Massey, a geographer by training, told the 1998 World Congress of Sociology (1999: 7): 'What we are experiencing today is not some "globalization in general", but globalization in a highly particular form . . . essentially neo-liberal globalization. . . . It is a project maintained by a powerful discourse produced in the North of the planet . . . a discourse of inevitability, which precisely serves to hide the agencies and the interests which are producing it.'

A strong thread links Massey and Madisha to the mass protests in Seattle, Genoa and elsewhere. This regards globalisation as hostile to the interests of the majority of humanity, as a product of a particular period in history, and as something that is stoppable. There is a disjuncture between this newer view of globalisation, and the older ones, whether these were ideological or sociological in form. At the heart of ideological theories of globalisation – the ones popular with politicians the world over – there is the notion that the process, reducing barriers to 'free trade', is inevitable and generally beneficial. Thus, one should work with globalising tendencies, rather than against them. This approach, however, had little appeal to the 30,000 who gathered outside the April 2000 summit of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), demanding: 'Break the Bank, Defund the Fund, Dump the Debt' (Bond, 2000).

As for sociological theories, anti-globalisation discourse does not so much reject them, as largely ignore them. By 'sociological theories' I have in mind the emphasis on time/space compression and increasing interconnectedness, particularly through the application of new information technologies (e.g.

Giddens, 1991: 21; Castells, 2000: 5-6). The suggestion, of course, is not that Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells, who have pioneered these ideas, are wrong, rather that the opponents of globalisation are focusing on a different problem (or, possibly, a different aspect of the same problem). Indeed, many, if not most, of the protesters have positively embraced the new technologies and even the dynamics of networking (so, at this level, Castells might take some comfort from events). Nevertheless, to the extent that sociological theories side-step the inherent contradictions within globalisation, they can provide grist for the politicians' mill. Thus, the British government recently published a 'white paper', *Making Globalisation Work for the World's Poor*, in which globalisation was defined as 'the process' whereby 'the world's population becomes more and more connected' (DFID, 1999: 3).<sup>2</sup>

The older approaches to globalisation are also prone to another line of assault; one advanced by leading Africanists, who argue, in effect, 'What's new?' Such reasoning was frequently expressed at the 2001 conference of the South African Sociological Association, with some participants describing globalisation as a continuation of imperialism under another name. Francis Nyamnjoh provides a slightly different twist, arguing that 'globalisation' is the latest 'label' for the 'same basic process or mission' previously described as 'modernisation'. 'This mission,' he claims, 'is that of freeing the African of his natural and cultural *Africanness*, and inviting him or her to partake of the "standardised, routinised, streamlined and global" consumer culture.' He adds that 'granted the level of poverty in Africa, only an elite . . . qualify' (Nyamnjoh, 2000: 5; quoting Golding, 1994). Fred Cooper also notes similarities between modernisation and globalisation, adding a number of sharp historical points. International trade as a proportion of world GDP has only recently surpassed levels reached in 1913; intercontinental labour migration was more significant during the century before the First World War than it has been since; and the anti-slavery movements of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were transnational in form (Cooper, 2001: 194-6).<sup>3</sup>

On a continent where only a minority of the population has electricity, let alone Internet connections, it is difficult not to have considerable sympathy for the sceptics' case, which, in its essence, remains valid. Most international trade is still between the rich counties of Western Europe, North America and Japan, where less than 15 per cent of the world's population is located.<sup>4</sup> Also, whilst foreign exchange may be highly mobile, land and infrastructure are usually immobile, and even factories are costly to move (Harvey 1999: 420). Moreover, whilst there is deregulation in certain areas of economic life, elsewhere new regulations have been introduced and old ones are rigorously enforced. Patents, copyrights, franchises, business secrets and tariffs shield major western corporations, and US and European Union agriculture is heavily protected (Moody 2000: 4-5). Further, whilst what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'left hand' of the state, has been in decline, its 'right hand', that which tends to

benefit big capital, remains strong (this is notably true of western military might) (Budd 2000: 28). Finally, it is governments that are represented at the WTO and the IFIs, and it is governments that have implemented the various neo-liberal policies responsible for promoting globalisation (e.g. Massey 2000: 1).

However, recent experience – mainly with post-graduate students in South Africa – has taught me that discussing the content of ‘globalisation’ is more effective than denying its existence as anything other than discourse. As Massey argues, it is also a project, and one with significant consequences. Nyamnjoh, Cooper and others are correct in insisting upon continuities (see also Wallerstein, 2000), but there is also a strong sense in which the early to mid-1970s marked a break in the character of post-war capitalism (Chomsky’s Phase Two). First, there are the economic changes that followed in the wake of the 1973 crisis: the freeing of exchange rates, the rapid and massive growth in foreign exchange turnover (mainly speculative), the sharp increase in exports from wealthy Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and, from the mid-1980s, a marked rise in foreign direct investment. These have been widely discussed elsewhere (Ohmae, 1990; Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Held *et al.*, 1999; Bairoch, 2000; Went, 2000). Secondly, the crucial shift to explicit neo-liberal government policies, which is considered in some detail below. Thirdly, increased use of new technologies, with important implications for working practices (see especially Moody, 1997), as well as non-industrial culture. Too much can be made, however, of the dynamic qualities of the technology itself, which requires broader, societal change to facilitate its application. But this is not the occasion to develop this argument. There is also a fourth aspect, to which we now turn.

### **Politics and Inequality**

What is missing from most accounts of globalisation is any attempt to integrate an analysis of the changing international balance of class forces. The main exception is Kim Moody’s excellent *Workers in a Lean World* (1997). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, alongside, first, the faltering of the long post-Second World War boom, and then the sharp recession that occurred in 1973, there developed powerful working class movements. This phenomenon was particularly marked in western Europe. Here there was a French general strike in 1968, the largest in world history; an insurgent workers movement in Italy; the 1974 miners’ strike in Britain, responsible for toppling the Tory government; the 1975 revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship in Portugal; and forceful mobilisations elsewhere, notably in Spain and Greece. But the upsurge in popular discontent was a world-wide process. One example was the 1973 strike-wave in the South African city of Durban, which gave birth to a new labour movement that would be central to the overthrow of apartheid. In the United States, in addition to the largest workers’ movement since the immedi-

ate post-war years, the country's rulers also confronted militant mobilisations against racial and other forms of oppression, defeat in Vietnam (in 1973) and the Watergate scandal. This period came to an end for a number of reasons. Sometimes, as in Chile in 1973, there was repression, but this was exceptional. Generally, increased unemployment undermined confidence, but this was not decisive. The key, at least in western Europe, was a desire for social peace and a series of agreements forged between labour leaders and centre-left governments. In Britain the accord was called the social contract, in Italy it was known as the historic compromise, and in Spain as the pact of Moncloa (see especially Harman, 1988).

For western workers, the relative social stability of the late 1970s witnessed some chiselling away of both living standards and organisational gains, but the hammer blows were still to come. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, and the following year Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States. These two leaders were to play a pivotal role in shaping the politics of neo-liberalism, and, hence, the advance of globalisation. In 1981, Reagan demoralised US unions by sacking 11,000 striking air-traffic controllers. Organised labour in Britain took longer to break, but the defeat of a year-long miners strike in 1985 was a turning point. In 1981, France had elected a socialist president, François Mitterand, but after the collapse of an initial attempt at old-fashioned Keynesianism, he was soon adopting Thatcherite policies. The following year, 1982, Germany elected the conservative Helmut Kohl as Chancellor. Throughout the west, social spending was cut and state-owned industries were privatised (and, as was to be the case more widely, this provided new opportunities for multinational companies). But this was just Stage One of the new world order.

Stage Two, implemented from the mid-1980s onwards, came with the internationalisation of neo-liberalism via the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Under the influence of Reagan, Kohl and Thatcher, the IFIs forced or encouraged one developing country after another to devalue currencies, reduce tariffs, slash state expenditure, and privatise state undertakings. In most of Africa, much of Latin America and parts of Asia, these policies – known collectively as ‘structural adjustment’ – were the means by which globalisation was put into practice. Part Three came, in 1989-91, with the upheavals in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the total and dramatic collapse of the old order. Here ‘shock therapy’ was introduced as the local variant of globalisation. We may now be undergoing a fourth stage. As the WTO and various regional blocs – especially the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement – further liberate the world's rulers from electoral politics, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is used to quell local disturbances. My main point is simple: globalisation is as much, if not more, about politics, as it is about economics. The present era of capitalism – which is how I understand globalisation – emerged out of the political and economic crisis of the 1970s,

and it has been driven forward by political initiatives aimed at enhancing the wealth and power of a small minority of humanity.

This characterisation is underlined when we consider the data on inequality, which reveal increasing divergence, both between and within countries. According to the World Bank (2000: 51): 'In 1960 per capita GDP in the richest 20 countries was 18 times that in the poorest 20 countries. By 1995 this gap had widened to 37 times'. Another study, which compared western Europe and its 'offshoots' in North America and Australasia with Africa and Asia, showed that the ratio between average income levels in the two 'regions' changed from eleven-to-one in 1950 to twelve-to-one in 1973, and then to sixteen-to-one in 1992 (Moody, 1997: 54). The process was uneven though, and according to Larry Elliot (1999: 16), whereas, in 1960, per capita incomes in Africa were three times higher than in Asia, 'now they are less than half as high.'

The Asian Tigers witnessed declining inequality, at least until the 1997 crash, but elsewhere in east and south-east Asia, income inequalities have been increasing, and this is true, in particular, for the world's most populous country, China (Leisink, 1999: 18). For most of sub-Saharan Africa, average real incomes are lower now than in 1970 (UNDP, 1999:36), and in South Africa pay and earnings inequalities have expanded since the end of apartheid in 1994 (Budlender, 2000: 87). Most of Latin America has also experienced increased income inequality (Leisink, 1999: 18), and, according to Jay Mancur (2000: 84), the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisation's Chair of Foreign Affairs, 'Mexican workers have lost 25 percent of their purchasing power since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement.' Income inequality has grown particularly rapidly in eastern Europe and Russia, with the later recording a doubling of its Gini coefficient from 0.24 to 0.48 between 1987/8 and 1993/5. Even within the heart of the system, during the 1980s and early 1990s, only one out of 19 OECD countries showed some reduction in inequality, and that was slight. The deterioration was most pronounced in Sweden, the United Kingdom and United States (UNDP, 1999: 39, 37). According to Moody (1997: 188): 'The 80% of the total workforce in the US that hold working-class jobs saw their real average weekly earnings slip by 18% from 1973 through 1995.' One report showed that, over the two decades to 1999, the differential between payments made to average chief executive officers of major corporations and those made to average workers increased from 42 times to 419 times (Smith, 2000: 20).

Worldwide, between 1960 and 1995, the gap between the income of the wealthiest 20 per cent of the world's population and the poorest 20 per cent increased from 30:1 to 82:1 (Marfleet, 1998: 96). In the four years to 1998, the net worth of the world's richest 200 people more than doubled, to reach over \$1 trillion, a figure so great that, if they all provided a yearly donation of just one per cent of their wealth, it would be possible to provide universal access to primary education. The combined assets of the top three – who included Bill

Gates – were greater than the combined Gross National Product (GNP) of the 48 least developed countries (which provided a home for some 600 million people) (UNDP, 1999: 37, 39; Smith, 2000: 20).

The link between globalisation and growing inequality requires further investigation, but some factors can be suggested. In Africa, the decline in average incomes is clearly related to the broad failure of structural adjustment. Significantly, sub-Saharan Africa is ‘deeply integrated in world trade’, with an export-to-GDP ratio of 29 per cent in the 1990s, compared to only 15 per cent for Latin America (UNDP, 1999: 31). The decline of the state has had an especially harsh impact on poorer people across Africa, some of whom now find it impossible to pay for primary schooling which, in the past, was often free. This is especially significant because, with increasing demand for highly-skilled employees – related, in particular, to ‘sped-up technological change’ – education has become a more important factor in determining income, even in the United States (Tilly & Tilly, 1998: 213). Moreover, according to Chris and Charles Tilly, US manufacturing has responded to tougher competition by cutting costs, rather than improving quality, and this has meant holding down the wages of workers whilst increasing rewards for their managers. Finally, these authors emphasise that, at least in the United States – though the argument can, doubtless, be generalised – increased inequality has been a consequence of a shift in the balance of bargaining power (Tilly & Tilly, 1998: 214-5). This shift is reflected in data for trade union density, which in most countries declined in the decade to 1995 (Alexander, 2001, appendix; also Leisink, 1999: 19).

### Three ‘Fault Lines’

Some years back, Immanuel Wallerstein (1993: 217) argued: ‘The history of the world is one of a constant series of revolts against inequality’. The development of globalisation has certainly been marked by many such revolts. Three significant fault lines are now apparent. The first, exposed by Seattle, is that, since globalisation must be managed – because it is not just about unseen and mysterious ‘market forces’ – it is possible to demonise the managers (the process referred to as ‘attribution’ by some social movement theorists). The battle, and the media coverage it attracted, revealed to millions around the world that it is real people – with names and faces and committees – who are responsible for their unhappiness. If these people can make decisions that force workers into the poverty trap, or turtles into the fishing trap, they can also, if there is sufficient pressure, decide not to do so. Subsequent mobilisations – in Melbourne, Washington, Prague, Nice, Davos and Genoa – have shown the breadth of Seattle’s impact, and the depth of anger against globalisation. A new movement has been born. Like all movements it is cross-cut by divisions, and I will return to these. But, in addition to its general educational value, the movement has three other strengths. First, in contrast to the negative prognosis offered by Castells

(e.g. 1997: 354), it shows that trade unions can still be a powerful force for progressive change. To coincide with Seattle, the International Longshore and Warehousemen's Union shut down every port on the west coast of the United States for a day (Bacon, 2000: 4), and at Nice, as in Seattle, the bulk of those who protested were mobilised by trade unions. Secondly, at least in Europe, North America and Australia, it is drawing a fresh, mainly young, wave of people into political activity (at Genoa, according to one report, the average age was 'perhaps 23') (Renton, 2001). Thirdly, and related to this, it is encouraging a new cosmopolitanism (see also Cohen & Rai, 2000: 13-15). Whilst e-mail has been important, the very act of demonstrating has brought together activists from different countries and varied backgrounds. To quote a fragment from a rather hurried report on Nice (received by email):

The anti-capitalist youth from Spain, Italy, France, Germany – yes and Slovenia, Sardinia, Hungary, Poland, Greece et al – were up early too, having slept head-to-toe (two thousand of us) at the Convergence centre after a night of discussion and social chit-chat. . . . There were a thousand or so from ATTAC, the French-based campaign for tax on financial speculation. There were hundreds from the French Revolutionary Communist league (LCR) and similar numbers from the ISO [International Socialist Organisation] groups mainly from the UK, Spain, Greece, France and Germany. Several hundred Basque nationalist and Spanish activists of the anarcho-syndicalist CGT (Matthieu, 2000).

The second fault line exists at the level of international trade-union solidarity. Of course, such solidarity is not a new phenomenon. For instance, Peter Waterman (1998a: 163) informs us that, in 1889, Australian workers sent striking dock workers in London a donation which, for the latter, amounted to three days pay. What is novel are new possibilities provided by globalisation. These exist, in particular, for two groups. First, increased levels of international trade provide more leverage, potentially at least, for some transport workers, such as those employed on docks. In 1997, in an unprecedented show of solidarity, workers from over 100 ports around the world took action in sympathy with striking dockers from Liverpool in the United Kingdom (Moody, 1997: 9). The strikers had carefully built an international network of support using email, telephone calls and air travel, and publicised their strike by developing an internet site. Their ultimate defeat reflected the continuing weakness of the British labour movement.

A second group is those employed by multinational corporations, especially where, as in the auto industry, there is internationally-integrated production. In 1996, when 3,000 brake-parts workers employed by General Motors at Dayton, Ohio went on strike, within a few days their action led to 125,000 lay-offs across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The stoppage cost the company \$45 million per day and was soon settled (Cliff, 2000: 24). The 1997 United Parcel Services (UPS) strike involved transport sector workers employed by a multinational company. In addition to the 185,000 US strikers who were directly involved, UPS employees in Italy and Spain struck in sympathy, and



according to Mancur (2000: 87) the strike was settled the day after French transport workers threatened to close down UPS operations at Orly airport. Assuming that workers' organisation recovers from the defeats of the 1980s, and there are signs that such a revival is already underway in the United States and parts of western Europe, we can expect to see more examples of international solidarity.

So far, most of the evidence for the first fault line comes from the old, industrialised countries. This is where the managers of globalisation have their headquarters and prefer to meet, and this is also where opponents of globalisation have more resources for long-distance travel to such gatherings (even if it is by Greyhound bus, rather than plane). Newly industrialising countries provide more evidence of the second fault. For example, South African workers, who themselves benefited considerably from international solidarity during the apartheid years, have now begun to reciprocate, notably providing support to sacked Australian dock workers and on two occasions to arrested Swazi trade unionists (Lambert, 1998: 74; Bezuidenhout 2000: 14; Limb, 2000). Nevertheless, given that trade and multinational production are concentrated at the core of the system, this second fault may continue to be more visible in the old countries.

The third fault line, however, is without doubt more pronounced in the periphery and semi-periphery. It is particularly in these countries, where protests against some aspect of globalisation – such as reduced living standards – merge with discontent about lack of democracy, producing mass unrest in the form of general strikes or huge riots. John Walton and David Seddon have written about a wave of 'austerity protests' that swept across the global South, mostly during the 1980s. They define these as 'large-scale collective actions including political demonstrations, general strikes, and riots, which are animated by grievances over state policies [related to structural adjustment]' (Walton & Seddon, 1994: 39; see also Auyero, 2001). In an analysis of the roots of the Seattle protest, Jackie Smith (2001: 4), traces international resistance against neo-liberal trade policies back to these austerity protests, thereby suggesting an interesting link between Southern and Northern mobilisations.<sup>5</sup>

At least in Africa, this unrest continued into the 1990s, though this was barely acknowledged in the international media and remains largely unanalysed in scholarly literature. Between 1989 and 1991, the countries affected included: Benin, Cameroon, Zaire, Malagasy, Algeria, Central African Republic, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Zambia, Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Mali and Sierra Leone. In the Malagasy capital of Antananarivo, a city of 800,000 people, a series of enormous marches culminated in one, in August 1991, that was half-a-million strong (forcing the calling of elections). According to one assessment, the mobilisations often took inspiration from events in eastern Europe, and sometimes from the struggle in South Africa, but the main impetus was provided by adverse consequences of structural adjust-

ment (Hester, 1994). Moody (1997: 14, 21) lists 17 countries affected by general and mass strikes between 1994 and 1997; significantly, only six were in western Europe or North America, while 11 were in Latin America, Asia or Africa (and one could add to his African list). During 2000, in Southern Africa alone there were general strikes in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia (and one in Mozambique was cancelled after concessions had been secured).

### Cases and Concerns

The example of Zimbabwe will be used to highlight some salient points about struggle around this third fault line. The country has a mixed economy, with about a third of the population living in urban areas. Structural adjustment, which was only introduced from 1990, benefited a few, but the majority, including a large element of the middle classes, suffered. In November 1997, the Zimbabwe dollar lost 75 per cent of its value in a few hours, and from 2000, with the expropriation of white-owned farms, the economy has continued to collapse. Interviews, conducted in June 2000, revealed that workers were experiencing considerable hardship, including hunger, and as a consequence they wanted to see the removal of the present government, led by Robert Mugabe, as soon as possible (Alexander, 2000). They used the experience of Zambia, where President Kaunda was voted out of office in 1991, to show that peaceful change might be achieved; but they also used the 1998 overthrow of Indonesia's President Suharto (1998) to justify an alternative scenario (one given added weight by more recent events in Serbia) (*Socialist Worker*, 2000). The present movement can be dated back to mass strikes by public sector workers in late 1996. These kicked the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the country's only labour federation, into life, and together with subsequent strikes, they boosted union membership (so that density is now in excess of 20 per cent of employed workers). Moody (1997: 14) describes how, generally, in the mid-1990s 'unions took on new roles: as champions of the interests of the interests of the working class as a whole'. This was true of the ZCTU, which went further, accepting responsibility for initiating the new multi-class Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main opposition party. However, under the impact of economic crisis, the MDC now endorses neo-liberal policies, and divisions have opened up within the ZCTU (see Raftopoulos, 2000a & 2000b). Earlier this year a new leadership was elected that is critical of both the government and the MDC, but there are still factions that identify with Mugabe and with Morgan Tsvangirai, the federation's former general secretary, now President of the MDC (Gwisai, 2001).

If we compare South Africa to Zimbabwe, some differences are obvious. The former has an older and much more substantial economy (responsible, in 1998, for \$130 billion out of Southern Africa's \$160 billion output) (Bond, Miller & Ruiters, 2000: 1). In South Africa, the modern labour movement is a

product of 1960s growth and 1970s crisis, and in the 1980s and early 1990s it gained confidence from its pivotal role in the overthrow of apartheid. Moreover, because of the relative strength of the country's economy and the impact of the anti-apartheid struggle, structural adjustment was largely delayed until 1996 (though some aspects of neo-liberalism were present in the mid-1980s). Also, adjustment was implemented by a governing party that had a formal alliance with the main union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Nevertheless, there are important similarities. Movements in other countries provided inspiration (notably, in the South African case, that of Poland's *Solidarnosc*). Union membership was built through struggle, both industrial and political (and figures for union density are now among the highest in the world). COSATU was central to the fight for democracy, though, in the final stages, leadership was provided by the African National Congress (ANC). Finally, as in Zimbabwe, there are now important political arguments within the unions, with a minority favouring the formation of a workers' party, the 2000 COSATU congress voting to hold a 'Conference of the Left', and the federation's general secretary becoming increasingly outspoken in his criticism of the government (COSATU, 2000: 10; Vavi, 2001).

Broadening discussion to include one of the most successful newly industrialising countries, South Korea, again there are differences. The country's industrial expansion was more recent, and more dramatic than that of South Africa, and its modern labour movement can be dated to the 1980s, specifically a 1987 strike wave, rather than the 1970s. The period from 1987 to the elections in 1992 witnessed economic liberalisation in tandem with democratisation. By late 1996, the adverse effects of globalisation were being felt, and a new wave of strikes broke out and continued into 1997, the year of the Asian crisis. It would be interesting to know what inspiration, if any, Korean workers took from events in other countries. Was, for instance, the formation of a new federation, the Korea Trade Union Congress, influenced by the establishment of COSATU five years before? As for similarities, we can begin by noting that the unions played a critical role in the fight for democracy. Then, although the first democratic government was not sympathetic to labour, the government of Kim Dae Jung, elected in the wake of the crisis, has, like the ANC, engaged in tripartite decision making. Now, as in South Africa and Zimbabwe, there is a debate within the labour movement about politics, and as in South Africa the main question is whether or not to form a labour party (Moody, 1997; Song, 1999; Lambert, 1999; Callinicos, 1999; Jose, 2000).

The common features that emerge from this brief discussion are fivefold. First, new workers' movements have developed in response to the effects of globalisation. Secondly, the response has been political as well as economic, and, to a greater or lesser degree, has involved layers of people beyond the organised working class.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, organisation and union membership have grown out of struggle. Fourthly, new movements have produced new debates

about the way forward for working-class politics. Fifthly, mass movements are inspired by similar movements in other countries. Slightly modified, these five points could also be applied to resistance around fault lines one and two. The main problem would probably be around the second of the five points, since the first fault is largely political, and the second is chiefly economic; the political tends to involve a broader range of participants, but the economic tends to be deeper. The strength of struggles around fault line three is that they tend to move between, and can merge, economic and political concerns.

Some further attention should be given to the fourth of these points. It is probably the most controversial, and it is likely to become the most pressing for activists and labour leaders. Chris Harman (2000: 49) presents an important claim:

Every successful protest goes through two phases. The first is when it bursts upon the world, taking its opponents by surprise and bringing joy to those who agree with its aims. . . it seems that the sheer momentum of the movement is bound to carry it forward from strength to strength. This draws its adherents together, and leads them to play down old differences of opinion and old arguments on tactics. But those against whom the protests are directed do not simply give up. . . . At this point, arguments over tactics necessarily arise within the movement, even among people who have sworn to forget old disputes in the interests of consensus.

He illustrates his claim using an incident described by Naomi Klein. During the April 2000 protests in Washington, demonstrators occupied road intersections near the headquarters of the IFIs. Their aim of disrupting the meeting was thwarted by having the delegates slipped in early. This produced an argument: some people wanted to prevent the delegates from leaving, and others felt that it would be better to join the official march. A gathering of spokespeople agreed on a compromise: demonstrators could opt for either alternative. Klein comments:

This was impeccably fair and democratic, but there was just one problem – it made absolutely no sense. . . . If some intersections now opened up and other, rebel camp intersections stayed occupied, delegates on their way out of the meeting could just hang a right instead of left, and they would be home free. Which, of course, is precisely what happened.

Harman comments that loose, network organisation has its weaknesses, and that these need to be addressed through some form of democratic decision making that is binding on those involved. The importance of this conclusion was underlined by events in Genoa, where the behaviour of a section of the protest, the Black Bloc, was widely criticised for placing other demonstrators in danger of injury. The need to develop democratic procedures and cohesive organisation is not a new problem, and it is one that might benefit from examining the past experience of other movements, including the labour movement.

Moody ends his book with a consideration of some of the most socially-aware union organisations, and concludes by making the case for 'international social-movement unionism' (ISMU). He explains:

Central to this view of social-movement unionism are union democracy and leadership accountability, membership activation and involvement, commitment to union growth and recruitment, a vision and practice that reach beyond even an expanding union membership to other sectors and organizations of the working class. This view sees unions as taking an active, leading role in the struggles against international and domestic capital and their neoliberal allies (Moody, 1997: 290)

Defined in this way, one can see, both, that ISMU would advance the struggle against globalisation, and that, to some degree, it is already practised by trade unions in various parts of the world. Although Moody draws on examples from, for instance, Canada, his best model is provided by the larger of the new union movements in the South, especially COSATU. South Africa also provided evidence of SMU for an earlier advocate, Peter Waterman (1993), who, however, seems to have become more sanguine with age. He argues (1998b: 372):

Brazil, South Africa, Korea and some other countries certainly went through a period of something that could be called 'social-movement unionism' – at least in the sense of significant *labour/popular* alliance. But this, regrettably, seems to have been a moment rather than a tendency. The workers and unions of these countries find themselves mired in much the same neo-liberal mud as those of the North, and the unions tend to find themselves increasingly deeply involved in webs of national industrial relations institutions.

Waterman makes a strong point, and it is a pity he does not pause to consider why he mistook a moment for a tendency.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps there is a clue in Rob Lambert's analysis of the main dynamic propelling SMU in South Africa. 'Union leaders,' he says (1998: 73), 'became conscious that the apartheid state could not be brought to its knees through a narrow workplace focus, no matter how militant the focus might have been.'<sup>8</sup> That is, SMU had a clear political focus, the overthrow of apartheid, which provided unions with both the need for and the possibility of mobilising and developing alliances with wide social forces. In reality, the actions and organisations that developed were nearly always much broader than Moody's idealised working-class movement. This is true too of the MDC in Zimbabwe, and, so I understand, true also of similar movements for democracy in South Korea and other countries in east and south-east Asia. Herein lies the problem. Such a broad movement might hold together in struggles for democracy, though even then there can be explosive tensions, but class differences become more critical thereafter. In South Africa, COSATU's ally, the ANC, is now in government and implementing neoliberal policies. With most union leaders still backing the government, albeit with reservations, COSATU does not have the kind of oppositional political focus that enabled it to develop SMU in the 1980s. Perhaps, then, SMU, at least in South Africa, was a characteristic of a particular movement, a powerful one to be sure, but, nonetheless, a movement, and like all movements it went through its two stages.

## Conclusions

The first conclusion is that the impact of globalisation is profoundly uneven. This essay has considered just two key variables (though there are certainly others). These were the timing of the imposition of neo-liberal policies, and their implications for economic growth and decline. However, to see globalisation merely in terms of divergence would be mistaken, for there are also elements of convergence (or commonality). In particular, internationally, the experience has been one of rising inequality and an undermining of working-class organisation, though also one of resistance. It is important, however, and this takes us to the second conclusion, to recognise that unevenness – related to preceding histories, as well as globalisation – is likely to impact on the character of that resistance. We have suggested three models, though these are not intended to be exclusive. Of these, the first, international protests against the managers of globalisation, has been a northern experience, and the third, austerity protests and mass strikes, is largely southern. The second, international strike solidarity, has potential to cut across this divide, but is still underdeveloped.

The argument presented here suggests a number of major challenges for opponents of globalisation. In particular, whilst the various mass mobilisations have exposed major faults, they now need to be extended and connect such faulting. Spontaneity is a necessary but not sufficient basis for a successful challenge. There is, for example, a danger of northern protesters underestimating the importance of southern struggles against globalisation, and the converse is also true. On the ground, though, the problem is confronted in yet another form. How can we move from playing away (maybe in Genoa), to winning at home (perhaps in London)? Or, how do we counter neo-liberalism and defeat Mugabe? In answering such questions, those opposed to globalisation will need to learn from the managers of the process, and develop a unified project as well as a common discourse. It remains to be seen whether this can be achieved.

## Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented to conferences held at Hong Kong's City University, Manchester Metropolitan University and New York University, and the author is grateful for the feedback he received at each event.

1. Cohen's comment was made at the South African launch of his latest book (Cohen & Rai, 2000). For what may well become the seminal work in understanding globalisation from below see Burawoy *et al.* (2000). A detailed account of the collapse of the Seattle talks can be found in Fleschman (1999).
2. Whilst acknowledging that 'the market fundamentalism of the eighties and early nineties has been discredited,' the White Paper continues, in the same sentence and with only a comma separating the ideas: 'it is now widely accepted that efficient markets are indispensable for effective development.' The thrust of the argument

- is on the need for 'effective systems of government . . . in developing countries.' A more serious analysis would highlight Britain's own role in encouraging the 'market fundamentalism' that increased poverty in Africa and, often, undermined effective government. Thabo Mbeki, the South African president, also argues the case for 'making globalisation work'. He told other African leaders (1999: 3): 'we have to activate our intelligentsia to become a valued partner in the struggle to interact with the process of globalisation in a manner that benefits our peoples and our continent.'
3. As with trade, so too with foreign direct investment (FDI). However, FDI is an inadequate indicator of the impact that foreign capitalists have on local capital formation. On the one hand, by 1997 mergers and acquisitions were responsible for 59% of all FDI (UNDP, 1999: 26). On the other, as Robert Ross explained to me, especially in the Far East, new factories have often been built as a consequence of out-sourcing production (i.e. trade rather than FDI). For Ross's own major contribution to debate on the subject, see Ross & Trachte, 1990. With regard to migration, many countries have introduced new restrictions and, according to official statistics, international migration has declined relative to total population (World Bank 1995: 52). However, these statistics do not allow for the high levels of undocumented migration that occur, especially, perhaps, in Africa.
  4. By 1990 about three-quarters of world exports went to these 'triad' countries. There was a slight easing of this economic concentration in the 1990s, but only because of sharply increased investment in a few countries, notably China. Then, after the 1997 crisis, some East Asian countries experienced an outflow of capital (Hoogvelt 1997: 73, 77; Hirst & Thompson 1999: 69-76; UNDP 1999: 41; Toukhy 1998: 473). Africa's experience, however, has been one of a sharp decline in the share of world exports, from 5.8% in 1980 to 2.1% in 1998 (UN Statistics Division, quoted in Fleshman, 1999).
  5. Smith (2001: 5) also notes that at Seattle 'Southern activists and scholars were 30-40% of the panelists at the largest protest rallies and the People's Assembly.'
  6. Here I part company with Nyamnjoh (2000: 23-8), who rejects the idea that there is such a thing as a working class in Africa (except, possibly, in South Africa). Perhaps this stems from the fact that his account largely ignores the continent-wide wave of resistance against globalisation. Missing such a dimension his account reaches a largely pessimistic conclusion.
  7. Since, in an even more recent discussion, Waterman (2000: 8-9) has presented a programme for SMU, one wonders how committed he is to the 'moment rather than a tendency' idea.
  8. Lambert – a South African labour activist turned Australian academic – has been involved in assisting the development of a Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights, known as SIGTUR, which has drawn together many of the leading trade union centres across the South. For a fascinating paper on SIGTUR see Lambert (2001).

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