

### BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Goldsmith, Edward and Jerry Mander, eds., *The Case Against the Global Economy and a Turn Towards Localization*, London, Earthscan Publications Ltd., 2001, 328 pp., 14.95 Pounds Sterling.

This is an important and a substantial book, one not to be overlooked. A glance through the Table of Contents is enough to indicate that much substance is to be found in its pages. The volume contains a number of fine contributions by the already well known and the just-getting-known critical voices in the globalization discourse: Walden Bello, Tony Clarke, Edward Goldsmith, David Korten and a variety of others.

The major themes treated are by now familiar: development as modernization and colonialism, global corporate rule and misbehaviour, the institutions and mechanisms of global governance or mis-governance (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and, perhaps most ominously, the World Trade Organization), the erosion of the nation-state's viability and authority, threats to democracy, the deleterious impact of structural adjustment programmes, the homogenization of global culture and the ecological damage inflicted by global economic integration and trade. Yet there are insights and facts which bear repeating or, in some instances, may well be new to readers.

No one preoccupation, whether economic, ecological or cultural dominates the discussion or excludes others. Indeed, the collection is, on the whole, a very well balanced and comprehensive critique in which the different elements reinforce the others.

For the most part, this is a coherent treatment, at least in Parts 1 and 2, "Engines of Globalization" and "Impacts of Globalization" respectively. Together, these account for roughly three-quarters of the text. Each chapter has its own focus and could stand alone, and yet there is an overall consistency of perspective, signs of effective editing and indeed even evidence that the authors talked between and amongst themselves. Certainly, not every collection of essays can boast this degree of unity, consistency and coherence.

That having been said, the contributions are drawn, in the

main, from the global north. Indeed only five of the twenty-six chapters are written by southern writers (alone or in co-authorship). This shortcoming is, lamentably, not unusual in such collections. Though not an entirely easy problem to address, it continues to cry out for attention. The difficulty is not that the authors do not see the world in roughly similar ways – indeed these ones generally do – but that the largely North American and European content and authorship render the case less credible than it might otherwise have been were there a better North-South balance of vantage points.

The major problem though, in this reviewer's estimation, is that the final section, Part 3, "Steps Towards Localization (roughly a quarter of the total pages of text) scarcely begins to address the devastating treatment of the global economy presented in the first two parts. Indeed much of the content of Part 3 is embarrassingly limp when juxtaposed against Parts 1 and 2. It becomes largely tentative and hortatory. If the world is as far gone as the early chapters suggest – and indeed the case put forward is compelling – what is going to turn it around? How do local exchange (or employment) trading systems (LETS), Time Dollar schemes and other "alternatives" begin to make a dent in the massive globalization which already holds sway?

None of this is to suggest that local experiments are not promising or worthy in their own right. Indeed, if impotence is an almost irresistible temptation in the face of global forces, these need to be supported. If creative solutions to community level problems generate hope, they should be encouraged. There are many local initiatives which are worthy in their own right and which people in local communities are not powerless to undertake. Moreover, such experiences need to be documented. Do they, however, add up to a credible solution to economic globalization as we have come to understand it?

This question may or may not be an entirely fair one. Whilst the first part of the title, "The Case Against the Global Economy" is very compellingly put forward, the second part of it, "For a Turn Towards Localization" is modestly stated. No one can claim that the latter is oversold. Notwithstanding, the reader may be left feeling a trifle let-down towards the end.

What is not in a book is very often as significant as what is there. Though much is said, in this instance, about the iniquities

*LABOUR, Capital and Society* 38:1&2 (2005)

of unaccountable and essentially stateless transnational corporations, most of the authors cannot quite bring themselves to the point of recommending their disbandment, or whatever else might be done with them. Most contributors seem to assume that the corporations will continue to exist. Given their vast power and the absence of a current or emerging global consensus, one might be hard-pressed to argue that this is anything other than a realistic assumption. The unasked question, however, does not quite go away. Yet self-censorship is hardly an answer. The silent question, though, serves to highlight the very tentativeness of the concluding chapters.

Another limitation is the surprisingly little discussion of possible global antidotes to the undemocratic and unaccountable institutions of the current global economy. In particular, there is scarcely any mention of the United Nations and its agencies, whether unreformed or reformed, save as sources of quotations and statistical data. Why there is this near omission is itself an interesting question. Can the suspicion of the global and the attachment to the local run so deep that the very possibility of effective, responsive and democratized alternative instruments of global governance cannot even be contemplated?

All in all, a worthy contribution to the globalization discussion, though not without a few shortcomings that others will certainly continue to address as time goes on.

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Podobnik, B. and Reifer, T., *Transforming Globalisation. Challenges and Opportunities in the Post 9/11 Era* Leiden : Brill, 2005, 203pp

Globalization as the dominant world order is today being contested at many levels and in many ways by a series of movements that cannot be reduced to a simple 'anti-globalization' movement. Billed by the editors of this collection as 'probably the most important progressive movement of our time' it receives