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Newsletter 96- page 1(1)
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Sand in the wheels

Weekly newsletter - n°96 – Wednesday 19 September 2001.

THE FUTURE

Content

1- Not in Our Son's Name

This article is a letter to the New York Times and to President W Bush from Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez. Their son Greg was one of the victims on Tuesday in the World Trade Center. Their letters are so powerful and moving and courageous. Their address: 20 N. B Way apt F, WPI 10601 for letters of condolence.

2- For Peace and Development

No area in the world is today immune to terrorism, neither is any group or person safe from the acts of national or international groups that use terrorism as a means for imposing their demands and goals. The absolute poverty, terrible injustice, and absence of social justice facing the peoples of this world is a fertile breeding grounds for the growth and thriving of terrorism.

3- September Mobilizations in Washington DC

The changes in our plans in no way reflect a shift in the positions of the 50 Years Is Enough Network or its members or partners on the policies of the IMF and World Bank, nor on the imperative to challenge and change those policies. Our eight demands of the institutions remain our challenge to the decision-makers of the global economy, and will be the gauge by which we measure any policy decisions made, with or without the benefit of an annual meeting.

4- Tricks of Free Trade

Such a deal! We give up our jobs and environmental safeguards for the greater glory of transnational corporations.

5- Labor Wins First Round In Fast-Track Trade Battle

Back in April, when trade negotiators from across the hemisphere were meeting behind fortified walls in Quebec, demonstrations were held in over 50 cities across the U.S. in opposition to the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas--an expansion of NAFTA across the hemisphere). Fast-Track would allow President Bush to negotiate the FTAA without any discussion in Congress other than a yes or no vote (...)

6- Against GMO – A Struggle for Life

Environmental protection organisations, and researchers in the public sector, have shown that there is a risk for irrevocable ecological changes linked to the uncontrolled propagation of "foreign" genes (i.e. genes that are placed outside their normal context). These include changes in biodiversity, which is already threatened (for instance biodiversity of food crops).

7- This article is worth a billion euros

This article is worth a billion euros. More precisely - let us accept the idea between us - once you have finished reading this article, you will know how to get to the billion in question. But this is not where it started.

8- Meeting ATTAC worldwide

Not in Our Son's Name

by Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez

Copy of letter sent to NY Times:
Not in Our Son's Name



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Our son Greg is among the many missing from the World Trade Center attack. Since we first heard the news, we have shared moments of grief, comfort, hope, despair, fond memories with his wife, the two families, our friends and neighbors, his loving colleagues at Cantor Fitzgerald / Espeed, and all the grieving families that daily meet at the Pierre Hotel. We see our hurt and anger reflected among everybody we meet. We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son's death. Not in our son's name. Our son died a victim of an inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the inhumanity of our times.

Copy of letter to White House:

Dear President Bush:

Our son is one of the victims of Tuesday's attack on the World Trade Center. We read about your response in the last few days and about the resolutions from both Houses, giving you undefined power to respond to the terror attacks. Your response to this attack does not make us feel better about our son's death. It makes us feel worse. It makes us feel that our government is using our son's memory as a justification to cause suffering for other sons and parents in other lands. It is not the first time that a person in your position has been given unlimited power and came to regret it. This is not the time for empty gestures to make us feel better. It is not the time to act like bullies. We urge you to think about how our government can develop peaceful, rational solutions to terrorism, solutions that do not sink us to the inhuman level of terrorists. Sincerely,

Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez

For Peace and Development

by Arab NGO Network

Between the 14th and 15th of September 2001, members of the Arab NGO Network for Development and the Forum Civil Euromed held an open meeting in Beirut to discuss the agenda

and proceedings of the Euromediterranean Partnership meeting to be held in Brussels between 19 and 20 October 2001.

Due to the gravity of the terrorist attack on the United States that led to the loss of innumerable innocent lives, the participants issued the following joint statement:

Terrorism is a horrible and condemnable act. Today, we are all appalled and saddened, together with all those who refuse indiscriminate attacks against innocent victims. The tragedy that has struck the people of the United States should be considered, without a doubt, a heinous crime worthy of condemnation. On the other hand, we believe that this terrible act should not, in any way, justify the direct or indirect accusations that would lead to grave damage to international and regional relations. In this context, we call the attention of politicians, media, and organizations working on democracy, civil rights, and public opinion to the dangers of the continuation of hostile rhetoric and smear campaigns that link - directly or indirectly - terrorism, on one hand, and the Arab and Islamic world and the Palestinians, on the other.

No area in the world is today immune to terrorism, neither is any group or person safe from the acts of national or international groups that use terrorism as a means for imposing their demands and goals. The absolute poverty, terrible injustice, and absence of social justice facing the peoples of this world is a fertile breeding grounds for the growth and thriving of terrorism.

We call on the United Nations to deal with the above issues according to international law and the respect of democratic principles. On the other hand, we are gravely concerned about the creation of a new western security front and the extravagant use of war rhetoric by the government of the US and its NATO allies. Years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we reject the attempts to build a new wall of hatred along the Mediterranean. We call on Europe to respect its commitments to support the creation of new spaces and frameworks for the free movement of persons in the Mediterranean. This should be in parallel to strengthening democracy, human rights, diversity, and socioeconomic development in the context of the mutual respect of the welfare of the peoples living on both shores.

Moreover, we cannot even contemplate the guarantee of the free movement of goods and



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services in the Mediterranean, in addition to the strengthening of democracy and mutual security, without putting an end to the continuous Israeli aggression against the Palestinians and without the removal of Israeli settlements, the creation of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the insurance of the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland according to the resolutions of the international body.

It is in the interest of Europe to work diligently to achieve a just, durable, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to strengthen the Euromediterranean partnership on the bases of justice, mutual respect, and common interests.

Beirut, 15 September 2001
ARAB NGO NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

September Mobilizations in Washington DC

by 50 years is enough

The 50 Years Is Enough Network is shocked and deeply saddened by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. We unequivocally condemn these heinous actions. Our hearts and prayers are with the victims, survivors and their families.

The 50 Years Is Enough Network has consulted with colleagues around the U.S. and the world in the days since the September 11. We regret not being able to announce our plans regarding the events scheduled for the end of September before today.

We are changing our plans for the mass mobilization in Washington, scheduled for September 25 to October 4, to coincide with the scheduled annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. We are in agreement with other coalition partners that this is not an appropriate time for street demonstrations against these institutions. We will, however, go ahead with planned educational activities.

Last night we joined with our allies in the Washington-based host coalition for many of the September events, the Mobilization for Global Justice, in agreeing to cancel all street actions -- protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience, direct action -- focused on the IMF and the World Bank. This decision does not encompass any actions that may be planned in response to military or other aggressive actions taken by the U.S. government.

All reports indicate that the IMF and World Bank will be canceling or postponing their joint annual meetings. The U.S. Treasury Department is the official host of those meetings; it is expected to coordinate with the boards of the two institutions to announce such a course of action as early as tomorrow. We agree with the view expressed by the AFL-CIO that this is not the time for "another round of closed-door meetings behind tall fences," and hope that the institutions will not now magnify the lack of accountability and transparency that have already done so much damage to their performance and reputation.

The "traveling teach-in" sponsored by the 50 Years Is Enough Network together with Essential Action, the Center for Economic Justice, and Jubilee USA Network was already underway at the time of the September 11 attacks. Speakers from South Africa, Haiti, Zimbabwe, India, and now Panama, are addressing audiences interested in the IMF, World Bank, and corporate globalization around the United States. Most of the communities hosting events have indicated a desire to proceed as planned. We hope that our current speakers will soon be joined by others from Senegal, Ghana, and Tanzania, but that depends on the capacity of airlines to catch up with their disrupted schedules. For more information on the traveling teach-in, see www.essentialaction.org or contact Monica Wilson at 202/387-8030 or mwilson@essential.org

The "Ending Global Apartheid" teach-in, sponsored by the same organizations as the tours as well as Global Exchange and International Rivers Network (which has announced its intention to pull out of most events), will likewise go on as scheduled, beginning with an opening plenary the evening of Thursday, September 27, and continuing through Friday and Saturday, September 28-29. The reduced number of speakers who will be able to attend, together with the anticipated drop in attendance, have prompted us to abbreviate and re-structure the schedule. The price of tickets will correspondingly drop (with refunds offered to those who have already purchased tickets). Please visit www.essentialaction.org for further details, or contact Monica Wilson (see above).

The changes in our plans in no way reflect a shift in the positions of the 50 Years Is Enough Network or its members or partners on the policies of the IMF and World Bank, nor on the imperative to challenge and change those policies. Our eight demands of the institutions see www.50years.org



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remain our challenge to the decision-makers of the global economy, and will be the gauge by which we measure any policy decisions made, with or without the benefit of an annual meeting.

We acknowledge, however, that the political landscape has changed dramatically and suddenly, and that protests at this moment of uncertainty could be counter-productive. Part of our intention in re-structuring "Ending Global Apartheid" is to provide space for activists from around the U.S. and the world to begin to discuss and grapple with the new situation we all find ourselves in.

We encourage people to come to Washington, DC at the end of September if they still wish to. We believe there will be plenty to interest and occupy economic justice activists who make the trip.

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Tricks of Free Trade

by Mark Weisbrot

Future historians will certainly marvel at how trade, originally a means to obtain what could not be produced locally, became an end in itself. In our age it has become a measure of economic and social progress more important even than the well-being of the people who produce or consume the traded goods. President George W. Bush recently declared free trade "a moral imperative." His predecessor, Bill Clinton, was prone to making wild economic claims for unfettered trade—for example, that it had added to employment and growth in the 1990s, contributing to the longest business-cycle expansion in American history. This is an economic and accounting impossibility, since our trade deficit, now running at a record \$400 billion annually, actually ballooned during Clinton's presidency. Nevertheless, such assertions are rarely challenged in the press.

Technically, "free trade" refers to the absence of tariffs or other barriers that hinder the flow of goods and services across international boundaries. But it has recently morphed into a marketing tool to sell a whole range of new property rights for investors and corporations through an alphabet soup of sweeping international pacts: NAFTA, GATT, MAI, FTAA. In the last few years the environmental movement has increasingly opposed these agreements.

Together with organized labor, environmental groups were a major force in the collapse of the World Trade Organization's Millennium Round in Seattle at the end of 1999. More recently, they helped organize mass protests at the April 2001 "Summit of the Americas" in Quebec City.

Environmentalists were drawn into this debate because they were among the first to recognize that these trade deals were not primarily about "free trade" at all. For example, the most important provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had nothing to do with the removal of tariffs, which were already quite low on goods imported from Mexico to the United States—about 2.5 percent on average. While Mexican tariffs on U.S. goods were higher, the Mexican economy was only one-twenty-fifth the size of ours. President Clinton did not spend months of his time, billions of taxpayer dollars (to win over NAFTA skeptics in Congress), and precious political capital fighting the rank and file of his own party just to open the relatively small Mexican consumer market to Big Macs and Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

The payoff for all this pork and political cliffhanging was not "free trade" but the exalted goal of a more secure investment climate for U.S. corporations. Under NAFTA, Mexico is bound by an international agreement that supersedes its own laws. Equally important, U.S. corporations got a safe haven of cheap labor where environmental regulations are rarely enforced.

In practice, however, NAFTA's biggest environmental threat turned out to be one that received little attention at the time the agreement was debated: Chapter 11, which allows foreign investors to sue governments directly for regulations that cause a loss of profits. This turned out to be a continental coup d'état for corporations, elevating them to the level of sovereign nations—something they had never achieved either under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) or through the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the past, U.S. law has generally limited the definition of "expropriation" (for which the Constitution requires restitution) to government actions such as the taking of private land to build a highway. In the 1990s, the property-rights movement fought a (mostly unsuccessful) battle to broaden this definition to include what they called "regulatory takings"—for example, compensation for the reduced value of beachfront property due to environmental restrictions on its development.



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But through NAFTA, in a solidaristic act of corporate internationalism, businesses and investors have granted each other what they couldn't win for themselves in their home countries. Chapter 11 allows companies that experience even a partial loss of profits because of regulatory action to seek reimbursement from the offending government. Consider the complaint brought under Chapter 11 against the state of California by Canada's Methanex Corporation over its gasoline additive, MTBE. Because MTBE is a known animal carcinogen, a possible human carcinogen, highly soluble in water, and very costly and difficult to clean up, it is seen as a major threat to groundwater. In California, more than 10,000 groundwater sites have already been contaminated by the additive. When California sought to ban MTBE, Methanex filed a Chapter 11 complaint. If the state wants to outlaw the substance, it may have to pay the company nearly a billion dollars.

A similar Chapter 11 case involving the Ethyl Corporation, the company that brought us the lead in leaded gasoline, turned the national tables. In 1997, the Canadian government banned the import of MMT, a manganese-based gasoline additive made by Ethyl that is a suspected neurotoxin, especially when its airborne particles are inhaled. "The history of leaded gasoline holds a very important lesson," says Elizabeth May, executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada. "If we want to put poisons in the blood and brains of our children, an excellent delivery mechanism is to add them to gasoline." Faced with a \$250 million lawsuit brought by Ethyl, however, the Canadian government repealed its legislation banning MMT and paid the company \$13 million in damages.

In 1995, the U.S. government led an attempt to extend this liberalized standard for takings—along with those three fateful words, "tantamount to expropriation"—to the 29 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The vehicle, a treaty known as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), also sought to confer a host of other new rights and privileges on multinational corporations. But in doing so it sparked an enormous backlash against globalization, rallying more than 500 nongovernmental organizations against the proposed agreement. The treaty was almost complete before the American public became aware of its existence in 1996; within three years it was dead, largely because of this international campaign—one of the first, by the way, to be

organized over the Internet. (See "All Hail the Multinationals!" July/August 1998.)

The body was dead, perhaps, but the soul migrated to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Proponents are portraying the new treaty as a helping hand to low-income countries because it creates a single open market that spans the hemisphere. But the helping hand is actually reaching out to corporations, offering them—as with the MAI—veto power over nations' environmental and public-health regulations.

The biggest threat posed by these commercial agreements and institutions is their usurpation of a nation's authority to rule in the interest of its own citizens. This is part of a long-term trend that has increasingly removed economic decision-making from parliamentary and other national institutions—which are at least potentially accountable to the wishes of an electorate—to unaccountable supranational bodies.

The most powerful of these by far are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The IMF's clout comes from its position as the head of a cartel of creditors. (What OPEC is to oil the IMF is to credit.) A country that does not win the IMF's approval for its economic policy will be ineligible for most credit from the World Bank, other multilateral lenders, governments, and very often the private sector. While OPEC uses its control over oil resources to determine (as much as it can) the price of oil, the IMF uses its vast power to dictate economic priorities to dozens of developing countries.

The consequences are often disastrous for both the economy and the environment. For example, the IMF's and World Bank's advocacy of export-led growth, often based on nonrenewable resources, has caused enormous environmental destruction in countries that might otherwise have pursued more balanced growth strategies. Instead of developing local industries and talents, these countries are building gigantic dams, razing rainforests, and digging mines.

But it was NAFTA and the WTO that generated massive protests in the United States, where these institutions get most of their direction and are therefore most vulnerable. The huge popular rejection of the WTO came, in particular, because NAFTA failed so miserably to live up to the promises of its advocates. President Clinton and other NAFTA boosters claimed that the agreement would create new jobs in the United States, when



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instead it spurred hundreds of factories to close up and move south of the border. They also promised environmental improvement in Mexico, where in fact conditions have worsened. (See "Free-Trade Triage.")

Opposition was further galvanized by the new trade regimes' imperious insistence on their supranational authority. Should Europeans have the right to exclude hormone-injected beef from their markets? Most people would say yes, but the WTO ruled otherwise, even though the ban steered clear of protectionism by applying equally to both foreign and domestic beef. The scientific evidence did not justify the ban, the WTO ruled, thus substituting its own secretive deliberations for the judgment of the European Union's scientists and the desires of the European public.

More recently, another life-and-death issue has emerged to discredit the notion that "free trade" guides these institutions. A major objective of the WTO, NAFTA, and the proposed FTAA is to extend the enforcement of patents, copyrights, and other "intellectual property rights" beyond the borders of the wealthy countries where they are owned. A crucial test concerns the 36 million people who now have HIV/AIDS, most of them in the developing world. The "triple-therapy" drugs now widely used in the United States can keep people with HIV/AIDS alive and relatively healthy for many years, but at a cost of \$12,000 per person annually, a prohibitive price for those in the developing world. Recently, the Indian generic-drug manufacturer Cipla offered to provide these drugs for as little as \$350 per year. This would make treatment possible for millions of people, and millions more could be saved with relatively modest amounts of foreign aid from the high-income countries.

The United States, backing its major pharmaceutical companies, has fought to prevent such widespread distribution of generic versions of these and other life-saving medicines. For example, it went to the WTO to challenge Brazil's laws dealing with the manufacture and import of generic AIDS drugs—laws that form an important part of Brazil's remarkably successful AIDS-treatment program, which has already saved 100,000 lives and has cut the number of AIDS-related deaths there in half. (Stung by international criticism, the United States announced in June that it was dropping its challenge to Brazil.)

Extending patent rights to life-saving pharmaceuticals is the antithesis of free trade. It is, in fact, the most costly and deadly form of protectionism in the world today. By any standard economic analysis, a patent monopoly creates the same kind of economic distortion as a tariff. The major difference is that while tariffs rarely increase the price of goods by more than 25 percent, patent-protected prices can be 10 or 20 times the competitive price. The pharmaceutical companies maintain that their enormous profits are needed to fund necessary research and development. This is partly true, under present arrangements. But it merely strengthens the case for shifting R&D for essential medicines to the public and nonprofit sectors, which already account for about half of all U.S. biomedical research. The waste and inefficiency of using patent monopolies to fund this work is simply no longer affordable—especially in the face of AIDS, a pandemic more devastating than any since the bubonic plague killed a quarter of Europe's population in the 14th century.

The major multilateral economic institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO are not only unaccountable to any electorate, they have fundamental goals at odds with environmental protection. This is true in the extreme for the WTO, which was formed in large part to make sure that environmental and other policy goals of national governments did not "unnecessarily" impede international trade and investment flows. Its main actors—the top government officials and corporate CEOs of the G7 (the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Canada, and Italy) would rather ditch the whole project than watch it evolve into something that would allow trade sanctions to be used to advance such aims as environmental protection or labor rights.

The same is true for commercial agreements such as the FTAA, which is also very much corporate driven. (CEOs of corporations such as IBM and Coca-Cola, for example, are allowed to comment on drafts of the agreement before they are made available to the general public.) For these folks, such deals are gravy: They can do just fine with the status quo, and it would be irrational for them to accept anything that restricted the freedoms that they presently enjoy.

The IMF and the World Bank are another story: They have multiple goals and are many times more powerful than the WTO. Because they have the authority to impose a host of policies on borrowing countries, often under the threat of



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economic strangulation, these institutions cause more environmental destruction in a typical month than the WTO has brought about since its inception.

A major obstacle to reducing the damage caused by these bodies is their image as bulwarks against global economic chaos. Proponents depict the WTO as the protector of poor countries, because it allows trade to take place under a "rule-based system." Similarly, the IMF is seen as a lender of last resort, the global analog to an individual nation's central bank—rescuing countries in crisis just as the U.S. Federal Reserve System would bail out a private bank to prevent a financial breakdown from spreading.

This vision, however, presumes that the world really does have a "global economy" rather than a collection of national economies. Eighty percent of what is produced in the world (88 percent in the United States) is not traded internationally at all, and while it is true that most nations have evolved regulatory institutions like our Federal Reserve to resolve some of the problems inherent in a system of unregulated markets, the IMF does not play a similar role at the international level. Nor can we expect it to do so; in fact, it is much more of a world anti-government than a world government, promoting privatization of the public sector and deregulation of trade and investment flows (with the exception, of course, of intellectual-property rights, where "world government" seems to be the goal).

Most environmental policy—like the economic policy to which it is generally tied—will continue to be made at the national level. In addition to stopping the FTAA and WTO, then, we must reduce the power of the IMF and World Bank to impose environmentally unsound policies (such as export-led growth) and projects (like the disastrous World Bank-financed oil pipeline through the rainforest of Cameroon). This strategy of "harm reduction" means breaking up the creditors' cartel that these institutions control and weakening their grip on the policies of borrowing countries—which would include the IMF and the World Bank canceling the debts of poor nations. We cannot realistically expect to see environmentally sustainable economic strategies adopted in the developing world so long as these institutions hold sway.

In taking on NAFTA and the WTO, the environmental movement found itself in a powerful alliance with organized labor. Challenging

the World Bank and IMF would yield many more allies throughout the world, like the hundreds of millions of small farmers in poor countries, whose markets the WTO seeks to flood with subsidized food from the highly mechanized farms of the United States and Europe. The IMF and World Bank squeeze more debt service from the poorest nations than these countries spend on health care or education. And the whole experiment in globalization has been an economic failure, even ignoring the environmental costs. In Latin America, for example, income per person has grown only 7 percent over the last 20 years, as these economies have opened up and followed the IMF's "structural adjustment" programs. In the previous two decades, per capita income increased by 75 percent, more than ten times as much.

In the United States, the marketing of "free trade" may have won over press and pundits, but it has failed to impress the general population, which has also suffered under globalization. The real median wage in the United States today is the same as it was 27 years ago. This means that the majority of the American labor force has been excluded from sharing in the gains from economic growth over the last quarter-century, an unprecedented event in our history. When asked to describe their views on trade in a Business Week/Harris poll last year, only 10 percent chose "free trader." Fifty percent chose "fair trader" (that is, a supporter of trade that pays a living wage to producers), and 37 percent chose "protectionist"—a word that is never used positively in the mainstream media. Although there were mixed feelings about globalization in general, most people chose "protecting the environment" and "preventing the loss of U.S. jobs" as major priorities for trade agreements—putting them very much at odds with our policymakers and trade officials.

This is not to say that there is no need for international institutions. On the contrary, agreements of the sort embodied in the Kyoto Protocol on global warming are essential. But the institutions and agreements promising "free trade" have a very different agenda. There is nothing "free" about creating new property rights for corporations while eroding national environmental protections.

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Labor Wins First Round In Fast-Track Trade Battle

Coalition Holds Together Despite Differences on Environment

by Teófilo Reyes

"If you look at the Crane bill, they couldn't get the votes before the August recess. There's people organizing across the country against this," exclaimed Ryan Hunter, trade organizer for the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment. Hunter was talking about the "Fast-Track" bill authored by Rep. Philip Crane--which the Republican House leadership has had to shelve for lack of support.

ASJE, Jobs with Justice, and local trade coalitions led a wave of grassroots resistance to Fast-Track that led to this victory.

Back in April, when trade negotiators from across the hemisphere were meeting behind fortified walls in Quebec, demonstrations were held in over 50 cities across the U.S. in opposition to the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas--an expansion of NAFTA across the hemisphere). Fast-Track would allow President Bush to negotiate the FTAA without any discussion in Congress other than a yes or no vote.

Since then, this movement, largely ignored by the media, has organized rallies, community forums, union speakers bureaus, local union and city council resolutions, phone banks, letters, and even the occasional sit-in.

A sample:

- In Oregon, Local to Global, an informal anti-FTAA coalition, has set up mobile phone banks on busy streets, setting up cell-phones for passers-by to call their congresspeople.

- The Texas Fair Trade Coalition has set up phone banks to contact not only congressional reps but also union locals in swing districts. They have also gotten onto conservative radio talk shows to discuss sovereignty issues related to the FTAA.

- Activists in California have set up a "Labor to Labor FTAA Speakers Bureau" through the L.A. County Fed that sends out union members to speak to unions throughout the region.

ASJE, according to Hunter, has "generated informal working groups" that bring together local labor, environmental, human rights, and church leaders who are willing to do much more than simply sign a resolution. They have developed a network of anti-FTAA activists in Oregon, Washington, and Ohio.

AFL-CIO ON TRACK

The AFL-CIO was largely caught off guard by the swiftness with which Republicans moved to introduce a Fast-Track bill in the House. In July, following a short debate over the need to reach out to moderates, the House leadership backed the hard-line bill introduced by Crane. The bill would have granted Fast-Track with no crumbs for labor or the environment.

According to one union's regional political director, some officials were furious that the AFL-CIO had no Congressional target list until July. "People were apoplectic about the fact that the AFL-CIO was moving so slowly," he said.

The CWA and USWA, in contrast, had been mobilizing for some time. The CWA trained 600 field reps to lobby against the FTAA in early May, and the USWA has been active with groups such as ASJE and in actions such as the takeover of Crane's office [see box].

Organizers on the ground praised the AFL-CIO's current involvement, however. "They started a little slow, but they are very active," according to Hunter. Nancy Haque, JwJ field organizer, agreed: "The actual legislation came out faster than we thought. Since then [the AFL] has moved very fast."

In early July, John Sweeney held a conference call for international and state AFL-CIO presidents about Fast-Track. The AFL-CIO set up a hotline (800-393-1082) for members to call their congresspeople, which had generated 12,000 calls by August 7, and the federation took out TV ads in about 20 districts before Congress adjourned, with promises of more in the fall.

The federation pinpointed 71 wavering Congressional targets for activists to lobby during the August recess. And the AFL-CIO is helping to organize a September 30 rally in Washington, D.C. against the International Monetary Fund and wants anti-Fast-Track to be part of the focus.

NEW FAST-TRACK ON THE WAY



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In the fall, a different version of Fast-Track, this time with fig-leaf language on labor and the environment, will be introduced, and this will be the true test of anti-FTAA muscle. According to AFL-CIO trade lobbyist Scott Paul, speaking on an August 7 conference call with anti-Fast-Track activists, "We've lost about half of the Republicans who voted for us under Clinton, and we need to keep the Democratic losses under 30."

There appears to be little chance that anti-Fast-Track forces will compromise and accept a bill with weak language on labor and the environment like that in the NAFTA side agreements, which have proven useless. When NAFTA was debated, this language was somewhat of a face-saver for some Congress members who were pro-NAFTA but did not want to alienate voters.

Members of the anti-Fast-Track coalition have either taken the stand "no Fast-Track" or they have stated that they would accept no bill unless (1) it includes trade sanctions against any country that violates its own labor laws or the labor standards of the International Labor Organization of the UN and (2) it ensures equal treatment under the FTAA's dispute resolution mechanism.

The latter means that any penalties against countries that violate labor or environmental laws must be on a par with penalties for other sorts of trade violations, such as intellectual property infractions. Such a provision would be light-years ahead of anything in the NAFTA side agreements. Ralph Nader's Public Citizen group and many local coalitions are pushing House members to sign on to a letter supporting these principles.

No one seems to believe such provisions stand the slightest chance of passing, however, so that the operable message remains, as the AFL-CIO's literature puts it, "Derail Fast Track!"

LABOR-ENVIRO SPLIT?

One area of concern as labor works with other groups is the fall-out from the AFL-CIO's decision to push wavering Democrats to vote in support of oil drilling in Alaska. "Folks are really upset about ANWR [the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge]," notes Hunter.

"Union members are upset about it. We have environmental organizations and unions working side by side, and the Teamsters' support for [oil-drilling] was a big blow to that momentum." He adds, however, "Everyone needs to realize that

they are not going to win it alone. Our philosophy at ASJE is 'there are some issues we are going to disagree on. We build bridges where we can and do work together.'"

The frictions between labor and environmentalists did not begin or end with ANWR. Hunter explains: "We had a leaders briefing on the Oregon Coast and a shrimp catcher said, 'I don't think I can work with environmentalists.' We can come to other issues separately or together, but right now we want to do something about the trade agenda."

On the conference call, Paul predicted that "if Bush doesn't get Fast-Track before November, it will be dead for the next two years." For this to happen, the grassroots work of the last two months will need to intensify.

[The Jobs with Justice website www.jwj.org has links to over 50 anti-FTAA contacts from across the country, and a host of other resources. Asje.org has sample letters and a calendar of events in the Northwest. Aflcio.org has printable flyers with space for local information. CWA-union.org, USWA.org, and UAW.org all have useful information and links, including a list of Congressional targets. PublicCitizen.org has Fast-Track talking points, background information, and up-to-date news.]

Teófilo Reyes is co-director of Labor Notes 'Labor Notes' is a monthly magazine based in Detroit, USA. We are committed to reforming and revitalizing the labor movement. We report news about the labor movement that you won't find anywhere else. News about grassroots labor activity, innovative organizing tactics, international labor struggles, immigrant workers, and problems that some union leaders would rather keep quiet. Subscribe and receive a copy of 'Labor Notes' in your mailbox! Subscription information can be found at our website at www.labornotes.org

Against GMO – A Struggle for Life

by Confederation paysanne

The Confederation of Peasants/Small Farmers refuses to accept the use of GMOs in agriculture and in the agro-alimentary chain. For the detractors of the movement this would mean irrevocably cutting themselves off from "the benefits of scientific progress that has issued from genetic engineering". To oppose it, they say, is to flirt with the forces of obscurantism, to fall prey to



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ancestral fears and consequently throw away all research. These conclusions are so reductionist and simplistic that they are a caricature of the position of the GMOs refuseniks.

The battle being fought on the subject of authorising the importing or growing of various GMOs is passionate, and the very fact that it involves different actors in civil society passionate shows that it is an extremely vital social question that requires a much more democratic and transparent frame of consultation than is the case at present.

The overwhelming majority of European consumers refuse GMOs at whatever level they are present (level of tolerance) in food. They ask themselves what risks (particularly toxicological risks) these products might pose to their health.

Environmental protection organisations, and researchers in the public sector, have shown that there is a risk for irrevocable ecological changes linked to the uncontrolled propagation of "foreign" genes (i.e. genes that are placed outside their normal context). These include changes in biodiversity, which is already threatened (for instance biodiversity of food crops).

Farmers, who are and will remain the first link in the human food chain refuse to use a technology that brings no demonstrable benefit, but that places them under the yoke of the large agro-chemical and seed firms, as is already the case in USA and Canada.

The aim of the powerful trans-national societies is financial. They want to conquer and develop the seed and food markets so that their genetic technology will find a market. Their insistence that they are protecting the environment or satisfying the food needs of the world are merely crude decoys!

Forbidding GMOs will not suffice to end an era of exponential development of industrial agriculture. But authorisation of GMOs would be a heavy blow for our resilient and sustainable peasant agriculture.

The Confederation of Small Farmers calls for research in the public domain to direct its efforts towards real social demands. Small-scale farming is the source of progress for both peasants and the general population.

Patents and the ownership of life

The rise of genetic engineering in the eighties made possible modification of genetic information and also opened the possibility of taking patents on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The first patent was on a bacterium in 1980 in the USA. Patenting was gradually extended to all living organisms (animals, plants etc). Although the identification of a gene or a gene sequence is recognised as a discovery, the clarification of the function of the gene is considered to be an invention and can be patented. By a trick of semantics the original function of patenting has been reversed. The battle for the ownership of genetic information has begun. Today there are 9 364 patents covering 126 672 genes and gene sequences.

Monsanto and infringements of patenting

Monsanto has brought a Kentucky farmer to court for infringing their patent for Roundup Ready Soja. The farmer had grown this soja and sold seed from it to his neighbour. The farmer has been condemned to pay 35 000 dollars to Monsanto. Monsanto has to date brought 500 cases of "patent infringement" to court, the farmers having signed contracts with Monsanto when they bought seed not to sell seed from their harvest to other farmers.

Can GMOs feed the world and save people from famine?

No, because famine and the failure of food security are primarily linked to the dysfunction of the market economy, to access to food and to distribution. Where the use of GMOs has been proposed it is for producing food for export and for feeding livestock, and the GMOs are designed to express their potential under the conditions that obtain in industrial agriculture (irrigation, artificial fertiliser, pesticides and herbicides). GMOs do nothing to improve the essential food needs of those who are most exposed to hunger. The technology is out of reach for small peasants.

The case of Golden Rice

AstraZeneca, together with the representatives of Swiss laboratories in the public sector, announced that they had created a rice that was genetically modified to contain beta-carotene, which they claimed would alleviate vitamin A deficiency in Asian countries. This rice is known as Golden Rice. This miracle solution proves to be deception. To have the intake of the 750 micrograms of vitamin

A that an adult requires daily he or she would have to consume 2.27 kilos of rice daily! Besides, there are a variety of non-GMO solutions available, the simplest being to increase the availability of locally grown vegetables rich in vitamin A.

Do GMOs present risks for the environment?

Yes, because genetic manipulation can induce changes in functions in plants including the production of new toxins. Genes for resistance to anti-biotics (used as markers in the production of GMOs) may be spread far and wide. Controls for toxicity of GMOs are not being made. Most of the GMOs on the market are varieties that are resistant to pesticides or that contain insecticides. When the crops are freed from weeds by spraying them with the pesticide to which they are resistant the residues of pesticides can be accumulated in the food chain and may have long term effects. Moreover, resistant varieties of pest species may develop.

The Arpad Puztai affair

The British biochemist Arpad Puztai fed rats for 10 days with GM potatoes modified to produce lectine. He found that their digestive system was damaged. He mentioned his results on a television interview. Days later he was dismissed from his laboratory.

Starlink maize

The US government was forced to halt export maize contaminated with a GM maize called Starlink, deemed to be unfit for human consumption.

More resistant varieties of rape

Three GM varieties of rape have turned into weeds in Canada. These varieties were each resistant to a different herbicide. They cross-pollinated and produced new forms of rape resistant to practically everything on the herbicide market. Farmers are forced to use total herbicides on all their crops.

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This article is worth a billion euros

By Laurent Jesover

This article is worth a billion euros. More precisely - let us accept the idea between us - once you have finished reading this article, you will know how to get to the billion in question. But this is not where it started. No, this article started this morning. The problem that is still holding me back is the tone, since it is all about sick people and epidemics, deaths, desertion, cynicism and goodwill. But I prefer the beginning in the morning. And what's more, the minute I get into the taxi.

Taxis are a kind of haven of tranquility. You get into them with calm faith, escaping for a time the hubbub and animation, the confusion of the day's millions of paths, of possibilities, you get in sure to arrive. The interesting part about taxis is their drivers, this time a woman, because after all you are getting straight into a story, sometimes long, always human, a story. This morning my lady driver is from the Cameroon. I find this out thanks to the news on the radio.

There are around 36 million people living with HIV throughout the world. 5 million of them were infected in 2000, and 3 million died that year, bringing to a total of 22 million the number of deaths since the epidemic broke out. Just over 25 million people carry or are sick with the virus in Africa, but there are no reliable statistics for many countries, in particular Asia.

And the radio passes on to other news. My driver takes advantage of the red light at which we are stopped to give me a reproachful look in the mirror. I explain myself, or rather justify my smile as best I can. What made me burst out laughing was anger. Shame made me almost laugh at the news. All of a sudden the procrastination, the grand declarations, the finer feelings hoisted up to the rank of a political programme caught in my throat and all that came out was a chuckle. Of course my great haste to talk stops just how serious this laugh is from showing. But it starts the conversation.

When I get out of the taxi, I am no longer sure whether she has AIDS or whether she gives money to a community health centre that takes care of or, to be nearer the truth, given their means, tries to take care of the sufferers. Whatever. When I get to my destination it is no longer a day that is beginning, but a mission.

In a recent report on 10th August destined for Ministers Bernard Kouchner and Charles Josselin and moreover financed by them following the UN's extraordinary meeting on AIDS last June, among the many obstacles to accessing treatment highlighted by the 3 experts that wrote it, the WTO's TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) agreements were high up on the list. "Developments in international legislation on intellectual property rights (TRIPS agreements) may have major consequences on price-reduction negotiations. Incorporating public-health aims in patent law and policies will be decisive from this point of view" (Professors Gastaut, Kazatchkine and Sicard). This opinion can at least be credited with being destined to end up on the desk of Pascal Lamy, EU Trade Commissioner and grand negotiator for all of us at the WTO, which is currently asking for a cycle of global and total negotiations wherever it can, with the hope that he thinks about it himself rather than asking the multinational their opinion.

A month after the G8's declarations in Genoa, the planet's richest States' outwardly attractive agreement has already been torn to shreds. The Global Health Fund (for AIDS but also tuberculosis and malaria) is hesitant and getting cold feet. A temporary working group set up in Brussels is struggling along, with around 40 representatives. It will have to give its opinion very shortly if the Fund is effectively to be set up in January 2002 as announced. By way of opinion, the working group's shipping forecast announces strong winds but broadcasts a gale warning. No one agrees anymore. Apparently it is not the Fund that administrates financing according to the projects, but the donors who direct their donations according to their personal policies. And then not really. And yes and no. No doubt. Well, you understand. Every illness has the right to a cash dispenser, and then not. In short, no-one is sure any more. The temporary working group is made up of 16 representatives of the Northern countries and 12 representatives of the Southern countries.

That makes 28 out of 40. As for the remaining "seats", they are for the civil society. Who? NGOs, yes, really! For example, the Gates Foundation (as in Microsoft), \$100 million in donations, is against financing access to treatments and won't pay unless it can also control. It is also certain that the pharmaceutical industry has not been outdone as regards either donations or seats. Generic medicine? No way... it's a serious breach of the law of the Market. So a virtual Global Health Fund

really does exist, born during the Genoa declarations, declared clinically dead, and in intensive care ever since. What we are left with is hope. In other words a kind of wind that sustains you except of course when you are really ill.

As for the French government, it displays feeling, of the finer type. There are "French doctors" among its managerial ranks, and it shows. According to the French government, it has ?10 billion of debts, ?5.5 billion for the Southern countries' multilateral debt (the international financial institutions: IMF and WB), and ?4.5 billion for the bilateral debt (Paris Club). With this it controls the resources of a goldmine called the "Poverty Reduction Plan" and better known under its former name "Structural Adjustment Plan". These plans aim at putting countries' economies back on their feet, on the whole using huge privatisations, whence the notion of goldmine, as multinationals jump at anything that could be solvent and leave the behind rest to debt, poverty, death to be blunt. They walk past water, electricity, aid for local production; local financing policies are blocked, forbidden, outlawed (from market law, of course); and they stop at privatising health, education, access to all kinds of treatment and the possibility of knowing how to dispense them. And now we reach the billion euros (over 10 years) and finer French feeling.

So 10% of French debt is reputedly set aside and made available for the fight against the AIDS epidemic. This 10%, i.e. ?1 billion, is supposed to take the form of a reduction in the countries' debt. As for debt reductions, the countries must pay them back (they can always ask for another loan, of course), but the reductions can be made to them in the form of financing for specific projects. So ?1 billion over 10 years has been put aside for - or rather, since it does not exist until the countries have paid up, has already been incorporated, by France (rather like an advertising campaign) without France actually having to pay out a single cent - has been earmarked for fighting AIDS. But fighting an illness is firstly fighting "too much State" in the Southern countries and forcing them to pay back to the detriment of paying for local training, or hospital, educational, etc. infrastructures - leading to phenomena such as Africa's brain-drain, since that's the continent we are always talking about, and the possibility of reaching populations directly by making them responsible for themselves. But the billion is there - hi, billion!

France, with its usual generosity, with finesse and dexterity, privatises here, destroys any possibility of constructive policy there, and here asks governments in alliance with local civil societies (so as to avoid corruption, an obvious speciality of the Southern countries, given the few scandals that take place in the Northern countries) to propose projects that would thus be financed by privatisations and the destruction of others' local development policies.

Do you understand any of this? Me neither. But it is a lot of money and the French government is all doleful about not having received any requests for project financing. I wonder why? Hmm, no doubt a firm of expert consultants can provide the answer after an in-depth study. It will come to a

definite conclusion: a lack of communication. So the virtual budget will be the subject of a brochure, forms, a video... and then a TV and a video recorder will be sent to each village that no longer has electricity, a school or a dispensary, to explain to them how to get involved in asking for a billion euros.

Faced with such ludicrousness, I'm not sure that I should laugh, but it does get things off your chest. No doubt my taxi ride will have just got me from A to B. In any case, now that I have reached the end of this article, I just have this provisional conclusion: mission impossible.

Laurent Jésover. Editor for journal@attac.org

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- Thursday 20 : FRANCE : ST PIERRE D'OLERON – PARIS NORD OUEST – MONS – PARIS 13 – NANTES / IRELAND : DUBLIN
- Friday 21 : BELGIQUE BELGIE: LIEGE CITIZENS' EUROPEAN CONGRESS / FRANCE : SAINTES – CHALLANS – MAYENNE – CREST / NORGE : BERGEN
- Saturday 22: BELGIQUE BELGIE: LIEGE CITIZENS' EUROPEAN CONGRESS + MORE THAN 20 ACTIONS IN FRANCE see <http://attac.org/cec/> / ESPANA: MADRID / PARIS 11 – NIORT – PAU – TREVoux – AISNE – NICE – AIX EN PROVENCE – BASTIA – ST BRIEUC – UZEGE – COMMINGES – TOURS – NANTES – DUNKERQUE – LYON – PAU – PARIS – PARIS910 – PARIS NORD OUEST – PARIS 13
- Sunday 23 : BELGIQUE BELGIE: LIEGE CITIZENS' EUROPEAN CONGRESS / ESPANA: MADRID / FRANCE: PARIS 11
- Monday 24 : FRANCE: LA ROCHELLE – MONTIGNY LES METZ / ITALIA: GENOVA
- Tuesday 25: FRANCE: PARIS 11 – BREST – THIONVILLE - VALENCE
- Wednesday 26: BELGIQUE BELGIE: BRUXELLES / FRANCE: PARIS 11 – ROCHEFORT – PARIS NORD OUEST – QUIMPER / SVERIGE: MALMO