

EDITORIAL

## Of Social Movements And Protests

'Protests and Movements galore!' That's how the fast emerging social landscape can be aptly described. Of course, protests, movements and revolutions have always been there but earlier they were mostly confined to the question of the control over the means of production, were largely class oriented, taking place in the rural and industrial belt and mobilising the peasantry and the industrial workers. Now they have taken a shift and have moved across to the urban civil society. Thus the complimentary roles of class, state and power have now been replaced by the new phrases of grassroots movements, citizenship and democracy. Similarly social alliances are replacing the old class-based formations. This can find explanation in the fact that the traditional agrarian and labour movements were the off springs of the industrialization process whereas the post 1980 era, particularly in the developing world, saw rapid changes taking place in the social structure whereby "informal sector" assumed more importance than the traditional categories of rural and urban workers. These changes in the social structure, in turn, led to the phenomenon of new small-scale "micro-level" organisations assuming more importance than the old mass organisations like the trade unions and the peasant federations. The emergence of new ideas often led to discarding the class as a means of looking at society and revolution as a feasible solution. Thus class-based categories of labour movements and peasant movements were taken over by new social movements such as urban movements and women's movements. These movements were representative of the popular response to state repression and social disparities. These urban movements were also an open-handed category which depending on time, place and circumstances could include new forms of labour, women's, teachers, student, tribal or dalit movements.

This is exactly what has happened in the context of Globalization. The corporate-led globalization is increasingly facing the ire of the people. Grassroots movements and communities, all over the world, are getting closer to get rid of the corporate-led globalization. This was clearly evident by the massive gathering witnessed at Seattle in 1999. More than 50,000 people took to the streets in non-violent protests against the WTO, effectively shutting it down for a day. This spirit of protest continued through 2000, 2001 and 2002 as Seattle-inspired protests brought people into the streets to demonstrate against the other institutions comprising globalization- infrastructure like the World Bank, IMF and the World Economic Forum. The year 2003 was not far behind as large scale protests and demonstrations were held against WTO meet at Cancun in Mexico both before and during the meet on the streets of Mexico and elsewhere in the world. These protests signaled the coming together of a series of broad and diverse social movements which are striving for a new, more democratic and accountable political process and social order. These new movements comprise peasants and small farmers, community leaders, lawyers, student activists, parents and teachers, political leaders, small business owners and environmentalists and many others.

But do protests really qualify to be kept in the same category as the social movements? The answer is yes because protests are considered the most spectacular manifestation of social movements. That's why most social movements studies have always focused on those movements which gained their visibility through protests rather than more subtle or quiet actions. In fact, due to their high visibility and the dramatic imaging they create, protests are considered as crucial transformative events in the life of social movements. Observes social scientist Ghanshyam Shah, "Agitations or protests are not strictly social movements if we follow the working definition.... But, more often than not, a social movement develops in the course of time, and it begins with protest or agitation, which may not have an 'organization' or an 'ideology' for change". In fact, each major protest changes the course of a movement in a particular direction, influences a movement's discourse and identity and generates higher level of mobilisation or frustrates the spirit of highly surcharged people. In other words, early protests in the life cycle of a movement are often the pivots around which a movement articulates itself. This issue of **Lok Samvad** focuses on the intimate relationship between the Protests and Social Movements.

- Piyush Pant

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# **Defining Social Movement**

*Ghanshyam Shah*

The term social movement became currency in European languages in the early nineteenth century. This was the period of social upheaval. The political leaders and authors who used the term were concerned with the emancipation of the exploited classes and the creation of a new society by changing property relationships. Their ideological orientation is reflected in their definition. However, since the early 1950s, various scholars have attempted to provide a 'thorough-going' definition of the concept of social movements. Paul Wilkinson gives the following working concept of 'social movement':

Social movements are thus clearly different from historical movements, tendencies or trends. It is important to note, however, that such tendencies and trends, and the influence of the unconscious or irrational factors in human behaviour, may be of crucial importance in illuminating the problems of interpreting and explaining social movement.

A social movement's commitment to change and the *raison d'être* of its organisation are founded upon the conscious volition, normative commitment to the movement's aims or beliefs and active, participation on the part of the followers or members. This particular characterisation of social movement in terms of volition and normative commitment is endorsed by something approaching a consensus among leading scholars in this field. Heberle, for example, conceives of these belief-systems as an expression of the collective will of the people among whom they are accepted. He is emphatic that it is the element of volition of individuals acting collectively that brings about the embodiment of ideologies in social movements.

This working concept does not claim to offer a precise definition. It is too broad and includes collective action through legal means within the boundaries of political institutions (such as voting in elections or presenting memoranda), as well as violent extra-institutional collective action. The 'minimum degree of organisation' is problematic. It is difficult to say precisely what the 'minimum degree' is. One also wonders whether the social movement begins with setting up an organisation having committed members, or does the organisation evolve in the course of time as the movement develops. Such a definition may exclude protests and agitations, which may not have organisation to begin with. Notwithstanding the difficulties with Wilkinson's working concept, it has a heuristic value. Needless to say than, like many other concepts, the meaning given to the term social

movement by the participants, has temporal and cultural contexts.

## **Components of Movements**

Objectives, ideology, programmes, leadership, and organisation are important components of social movements. They are interdependent, influencing each other. The objectives of the movement change from narrow particular local issues to broad aims for social transformation. Sometimes a movement, which begins with broad objectives, may in the process get bogged down to one or two particular issues. Ideology also undergoes change. It provides direction for evolving strategies and programmes. And also keeps the participants together by developing feelings of 'we-ness'. Various strategies and programmes are evolved to mobilise the people. They sustain the movement for a long period. Leadership, which initiates or emerges in the course of the growth of the movement, plays a crucial role in articulating ideology and objectives, evolving strategies and programmes and maintaining the spirit of the participants.

Neither of these components is a priori and static. They evolve. They get changed in the course of the movement. They are in a rudimentary form in some movements and fairly well developed in others Ranajit Guha rightly points out that though these components are found in all types of movements or insurgencies, including the so-called 'spontaneous' rebellions, their forms vary - from very unstructured to well organised. He challenges the contention of some historians who opine that the peasant insurgencies were spontaneous and lacked political consciousness and organisation. Such insurgencies lacked, 'neither in leadership nor in aim nor even in some rudiments of a programme, although none of these attributes could compare in maturity or sophistication with those of the historically more advanced movements of the twentieth century'.

Collective actions, which follow the path of acquiescence for social mobility and change in status, are not treated as 'social movement'. The action which is legally permitted and 'widely accepted as binding in society or part of society, at a given point of time, is institutionalized action. Such actions include petitioning, voting in elections, fighting legal battles in courts of law, etc. However, sometimes these methods are accompanied by other collective actions and used as tactics. Such mobilisation though can be treated as a social movement, the anthology is largely confined to the direct actions of a group of people. In David Bayley's words, it is 'illegal public protest'. The term 'illegal' raises many questions and it is a matter of

interpretation of law and constitution. A particular action can be interpreted as illegal by those who are in authority or support the status quo; but the same action may be interpreted as legal by those who strive for social change. According to Rajni Kothari, 'direct action can be defined as an extra-constitutional political technique that takes the form of a group action, is aimed at some political change and is directed against the government in power'. The term 'extra-constitutional' can be a matter of interpretation. In the 1960s, Kothari's concept of 'political change' was narrow, confined to change in the government. We believe that political power is not solely confined to the government, it is also located at various levels in society. All those who strive for 'political change' do not always struggle against the government alone. After all, change in government does not necessarily bring significant changes in the nature of politics: relationship between the ruling class and the ruled, power relationship among various segments of society, the institutional mechanism for resolving conflict in society. Such transformation calls for the collective action of people at various levels against dominant caste, class and ideology.

Non-institutionalized collective action takes several forms such as protest, agitation, strike, satyagraha, hartal, gherao, riot, etc. Agitations or protests are not strictly social movements if we follow the working definition quoted earlier. But, more often than not, a social movement develops in the course of time, and it begins with protest or agitation, which may not have an 'organization' or an 'ideology' for change. For instance, when students of the engineering college in Gujarat protested against the mess bill, it was a relatively spontaneous act. But that protest led to the Nav Nirman Andolan of 1974 in Gujarat. Moreover, a particular collective action may only be an agitation for some scholars, and a movement for others, depending upon the level of analysis and perspective. For example, the collective action of a section of society demanding the formation of linguistic states in the 1950s was viewed as an 'agitation' by some, and a movement by others; or the same scholars, at a later stage, saw 'agitations' transforming into 'movements'. Agitations, protests, strikes and even riots are often but not always part of a social movement of a particular stratum of society. Some collective actions are often labelled by the authorities as 'riots', but they are more often than not a part of ongoing movements. A striking example is that of the so-called Deccan riots of the late nineteenth century against the government's land policy.

### **Social and Political Movements**

More often than not, political scientists and sociologists do not make a distinction between 'social' and 'political' movements. Sociologists assume, and rightly so, that

social movements also include those movements which have a clear objective of bringing about political change.

In the contemporary social science literature, the term 'new social movement' is in vogue. It is largely West-Europe-centric, derived from some of the movements there. Though there is no precise definition of new social movements, generally such movements are related to the issues of the 'post-modern' society. They are not raising economic issues and not concerned with state power. These movements are primarily concerned with protecting and enlarging the autonomy of civil society. These movements are not class based. They raise the issue of humanity cutting across the interests of all classes. In that sense 'new social movements' are social and not political. Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes make a distinction between social and political movements. According to them, the former do not strive for state power. The social movements 'seek more autonomy rather than state power'. There is a difference between social and political power, and the latter is located in the state alone. According to these authors, the objective of social movement is social transformation. The participants get mobilised for attaining social justice. This thesis is problematic. Of course, society and state, and therefore social and political power are not one and the same. But to differentiate between social power and political power in the contemporary world is to gloss over reality, and ignore the complexities of political processes. Politics is not just located in the political parties. The authors ignore the political implications of the movements involving issues concerning the sense of justice or injustice. It is simplistic to say that classes have disappeared. Though some movements do not directly raise issues related to one class, dominance of a particular class in such movements cannot be wished away. Though environment is apparently a non-class issue, it is an issue raised by the middle class with its class perspective which is different from that of the working class or Adivasi perspective. Dhanagare and John rightly assert that Frank and Fuentes are committed to a process of 'depoliticisation of the social realm'. Any collective endeavour, we believe, to bring about social transformation- change in labour and property relationship, distribution of resources, protecting the global environment for sustainable development -and struggle for justice, involves capturing or influencing political authority, though it may not be on the immediate agenda. Therefore, in the present context, the difference between 'social' and 'political' movement is merely semantic.

### **Approaches**

Generally, studies on social movements follow either

a Marxist or non-Marxist framework for analysis. Scholars following the Marxist approach are primarily interested in bringing about revolutionary change in society. According to them, the causes for social movement are located in the economic structure of society. Antagonistic interests between the propertied and labour classes are inherent in a class-based society which generates contradictions. The former use the coercive power of the state, as well as of other institutions including religion, education, mass media, etc., to impose their ideology on society and control the exploited classes. The latter resist, protest and occasionally revolt or launch organized and collective action against the dominance of the propertied classes. It is their effort to bring about revolutionary political change by overthrowing the dominant classes in power. Though to Marxists, structural causes of conflicting economic interests are central to their studies, a number of Marxist scholars have begun to pay attention to ethnic, religious and other cultural factors. Some of them have begun to analyse the nature of the consciousness of exploited classes. According to Marxist scholars, members of the same class not only have common interests vis-a-vis the other classes, but also share a common consciousness regarding their position in society and the common interests they share. This facilitates their collective action against the ruling classes and state.

There is a good deal of debate among Marxist scholars on theoretical and methodological issues. Recently a group of Marxist historians, known as subaltern scholars, have begun to study 'history from below'. They criticize the 'traditional' Marxist historians for ignoring the history of the masses, as if subaltern classes do not make history of their own, depending solely on the advanced classes or the elite for organization and guidance. It is argued that traditional Marxist scholars have undermined cultural factors and viewed a linear development of class consciousness. On the other hand, the subaltern studies are strongly criticized by other Marxist scholars for ignoring structural factors and viewing 'consciousness' as independent of structural contradictions. They are accused of being Hegelian 'idealists'. Other issues of debate are: are the parties and trade unions equipped to lead revolutionary social movements? Can the peasantry be divided into classes? Which class of the peasantry has more potential to deal with the revolutionary movement? Which class in capitalist society has the potential to be a vanguard to lead revolutionary movement? Non-Marxist scholars accuse Marxist studies of being 'reductionist', 'mechanical' and 'over determining' economic factors.

There is a great deal of variation amongst the non-

Marxist scholars also, in their approach to analysing social movements. The ideological positions regarding a need for social and/or political change, and the role of movements therein differ. It is argued by William Kornhauser, Robert Nisbet, Edward Shils and others that mass movements are the product of mass societies which are extremist and anti-democratic. These scholars are in favour of excluding the masses from day-to-day participation in politics, which hampers the efficient functioning of the government. The Indian scholars who approved of the agitations against foreign rule for Independence, did not approve of them in the post-Independence period, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. They condemned them outright as 'dangerous' and 'dysfunctional' for 'civilized society'. Though some others do not favour revolutionary change in the political and economic structure, they advocate 'political change' which is confined to change in government and political institutions. A few are for revolutionary change but they differ from Marxist scholars in class analysis. They lay emphasis on political institutions and culture. In their analysis of the movements, some do not inquire into causes. Others differ in their emphasis on the causes responsible for the movements. Some emphasise individual psychological traits, some focus on elite power struggle and their manipulation; and some others emphasize the importance of cultural rather than economic factors.

The theory of relative deprivation developed by American scholars has also guided some studies on agitations and mass movements. It ignores the importance of consciousness and the ideological aspects of the participants. It explains protests and movements of revolt, but does not analyse revolutionary movements. Protest does not necessarily lead to a movement. M.S.A. Rao asserts that relative deprivation is necessary but not a sufficient enough condition for 'protest movements'. He argues, 'A sufficient level of understanding and reflection is required on the part of the participants, and they must be able to observe and perceive the contrast between the social and cultural conditions of the privileged and those of the deprived, and must realize that it is possible to do something about it'. The deprivation theorists view movements as 'temporary aberrations' rather than as 'ongoing processes of change'. Moreover, they do not deal with the sources of deprivation.

How and why do individuals join together for collective direct action to attain political objectives also needs to be examined. The theory of relative deprivation is largely confined to acts of individual revolts. It does not explain the nature and the reasons for collectivity and collective actions. It deals with riots, not with the

purposeful movements launched for achieving social transformation. It explains only one type of movement and does not take into consideration revolutionary movements in which political parties and ideologies play an important part.

### **State and Movements**

The immediate response of the state to all movements pressuring or challenging its authority is negative. The state assumes the responsibility of holding sovereign power, is the repository of wisdom for 'common good' and manages the public sphere. It has therefore a tendency to resist any collective action, which by nature either exerts pressure on the authority for certain policy and action and/or protest against the decision and action of the state. The state looks at social movements as a challenge to its legitimacy of governance. Neither the capitalist state, overtly representing propertied classes, nor the 'communist' state, claiming to be the state of the working class, prefers to face the movements of the classes it supposedly represents.

After the initial response, the state uses different measures to deal with the movement. The measures vary from soft-paddling and leniency involving dialogue and negotiation to brutal repression: torturing and killing the activists and creating fear among the participants. Simultaneously the state also uses various tactics to appease and co-opt the participants. In order to diffuse collective action, appeasement with doles and concessions, and co-option of the leaders in decision making bodies are followed. The state is somewhat more soft with those movements which have reformist demands within the institutional framework than those movements which aim at overthrowing and replacing state power. However, when the state realises that mere brutal force would not work and lead to counter-productive results, the state changes the strategies which include co-option of the leaders, infiltration in the movement, evolving counter ideology and use of all kinds of gimmicks to pacify and divert the attention of the participants and the movement's supporters.

### **Social Movements and Indian Society**

In the mid-1960s, a group of political scientists addressed themselves to the question: why has India witnessed an explosion of violence on such an unprecedented scale? They disapproved of agitations. One of them argued, 'One will understand, if not justify, the reasons which led the people in a dependent country to attack and destroy everything which was a symbol or an expression of foreign rule. But it is very strange that people should even now behave as if they continue to live in a dependent country ruled by foreigners'(U. D. Phadke 1966 in 'The Historical

Background of Mass Violence in India'). They blamed opposition parties, leaders and trade unions for instigating the masses to direct action (Aiyar 1966 in 'The Politics of Mass Violence in India'; R Srinivasan 1966 in 'Democracy and the Revolt of the Mass'). Many of them have changed their position after the Emergency.

Some scholars, including a few Marxists, assert that mass movements or protests are redundant in Indian culture and civilization due to its 'multilineal character' and 'all-pervasive hierarchy'. Because of the Brahminical ideology and hierarchical social structure, the oppressed classes have become docile, obedient and fatalist. Such assertions are refuted by other scholars who point to a number of struggles by the oppressed classes in pre and post-Independence India. Some explain that the protests and agitations in post-Independence India are the result of the conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. According to them, parliamentary democracy has been transplanted in India, where there is no tradition of voluntary effort. People have developed an ambivalent attitude towards authority, they take the advantages offered by the political authority but at the same time do not legitimize it. Morris-Jones argues that, 'Even after independence the government is relied upon, and at the same time spat upon and abused. The same man who is "looking to government" one moment may in the next take part in demonstrations involving violence and on a scale that threatens to make any government impossible'. This was the result of the conflict between traditional values and attitudes on the one hand, and modern institutions, on the other.

The scholars who adhere to the theory of political development consider that the rising aspirations of the people are not adequately met by existing political institutions which are rigid or incompetent. As the gap widens between the two, 'political instability and disorder' leading to mass upsurge increase. Rajni Kothari argues that 'direct action' is inevitable in the context of India's present-day 'parliamentary democracy'. 'The general climate of frustration, the ineffectiveness of known channels of communication, the alienation and atomisation of the individual, the tendency towards regimentation and the continuous state of conflict (which may remain latent and suppressed for a time) between the rulers and the ruled—all these make the ideal of self-government more and more remote and render parliamentary government an unstable form of political organisation'. David Bayley argues that public protests have a certain 'functional utility' even in a parliamentary form of government. He observes that before and after Independence, a large number of the people felt that the institutional means of redress for grievances,

frustrations and wrongs—actual or fancied—were inadequate. In 1960, Kothari did not justify all types of 'direct actions'. The action is desirable 'only if the political change desired by the group involved in direct action offers a greater scope of political freedom than is offered by the exist-ing political arrangements'. Kothari and Bayley confine their discussion to the direct actions which are against the government. They do not consider the direct actions or protests against socio-economic dominance and power structure in society. AR. Desai joins issue with Kothari and Bayley, and argues that their discussion on direct action is confined to a 'formal level and offers no basic clues to the understanding of the problem'. Desai asserts that, 'The parliamentary form of government, as a political institutional device, has proved to be inadequate to continue or expand concrete democratic rights of the people. This form, either operates as a shell within which the authority of capital perpetuates itself, obstructing or reducing the opportunities for people to consciously participate in the process of society, or is increasingly transforming itself into a dic-tatorship, where capital sheds some of its democratic pretensions and rules by open, ruthless dictatorial means. Public protests will continue till people have ended the rule of capital in those countries where it still persists. They will also continue against those bureaucratic totalitarian political regimes where the rule of capital has ended, but where due to certain peculiar historical circumstances Stalinist bureaucratic, terroristic political regimes have emerged. The movements and protests of people will continue till adequate political institutional forms for the realization and exercise of concrete democratic rights are found'. Desai reiterated his position that the civil and democratic rights of the people are not

protected by the Constitution. Consequently, the movements for their protection have increased.

In his writings, Rajni Kothari argues that 'democracy' in India has become a playground for growing corruption, criminalization, repression and intimidation of large masses of the people. The role of the state in 'social transformation' has been undermined. People have started asserting their rights through various struggles. 'There is discontent and despair in the air—still highly diffused, fragmented and unorganised. But there is a growing awareness of rights, felt politically and expressed politically and by and large still aimed at the State. Whenever a mechanism of mobilisation has become available, this consciousness has found expression, often against very heavy odds, against constellation of interests that are too powerful and complacent to shed (even share) the privileges. At bottom it is consciousness against a paradigm of society that rests on deliberate indifference to the plight of the impoverished and destitute who are being driven to the threshold of starvation-by the logic of the paradigm itself.' Kothari feels that mass mobilisation at the grassroots level is both 'necessary' and 'desirable'. He asserts that it is in the state of 'vacuum in the traditional superstructure of the liberal polity that was supposed to render it humane despite powerful trends that the real countertrends are to be found—not in the party system, not in the arena of electoral politics and of State power, not in the typical confrontation between the so-called haves and have-nots within the conventional economic space dominated by trade unions. In their place there is emerging a new arena of counter-action, of countervailing tendencies, of counter-cultural movements and more generally of a counter-challenge to existing paradigms of thought and action'.



## I

It is commonplace these days to say that we live in an age of turbulence. What is not clear are the sources of this turbulence and reasons why, despite so much of it, it is not able to change the world we live in which those who wield power and authority are still able to thwart, divert or suppress it. What I propose to do here is to explore precisely this relationship between an increasingly defensive status quo desperate to retain its power and the forces of change and transformation that are getting increasingly restive and restless, conscious of the shackles that bind them and the need to move out of them, yet frustrated and disorganized and unable to cope with the growing repression and terror from the status quo.

Now there is nothing new in this undertaking. All social commentators, at least since the middle of the nineteenth century, who have cared to look at the larger dynamics that lie behind the myriad expressions of the human condition, have sought to deal with this very problem: the encounter between the forces of status quo and those of change. What is new in examining the same problem in our time (and by that I mean the 1980s of the twentieth century) is the deep confusion and uncertainty about what really is underway on both sides of the equation—on the side of the global, regional and local status quo and on the side of agents of change and transformation from the very local and 'micro' to the global and planetary 'macro'. It is by seeking to unravel this deep uncertainty about the directions in which the world is moving—both the dominant structures and those opposed to the dominant structures—that we may be able to at least begin to understand what is at work, what new factors have emerged or are emerging, how these are likely to shape the future and what, if any, counter-trends may be in the offing and may perhaps work. At present, no clear framework of understanding, far less of explaining, really exists, not even a method of coming to grips with it. There has taken place an obsolescence of ideological frameworks, of any grand theory, of any clear guide of formulating praxis. There is a striking decline of confidence among all but the most naive dogmatists. And this pervading sense of uncertainty has given rise to pyramids of insecurity, helplessness, bewilderment, withdrawal, cynicism and apathy.

Now to a large extent periods of uncertainty in history are occasioned by major changes in the structure of reality, changes at so many thresholds of human organization and so simultaneous that their impacts on consciousness leave the latter adrift and without

any firm anchor.

In the contemporary situation we see this at so many thresholds or levels of human endeavour and organization. At the larger political level of the world power structure, both the rise of the Third World in the post-colonial period and the replacement of a world structured around the European balance of power by a bi-polar world structured around the two superpowers, have unsettled all earlier understandings of international relations. While each of these two facts is recognized the two have not been considered together in an adequate manner. Once one does that, one can immediately see how a colonial kind of bondage was replaced by a much greater and stronger integration into either the global capitalist market or into the world strategic straitjacket fashioned by the struggle for world hegemony by the two superpowers. Our existing conceptual categories of historical analysis are somehow ill equipped to grasp the full implications of this split in the human community occasioned precisely by its greater integration, globalization and homogenization. Most existing ideologies—and their offshoots—were born in the typical European setting of nation states, the setting of first generation industrialization and one of essentially class-based identities. They seem to be ill equipped to deal with a transnationalized world in which the dominant currency is technological as distinct from economic and military as distinct from political. It is a totally different human setting.

Second, this is also reflected at the level of the organization of the productive forces. We are confronted with a completely different model of world capitalism, a switch from the European to the American model, in which technology as a system, propelled on the one hand by the communications and information order conditioning the minds of men and on the other by the corporate form of organization conditioning the behaviour of states, makes all other relations of production subsidiary. This has generally forced all other 'systems'—the socialist system, the Third World, the Japanese system—to fall in line and measure success on terms laid out by the American cultural syndrome (technology being the only culture the Americans have).

Third, this growing autonomy of the technological estate has found its greatest manifestation in the military field and the field of military-civilian relationship. We live in an age not just of growing militarization of the whole globe—from the powerful nuclear powers to the powerless Third World

countries-but of a model of militarization that is essentially technological. Nation states are at the mercy of the growing menace of the military research and development which marches inexorably and forces every major and even minor country to discard existing weapon systems and adopt newer ones, at escalating costs no doubt and with increasingly hazardous effects on social and ecological systems. It is a new version of militarism, rather autonomous of the will of the rulers and of course of the peoples.

Fourth, this dominion of technology and its pervasive impact of political, economic and security dimensions-each of which has come to become vulnerable to its design-has in turn produced a massive erosion of the ecological basis of human civilization, destroying the resources base of the people and especially of the millions of rural and tribal and 'ethnic' poor who have not just been made into surplus and therefore dispensable populations by the aggressive march of high-tech capitalism but whose traditional access to natural resources and non-commercial produce" has also been taken away from them. The usual syndrome facing even the most remote hill peoples is one in which the military builds roads, the urban and tourist traffic moves in with its artifacts and consumerism, modern communications 'hard-sells' these products and then comes the modern technology and its commercial arteries, drawing away all the resources of nature and heritage of history that were traditionally given free to these peoples.

**With all these forces impinging on traditional societies forcing them to fall in line and accept the dominant mode and ideology of forced modernization and, what is more, with the supposedly independent states too being forced to fall in line instead of providing new lines of defence to civil society, with this a deep socio-cultural crisis has ensued, especially in older civilizations. As the state in effect withdraws from its responsibility and surrenders its autonomy, civil society in these lands is thrown on its own resources. And this precisely when these societies are experiencing deep convulsions thanks to the powerful impacts both of the modernizing juggernaut immanent in the aggressive thrust of ruthless technologism which is the form that world capitalism has assumed and, in a different way, of the social and ethnic conflicts generated by formal - electoral democracy in which somehow wresting a majority at the time of elections has become the main stuff of politics.** This formal apparatus of democracy as a vehicle of modernization worked somewhat smoothly so long as it was controlled by an alliance of feudal and bourgeois elements. With

the rise and assertion of the masses which in good faith believed in the formal pretenses of bourgeois democracy, a big backlash arose from both the feudal landed interest and the industrial bourgeoisie which has found expression in massive repression of the poor on the one hand and the promulgation of a depoliticized technocratic state impervious to social and political aspiration of the masses on the other.

It is the bewildering interface between these powerful trends-each heralding a strong current of domination and destruction-that we need to come to grips with if we are to comprehend, assess and hope-fully steer the counter-trends that are emerging on behalf of the affected masses and people of the world. Crucial to such an understanding are two prerequisites. First, we should give up the specialized, single issue oriented approach to problems and crises that has characterized the dominant method of both the hard sciences and the social sciences. And, second, we need to identify the emerging ideological elements in the current praxis of the counter-movements and to relate them into some sort of a whole which, while drawing upon the best in earlier ideologies, empowers the masses towards a liberating process of their own creation, and volition. If this is an 'age of the masses' it is the masses and their leader that have to evolve a relevant ideology, not some ivory tower intellectuals except as aides (nor the wielders of state power who, all indications suggest, have a declining interest in the masses except to 'mobilize' them from time to time for their own perpetuation and glorification. Hitherto ideological claims or pretenses have been made either by intellectuals in their role of being 'vanguards' or by government or party leaders in control of the state or by 'planners') in which the masses have been treated as mindless followers with no ideas of their own, indeed no capacity for cognition. At least in our age this presumption must go. For, all the elites, including revolutionary elites, have failed to grasp the reality on the ground. On the other hand, one notices some refreshing and original ways of thinking among the masses from which we can all learn.

## II

Now, both the need to consider the multiple dimensions of domination, exploitation and marginalization in their interrelated manifestations and the need to similarly interrelate and integrate the large variety of counter-trends and their new ideological underpinnings can be best done by working on the central issue of our time-the changing nature of the state and its role in civil society, especially as it impinges on the masses and the peoples of the world, and of Third World in particular. We need to re-examine our assumptions about the state and its presumed role as liberator, equalizer, 'modernizer' and mobilizer. As we do this-

and I propose to go into it in some detail in this article—we shall be able to uncover a series of simultaneous dimensions. The state and its relationship to the people come through as not just a relationship between classes and the masses, but also between the principal carrier of modern capitalism and technology and the social order (marginalizing a large part of the latter). Between the military and the civil order. Between the development policies of the state and its transnational sponsors and the economic and ecological catastrophes that are hitting the masses and affecting sheer survival of large numbers of people. Between the global information order and the citizen reduced to a package of consumption, social prejudice and dazzling circuses organized by the state and corporate intelligence. And finally between dominant races and ethnic communities that have control of the state and those at the periphery, presumably still members of the civil order but progressively being pushed out of it by repressive and genocidal policies. It is this capture of the state by a convergence of class, ethnic, technological and military actors, by developmentalists, communicators and managers, including managers of votes, that has set the stage for the contemporary confrontation between the 'classes' and the 'masses'.

There has been with us, especially in the post-colonial work, a presumption of the state as a mediator in ameliorating the harshness of traditional social structures for the purpose of ensuring justice and equality, a protector of vulnerable peoples and liberator of oppressed and colonized populations, and an engine of growth and development that would usher in a new civil order based on progress and prosperity and confer rights to life and liberty, equality and dignity, on the people at large. There was a further presumption of relative autonomy of the state from entrenched interests and classes, of the state as an independent actor with preponderant powers to influence, discipline and, where need be, coerce established interests and estates to accept state policies aimed at transforming—either incrementally or through rapid strides—the status quo. And for a while it did seem that the bearers of power in the new states meant to act as autonomous actors and use their authority for the pursuit of declared policies. The written constitutions and fundamental statutes that were enacted and the wide array of social legislation that followed were designed to do this. The vigorous pursuit of economic models that then ensued, whether in achieving greater self-reliance through import substitution and the building of a substantial infrastructure for industrialization (as for instance was the case in India) or in achieving greater welfare through provision of social minima in the fields of food, health and

education (as for instance was the case in Sri Lanka), also suggested that the state meant to be a positive state in the interests of clearly laid out policies, in turn based on a given social and economic philosophy.

During the same period the opening up of the political space, either through exercise of adult franchise as in the liberal polities or through involvement in party structures and at production sites as in more socialist polities or through a combination of competitive politics, local self-government and cooperatives in the rural areas as in mixed-economics, also meant that leaders of those states were keen on involving the masses and seeking legitimacy from them. And in fact, large segments of the masses accepted this new benevolent form of a paternalistic state, and hoped to use it to improve both their life chances and their status in society and indeed in course of time to challenge the hegemony of the dominant classes in society. In short, though not always stated in that manner, built into the positive thrust and progressivist creed of the post-colonial state was an eventual encounter between the 'classes' and the 'masses' with the state providing a frame for mediation through which a confrontation of contending interests was translated into a series of transformative policies.

Now such a promise of the liberal polity through a mixture of faith in 'development', quite a degree of zeal in 'doing good' to the people and the availability of a credible and exemplary leadership that was on the whole not a prisoner of a particular class or estate was not without failings, or of serious critics. Many compromises were effected along the way, as for instance in the implementation of land reforms or in putting on the ground truly effective public distribution systems. Concessions were made when entrenched groups and interests put up a tough resistance to intended changes. There was too much dependence on the bureaucracy which was in most of these states a direct continuation of the colonial civil service. And finally, there was not a little corruption in high office and the inevitable compulsions of the middle class basis of the leadership and the social milieu in which both ministers and their secretaries and technocrats moved. All this was there and we were all along told about this. And we had also been warned that the state was an instrument of a class or of a colonial power or simply of bureaucrats and policemen and soldiers. And yet whether it was Lenin or Mao, Nehru or Nkumah, Nyerere or Nasser, they all pinned their visions of transformation on state power. Only Gandhi did not, but he was, even before India became independent, rendered important and irrelevant. Leaving the Gandhian stream (and most Gandhians also went for a model of voluntarism and 'constructive work' which heavily depended on state patronage),

there was consensus across the board, from the industrialists to 'left-of-centre' politicians to the radicals including the Marxists on a positive and interventionist role of the state on behalf of the masses.

It is now clear that the expectation of such a role of the state, and the presumed alliance between the state and the masses in such an expectation, have been belied. Today the state is seen to have betrayed the masses, as having become the prisoner of the dominant classes and their transnational patrons and as having increasingly, turned anti-people. Nor has it provided the sinews of a radical bourgeois transformation from the dynamics of which a revolutionary alternative would emerge. The state in the Third World, despite some valiant efforts by dedicated leaders in a few countries, has degenerated into a technocratic machine serving a narrow power group that is kept in power by hordes of security men at the top and a regime of repression and terror at the bottom, kept going by millions of hard-working people who must go on producing goods and services for the 'system' for if they did not, everything would collapse. The fact of the matter is that without landless labourers and sharecroppers and without the unrelieved drudgery of women and children the rural economy would collapse and without slum and pavement dwellers the urban economy would collapse but there is no chance of any of these rising above their levels of penury and destitution—either the landless acquiring land or the homeless urbanites getting homes. The chances on the contrary are the opposite: sinking below existing levels in the wake of still greater increases in unemployment flowing from still further modernization and given the growing sentiment against migrant labourers without whom the cities cannot be built but who are becoming eyesores for the affluent middle classes, bulldozing them whenever they get settled a bit.

### III

Now such a transformation in the role of the state in regard to the masses in the post-colonial world, from being an instrument of liberation of the masses to being a source of so much oppression for them, is a result of a number of factors. Some of these were foreseen by theoretical models of historical change but many others are a result of developments that were not foreseen then, at least not adequately.

One set of factors has to do with the very model of development that was adopted in most ex-colonial countries. Based on the urge to emulate and catch up with the countries that had once colonized them and from where our intellectuals continued to derive their main stimulus and sustenance after Independence, it produced a structure of opportunities

that was inherently inequitable and pitched against the masses. The emphasis on capital accumulation for rapid industrialization and the understanding of industrialization and associated patterns of urbanization and modernization being outward-oriented (from the villages to the metropolitan countries), inevitably distributed resources "unevenly, against the poor. And not just resources that were created by planned economic development but also the resources that originally belonged to the people or to whom they had free and easy access. Initially it was thought that these inequalities and disparities—between classes or regions—were transitory and technological, largely due to the inevitable lag between accumulation and distribution, and will not only disappear with further development but will be reversed in favour of the poor and towards a more egalitarian society. In fact, despite a degree of welfare measures and despite a mixed technological package that included development schemes for rural development meant to benefit the poor and the unemployed, the pattern of inequalities and of increases thereof has acquired a structure that has more or less become permanent and in which a great many vested interests have been created.

The reasons for this are many. There is just the greed of the classes that controlled or had access to state power and the administration at different levels and who were unwilling to make the so-called 'sacrifices', which in fact meant allowing the poorer classes access to a part of the surplus that they had created in the first place, so that the whole society could move forward and develop even more rapidly, benefiting all classes. This was the typical liberal bourgeois 'democratic' assumption that has not worked in these highly divided societies where the classes and the masses constitute two worlds apart.

But it was not simply a matter of greed and selfishness and lack of not just empathy for others but also of perspective on how better distribution leads to even greater enlargement of the cake instead of the narrow view that there is not enough to distribute and let us first simply enlarge the cake; in such a view there will in fact never be enough. But it is not just this. At the level of individuals and groups of the owning classes—there was the snare of an imported package of consumption, amenities and lifestyles, a highly seductive 'consumerism' that has had a powerful pull through global outreach of a particular culture of consumption, namely the American mass culture which in the case of our societies has become an elite culture that has kept the masses out.

In terms of the role of the state in this, what has happened is that having created an adequate industrial infrastructure or enough exportable surpluses to

satisfy the consumer needs of the owning classes and their middle class cohorts, and all this through the instrumentality of the state, these classes lost interest in continuing the operation of an interventionist state for that would have meant responding to the demands for redistribution, welfare and a more participative framework of economic management. The result has been an emphasis simultaneously on liberalization and lowering of taxes on the rich, presumably to increase incentives and replace the role of the state by that of the markets and on modernization and computerization of the technological base in which of course the state is expected to play a big role. The 'classes' (by which I mean the upper and the middle classes) will wallow in the imported mass culture of consumption and comforts, the masses will be left to the playground of the market and that too largely in the unorganized sector, and the organized sector of the economy will be modernized for effectively competing in the export-led model of development to which all developing countries have of late been led, again by a global mindset launched by international financial institutions and an international academic and policy elite that are at once clients and consultants to these world bodies. It is all part of the 'catching up' syndrome-in consumption patterns, in technology, in the ruling doctrine as regards the best path to economic affluence.

This is one set of factors. The other, and to my mind more powerful set, has to do with a still bigger process of 'catching up' that is at work. This is the very strong drive at building an efficient, strong, hard state, heavily industrialized after the high-tech model on the one hand and sufficiently militarized in which too the latest, sophisticated armament are acquired. Once this thinking takes shape, both the transnational salesmen and experts in the latest civilian technologies and the merchants of violence and war and of repressive technologies and intelligence systems come in and layout both their hardware and their software. This mirage of greatness in a world increasingly dominated by the superpowers and the multinationals only serves to drain away resources from the countryside to the urban areas, and from there to overseas in return for both civilian and military hightech, to increase areas of tension as the phenomenon of regional overlordship takes shape as part of a global management structure, and to harden the very arteries of the state which finds it necessary to suppress challenges locally, as part of dealing with them externally. This lies in the very logic of a global order based on technocratic and militarizing states. As far as the masses of these states are concerned, all this only draws away economic resources that could have been available

for their well-being and, what is worse, drains away natural resources to which they hitherto had, access and of which the new technologies are particularly destructive.

Third, as a consequence of these factors-the greed of the classes, particularly under the impact of modern consumerism, the 'catching up' syndrome, the drive towards a hard and efficient and militarized state, and above all the growing faith in market economics-we are witness to another important development that is still underway but is bound to grow: the collapse of the welfare state and of those components of development that were directed to the amelioration and -welfare of the underprivileged. We need to remember that one of the more progressive streams in modern economic thought, still within the broad bourgeois-liberal framework, has been the effort to chasten the harshness of modern capitalism and technology through the rise of the welfare state. In fact it has been said that the welfare state has proved to be a major defence of the capitalist order against radical and revolutionary forces. When the post-colonial states designed their models of development from the experience of the West, they also took on the welfare components of the same. Now with the welfare state under attack everywhere (including in the West) those components have been the first to have suffered in the Third World too. The belief in the market and in technological solutions to basically social and political problems has taken their place. The fact is that, unlike in highly urban societies that were industrialized over time, where the growth of strong class consciousness permitted the demands for equity and justice to emanate from the social space in the form of pressures on the state, in predominantly rural and tribal societies the state become a direct, unmediated presence, and whether it treats its citizenry in a humane way or becomes oppressive depends largely on the model of development as well as the balance of socio-political considerations that informs the model. This depends to a large extent on the ruling elite. When such an elite makes a direct jump to high-tech without having gone through the dynamics of capitalist growth, and when it allows the military, the tourist, the television and the computer full play, obviously welfare goes out of the window.

Once this happens both capitalism and the state get hardened, the latter becoming an instrument of the former in place of chastening its excesses. Thus it gives in to the compulsions of this computerized phase of capitalism, namely automation, in the organized sector and a new division of labour in the unorganized sector in which migrant and bonded labour and women and children become the targets of exploitation, in both cases destabilizing the 'working class' and its

organizations. Their capacity to combat poverty and marginalisation and destitution-and slow death-declines as these in fact become integral parts of the advance of the system, of science, of modern civilization. They are inherent in a dual economy which in turn is inherent in the wholly technocratic vision of capitalism.

**Fourth, a new ideological crystallization has emerged of late which is taking hold of the minds of leaders and intellectuals in all parts of the world (including to some extent, I am afraid, the socialist world). The crux of the new ideology is breathtakingly simple: re-placement of the state by the market. Building mainly on the right wing critique of a positive and interventionist state and of the phenomenon of bureaucracy, but also drawing indirect support from the critique of the state from the Left and from liberals (though of course distorting it), the new thought that is emerging is to give full play to the market, which is euphemistically called a 'free market', to competition, to modernization, to technology and to the great cata-lysts of all this, namely the transnational corporate giants.** In large part this is a doctrine promulgated by the state itself, or the new bearers of power in it (the post-Fabian generation if you like). But here too it is important to catch the nuance. The idea is not only to dismantle the state apparatus in regard mainly to distribution of national produce, in short in the social sphere, but to fully and systematically use it for promoting the new technologies and the dual economy that goes with them. It is a state that somehow bears a human face, uses 'liberal' symbols and invites everyone to come in, especially voluntary organizations and the NGOs, opposition groups and the liberal intelligentsia. In this the state is still central for it is the state that will drive us all like a homogeneous mass into the future. It is a grand strategy of cooperation of the classes away from the masses which are also, of course, being asked to look after themselves. That behind the state lurks the structure of corporate capitalism is true. But we are also witness to the rise of a new model of the state, the corporate capitalist state. All over the ASEAN world, elsewhere too where the so-called NICs are to be found, it is a direct marriage of the state and corporate capitalism, and not between the local bourgeoisie and foreign capital as was the case earlier. In fact, the local businesses are being wiped out.

**There is one final and most dangerous element in this growing crystallization of the ruling class. Aware that the dual economy and the likely consequences thereof are likely to generate restlessness and revolt from the bottom and**

**lower middle tiers of society, as also from the politicized elements of the middle classes, it has set into motion a completely new canard that is meant to detract attention from the socio-economic sphere to the highly volatile communal and ethnic sphere, releasing strong religious, linguistic and cultural sentiments, pitching people against people, utilizing mafia operations and the availability of hordes of lumpens and criminals, and unleashing a reign of terror on vulnerable castes, communities and regions.** Obscurantist sentiments and fundamentalist ideologies are mobilized for this purpose, the state acquires still more fire power, this time legitimized in the name of national unity and threats to it, undermining in the process all the politics of struggle and social movements that had challenged the hegemony of the upper castes earlier. Draconian laws against 'terrorism' are enacted in the same vein which are then used to deal with popular unrest and suppress social movements. It is an extremely serious development that has been a direct consequence of the ruling elite wanting to somehow hang on to power and, to this end, engender into the political process a strong dose of violence and civil strife. As it succeeds in undermining the caste and class basis of social interactions, and in communalizing that too, it threatens to tear the social fabric apart. Or at any rate the social fabric below the technocratic superstructure. In fact, we are witness to the rise of not one but two new ideologies, of technologism and of fundamentalism, and the two do coalesce as the exercise of power becomes increasingly cynical. The result is civil wars, ethnicization of civil society, and collapse of secularism as a mode of organizing plural societies. It undermines the conception of pluralism as such, of a conception of unity that not only respects diversity but also draws its resilience and strength from it. In countries where a large majority is able to steamroll the whole society into a monolithic whole, it goes hand in hand with the homogenizing drive of the modern corporate capitalist state. For the masses, it a double steamroller.

#### IV

Let me now turn to the obverse of this all, to the masses, having considered at some length the classes and the state that they have come to control, camouflage and commandeer. The question is how the masses allow these two—the classes and the state to stampede them into what looks like abject surrender. Especially in this supposed age of the masses which has led major observers of the human condition to pronounce the arrival on the scene finally of the masses, the 'revolt of the masses' as Ortegay Gasset announced some decades ago. The actual situation we face is 'fascinating' as the Americans

would say, excruciating as we would say (for the Americans, all suffering is fascinating, as is all sport). It is like this. There is a flurry of mass action, in various social settings, at a variety of sites at so many levels. There is also a spurt of state repression, usually at local and para-local levels but often escalating upwards to the urban metropolitan areas including the capitals of countries. There is at the same time an increase in exploitation in the economic sense, not just in the wage-capital relationship but also in terms of new production relations that have given rise to new structure of exploitation and there is wanton distortion and undermining of whatever laws and allocations there are for the poor, the backward and the destitute.

It is against this matching of opposite forces, this deadlock, this tension, this peculiar state of stagnation and exhaustion arising precisely out of so much action from so many opposing segments and sites that we have to evaluate the actual condition in which the mass of the people are placed. There is, first, as already mentioned, the continuing drudgery of so-called 'work' that must go on, for the system demands it, even under deteriorating conditions of which everyone including those who drudge along are aware, though perhaps not always so consciously. There is, second, the capacity of the ruling class to divide and split the labouring classes and the people generally-to break their strikes, to bring in 'outsiders' and count on 'black sheep', to be certain that when one set of people walk out or protest, another will walk in, or in any case incapacitate the protesting, to know that scarcity and poverty are the best conditions of demobilization than of mobilization (as radical theory would have it). In rural' areas and tribal belts even this is not necessary: the feudal order in league with the centralized bourgeois state ensures full success of the exploitative chain-all the way up and all the way down. They 'survive' precisely by surrendering. And third, there is, beyond the drudgery and the divisions and the chain of exploitation, a deep and pervasive conditioning of the mind of the masses by the powerful impact of modern communication media on the one hand and the deep schism and scare caused by fundamentalist drives on the other hand. The unfortunate fact is that the masses are more duped by I both than the middle classes and the professionals, there having little information on which to base a more discerning and discrete structure of appraisal and choice. The moot point, of course, is that such, conditioning perpetuates the other characteristics of mass behaviour from continuing drudgery to systemic exploitation.

And yet we know that the masses are on the march despite the "drudgery, the exploitation, the

conditioning. There is a great spurt in consciousness, willingness to challenge hegemonies and unearned privilege, to protest against injustices, to mobilize horizontally to deal with oppressions of a vertical kind. There is no doubt that all this is there, and growing. What is it that prevents it from crystallizing into an effective counterforce against dead drudgery, inhuman exploitation and involuntary conditions?

Here we come to the crux of the problem. The masses in the post-colonial world are unorganized, they lack politicization, and they are unable to withstand co-option and conditioning despite constant struggle and growing consciousness. The poor, the minorities, those outside the stream of the main civil society-the tribals, the forest people, large segments of the women-all suffer from this state of deep disorganization. This is largely because the typical avenues of mass mobilization and redress of disabilities and deprivation have given way before larger forces, or rather that are seductive and corrupting in a way. I have particularly in mind political parties on the one hand and trade unions on the other, two conventional channels and modes of mobilization and struggle. **Unfortunately-and this observation applies almost 'across the board'-political parties (not just ruling parties) have been so taken in by the compulsions of the electoral process that they have lost their capacity to have the masses, in particular the more destitute and backward among them. As regards the trade unions, there has taken place a near collapse of them as catalysts of a working class consciousness and a working class movement. Even the press and the judiciary are found to fall in their appointed tasks, they too are found to be corrupted by the crumbs of 'development' on the one hand and the miasma of a national security state and corrosive fundamentalism on the other. The masses are on the rise but the institutional channels through which they ought to have found expression and which were to provide a springboard of radical action are found to be wanting, co-opted and corrupted.**

It is in this state of vacuum in the traditional superstructure of the liberal polity that was supposed to render it humane despite powerful trends that the real countertrends are to be found-not in the party system, not in the arena of electoral politics and of state power, not in the typical confrontation between the so-called haves and the have-nots within the conventional economic space dominated by trade unions. In their place there is emerging a new arena of counter-action, of countervailing tendencies, of counter-cultural movements and more generally of a counter-challenge to existing paradigms of thought

and action.

It is necessary to understand the nature of this challenge. It is in many ways new and even unintended in the sense of some well thought out grand design. It is composed of a series of obvious and inevitable strands of struggles against existing hegemonies of organized resistance, of mainstream protest of civil liberties and democratic rights. But it is much more than this. It is an effort to redefine the scope and the range of politics. It is an effort to open up new spaces in both the arena of the state and in several other spheres of civil society outside this arena. And it is based on new spurts in consciousness-beyond economism, beyond confined definitions of the political process, beyond the facile (and false) dichotomy of state versus market, beyond both dehumanizing religiosity and dehumanizing modernity, discovering new indigenous roots and substance and strength based not so much on either the fractured old or the mediocre and insipid New as on genuine possibilities of alternatives that can in fact work in generating this process of 'conscientization' and engaging in actual struggles as well as searching for new alternatives has resulted in the emergence of a whole new class of people known as activists, essentially drawn from the conscious and enlightened and troubled streams of the middle class, engaged on a wide range of activities from Sarvodaya style 'constructive work' and NGO) type development projects to more struggle-oriented political work, but essentially settling in the latter mode of intervention. It is from this convergence of a conscious and restless people and a conscientious and equally restless class of volunteer politicians (to be distinguished from professional party politicians) that the new grass roots movements are taking shape. It is a convergence that is making it possible to conceive of the thousands of micro struggles and experiments in some kind of a macro perspective.

It is from such a convergence of new grassroots politics and new grassroots thinking that new definitions of the scope and range of politics are surfacing and around these redefinitions of new social movements are emerging. The environment, the rights and the role of women, health, food and nutrition, education, shelter and housing, dispensation of justice, communications and dissemination of information, culture and lifestyle, the achievement of peace and dis-armament-none of these were considered subject matter for politics at any rate, not for domestic politics and not for mass politics in which ordinary people were indulged. This has now changed. Ecology is something that cannot any longer be left to experts in ecology or in economic development, or even to departments of environment, though the establishment

of such department is itself a new development, a concession to popular political pressure. Nor can ecological considerations be left to be sorted out in the future on the presumption that if development and technology erode the enforcement in the short-run, this can be remedied in the long-run. It is something to be preserved here and now, it cannot be left to the good intentions and pious declarations of governments but must become part of peoples' own concern, an organized concern at that, including agitations and movements to restrain the state and corporate interests from running amuck and ruining the life chances of both present and even more importantly that of future generations, and indeed of non-human species and plants as well. Concern for nature and reversing the rapacious approach to it that is inherent in modern science is becoming part of a political movement, both worldwide and within individual societies.

The same is the case with health, and with food and nutrition. These are matters that were hitherto left to specialists and experts and to ministries manned by them. Not any longer. It is increasingly being realized that the new hazards to health, the new epidemics that are breaking out, the horrors created by modern drugs are in good part a product precisely of the experts, doctors, the medical profession and the multi-billion dollar global drug industry with millions being spent on research and development, the much boasted of R & D. They are also a product of the kind of development that has been let loose on trusting people, of technology and the environmental hazards created by it. In the meanwhile, modern civilization has created a whole new spectrum of diseases known as civilizational diseases which in turn has produced a whole industry of specialists who are nowhere near curing either cancer or mental disorders, nor will they ever be able to. All this is being confronted by various strands of the alternatives movement.

The same is the case with the availability of and access and entitlement to food, to minimum nutrition and to shelter and housing. These are among the most serious problems in distributive policies and the clearest refutation of the logic of development based on accumulation and production, with distribution to be taken care of at a later stage implied in this logic was also a view that treated people as beneficiaries of the process of development, not direct participants in it, thus without any real control over how things would go. And it is now being realized that things have indeed gone away. The faith in Green and white revolutions, in the revolution in materials technology and in so-called 'cheap-housing' has been shattered with the realization of growing hunger and malnutrition and millions living in slums and on pavements, to be driven out and bulldozed from there too. It is realized

that these are matters of empowerment and rights for which people will themselves have to fight. And that too not just at the level of securing more of the same goods but of devising alternative ways of attending to these needs, more often than not by the people themselves. The same is the case with education, so clearly related to being underprivileged. Something that was supposed to be an instrument of liberation has turned to be one of subjugation. Education just cannot be left to the mercy of the so-called educationists. This whole perspective applicable to so many areas, about de-expressing and de-bureaucratizing the provisions of basic needs is seeping into the grassroots political process and generating a new agenda of concerns for it.

Even as presumably learned and technical matters as dispensation of justice on the one hand and communicating information on the other are being subjected to not just greater public gaze but a large degree of direct involvement. Both the rise of public interest litigation and the growth of investigative journalism, in both of which human rights activists are getting deeply involved and which are together generating substantial movement of civil liberties and democratic rights, provide ample testimony to my point about politicization of issues and areas that were hitherto considered beyond the pale of politics, especially of mass politics.

Now here is the enlargement and redefinition of the scope of politics brought out as vividly and dramatically as in what is called the women's movement and what I would prefer to think of as a feminist input into our whole thinking on politics. Not just that the scope of politics has been enlarged by bringing into its ambit what was till recently considered a personal and private world. From a position that personal and political are polar opposites to the one that personal is political, that political is personal is a massive shift in not just the position of women in politics but in our whole understanding of politics itself. But also, in the process new approaches and methods to deal with basic problems like the environment, health, drunkenness and sanitation and choice of technology are gradually getting evolved-and not just by women but by men too for there is no necessary exclusive overlap between feminism and womanhood. Above all, there is emerging an unprecedented convergence between the environment and feminist movements and between them and the peace movement. This has already happened in Europe with the spectacular spread of the peace movement, with the affirmation that peace and disarmament are too important to be left to governments who left to themselves will in all likelihood blow up the world, and in this women have played a major role. This is yet to happen in our part of the world, given the powerful hold of theories of threat from within and

without. But it will happen here too; we just cannot afford to be prisoners of this arms race, and women will have to play a major role in changing this. But the more important point is one about inter-relationship of dimensions and movements, of a holistic approach to life, which goes against the grain of the modern scientific culture with its emphasis on specialization and fragmentation. As women come out of their presently narrow approach of catching up with men, and the more generalized feminist values become, a holistic approach will develop. A holistic approach that is also plural and based on complementarities. This is more likely to happen in the non-Western world than in the West.

**This all too brief sojourn into the grassroots orientation of mass politics-a vast terrain that is just opening up and still being shaped- does suggest one thing: the universe it seeks to build would be much more worth living in than the universe that the dominant tendencies seem to be building.** The basic question is: can all this activity, all these 'movements' produce a macro challenge, a general transformation (whether one calls it a revolution or not)? The analysis and prognosis of this article says that this cannot be achieved through the conventional channels of political parties, trade union activity, peasant organizations and capture of state power through electoral mobilization. **That for this we need new building blocks, partly through the non-party political process, partly through counter-cultural and alternative movements that are global in scope and partly through 'nationality' type of movements for regional autonomy and within the caste and community framework for texturing a pluralist social order supported by a decentralized political order.** It is a convergence of class, culture, gender and environment that one has in mind on the basis of emerging counter-trends. **These are possibilities that have not yet acquired high probability but which alone, it seems to me, can enable us to transcend the dual economy based on a technocratic and militarized vision that we are fast moving towards. And all this of course in close alliance with the more economic forms of struggle for fair wages and dignity in the treatment of the so-called lower rungs, the backwards, the untouchables and the bonded, or of the social peripheries, the tribals, the forest people and the aboriginals.**

Let me move towards ending this piece by saying that I do not conceive of the non-party political process as in any way hostile to the party political process. On the contrary, it is partly to revitalize the party political space, partly to correct its inadequacies but most of all to provide a constant grassroots infrastructural process, not just to act as watchdogs

but also to intervene whenever necessary and above all, to permit direct involvement of the people in both the non-party and the party political spaces that the whole conception of an autonomous grassroots politics (instead of one where it is a derivative of elite politics) has taken place. It is not in any way opposed to or even deflecting from the party)' political process as is sometimes alleged by some party leaders jealous to occupy the whole political space and particularly, suspicious of autonomous formations operating in the public space.

Where this conception of politics does differ from party politics is that for it state power is not seen as the only or even predominant object of politics. It sees an equal and perhaps even greater necessity to keep struggling against injustices which are bound to occur no matter which party or coalition of parties is in power, experimenting with new modes of organizing social, economic and technological spaces, insisting on norms in politics and keeping the intellectual ferment alive so that the state-based politics does not become an orthodoxy. It believes that it is not enough to provide participation in the system, even if this could be made less formal and more substantial; the aim is also to create a just society. Participation is necessary but not sufficient for this to happen. For that what is needed is self-government, a decentralized order through which the masses are empowered, not decentralization in the sense of some territorial schem of devolution of functions and resources to lower levels but decentralization in which the people are the centre, It is towards this end that the various social movements of the type discussed by me have a role to play, alongside of course the typical working class and peasant movement, in short a coalition of social movements and mass struggle. One without the other cannot bring about the necessary transformation.

There is, moreover, a socio-demographic reason why such a direct and dynamic role of mass politics of the grassroots variety becomes necessary, quite apart from being desirable. In a predominantly rural society with great diversity party formations like the various social democratic parties or labour parties that emerged in Western Europe and heralded the dawn of a mass age are not likely to emerge. We also know that without such formations and the pressure they generated, the phenomenon of the modern welfare state also would not have taken place. So on both these counts—the role of parties on the one hand and of the state on the other—we need to think wholly afresh, for ourselves, transcending all that we imported which we had to, to begin with. And as we

do this we will see that there is no alternative to moving towards a pluralist, decentralized polity with a humane technology and a relatively self-reliant economy. Self-reliant for the people and not just for the state as has been the thinking on self-reliance till recently. The point is, in our kind of a context, a just society cannot be built except by the people coming into their own and assuming responsibilities for shaping their lives. We just cannot afford to hand over things to experts. This may be possible in centralized and homogeneous societies like the Western ones. To follow the same model here is of necessity to create a dual society with large masses left out of citizenship, out of civilization really.

Fundamentally, the vision that informs the grassroots model of mass politics (as against the parliamentary or presidential or party model of mass politics) is one in which the people are more important than the state. This is crucial and it is not as simple as it sounds. In fact, in the times we are living in, it is a revolutionary idea. The dominant tendency and mode of thought today is to place the state above the people, the security of the nation state above people's security, the removal of real or imaginary threats more pertinent to the state than to the people. Hence too the spectre of threat-from communism in Marx's time to terrorism in our time. On the other hand, to restore to the people their sovereignty is not to undermine the role of the state but to transform it. This is to be achieved in four simple ways. The transformation of the state is to be achieved through the transformation of the civil society, not the other way around in which the state was to be the author of social transformation—that was a real misjudgment of the processes and pitfalls of secular power. Second, the role of the centralized state must decline. It will be very much there—some functions will have to be carried out by a centralized apparatus—but it is basically to operate in concert with other centres as well as other institutional spaces in civil society. Third, the state should be enabled to regain its autonomy from dominant inter-ests and classes; it should be gradually made to wither away as an instrument of class and ethnic oppression but enabled to survive, and survive effectively, as a mediator in conflicts and stresses that will continue to take place in civil society. And fourth, we will need to move beyond the nation state syndrome of statehood, in particular move beyond the national security state syndrome, which has been the source of both authoritarianism and hegemonism in our time. In any case, so long as the national Security State rules the roost the masses cannot and will not come into their own.

*(Courtesy: Economic and Political Weekly)*



# The Rocky Path of Social Movements

*Adam Lent*

We live in an era of movements. Thirty years ago, the industrialised world was swept by a wave of youthful movement activity that encompassed women's liberation, gay and lesbian rights, anti-racism, radical social reform and revolution. Today, a worldwide movement demands all these things once again but this time in the new context of globalisation.

But right across the political and social spectrum 'extra-parliamentary activity' has become the norm. We are now as likely to see 'Middle England' on a mass demonstration, or using direct action to protest threatened rural lifestyles or international debt, as we are to see radical students demanding the dissolution of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The journey from shared grievance to collective action is now so routine as to be banal. However, of all these mobilisations only a handful will transform themselves into mass movements that capture the imagination of millions and bring about profound change.

Since that explosion of activity in the 1960s and 1970s, a great deal of academic consideration has gone into answering why and how protest groups develop into mass movements. The prime conclusion is that the variables involved are multiple and extraordinarily complex and dynamic. Grievance alone is certainly not enough. For every mobilisation that goes no farther than a local community centre, there must be thousands of social and political grievances unheard beyond the living-room gripe.

## **How do Movements Grow, and Authorities Respond?**

However, it is now widely acknowledged that some key conditions are required if a movement is to grow and gain influence.

First, grievance is indeed essential, but is only transformed into the spur to collective action by a new threat or loss. Truckers across Western Europe may have complained about fuel tax for years but it was the sudden price rise in oil that led to mass action.

Secondly, the transformation of grievance into action requires the existence of a new opportunity for mobilisation. Unexpected shifts in alliances and policies amongst a nation's political elite may prompt long suppressed activism. The way Mikhail Gorbachev's reform drive spurred rebellion against hard-line Eastern European regimes – who could no longer rely on Soviet backing – is a classic case of such political opportunity. But opportunities may also be cultural and social – the radicalism of gay liberation in the early 1970s would have been impossible without

the massive change in sexual attitudes of the 1960s.

Thirdly, movements need resources. These may come in the form of money or assets but equally valuable resources may be found in volunteer labour or donations in kind. Possibly the most central resource, however, is the types of social and institutional networks from which new movements can win support and obtain further material benefits. The Labour movement drew its greatest support from networks formed within the factories of the Fordist revolution. The black civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s spread rapidly through the black churches of the southern states. The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s relied heavily on the masses of students entering the expanding universities of Western Europe and America.

Fourthly, networks are also important because they allow movements to tailor a vision to the circumstances and values of a specific audience. Such a vision is vital to explain and guide a movement's action. At the very least, a movement must explain to its current and potential supporters what is wrong, who or what is to blame, and what can be done. Such visions can be very simple (a consumer group's demands for a better or safer product) or extraordinarily elaborate and sophisticated (the great effort of analysis and debate that has gone into socialist ideology over the last two centuries).

Fifthly, movements also need innovative and appropriate strategies and tactics. All the methods of protesting we now take for granted were all new and unexpected at one stage. Often, such innovation occurs in the heat of conflict with authority and may be eminently practical responses to a certain situation. A prime example is the imaginative tree-climbing and tunnel-digging adopted by anti-roads protesters in the UK in the early 1990s.

The most effective tactical innovations, however, are those that can be adapted to different circumstances, thus opening up the possibility of extending a protest throughout society. The mass demonstration has shown itself to be probably the most flexible tactic of the contemporary era, but non-violent direct action may not be far behind.

Sixthly, movements need to build the right structures to effectively mobilise individuals and coordinate activity with other organisations.

For a nascent movement to be blessed with opportunities, resources, vision, adaptable strategies and tactics, and effective structures simultaneously

is beyond the usual bounds of good fortune. Only some of these factors are within the control of a movement's leaders (this may well help to explain why widespread social protest is so rare). However, even with a favourable combination of qualities, the response of authority will also play a major role in determining how far protest spreads.

There is no formula for how authority should respond. For example, repression can, under different circumstances and at different times, either defuse a rebellion or only serve to deepen and expand the movement. In truth, the most effective responses by authorities often combine a range of tactics including repression, facilitating moderate parts of the movement, carrying out reform which meets some demands, waiting out the protest and eventually claiming to be the champion of the movement's demands.

However, in the period between a movement growing and authority getting its act together, there is the space for a serious expansion of protest. At such times, once moderate groups suddenly adopt radical tactics and demands. Apolitical individuals and associations may rapidly find a political voice. Individuals from within the state may ally themselves to the protestors. The innovative tactics employed in the early stages of the movement will be used more widely in new circumstances and in support of different claims. And there may be a growing sense that a wide variety of differing demands are actually a common cause. Most notably, many aspects of daily life that previously ran smoothly and without question will face considerable disruption and challenge.

It is also at such a point that a significant counter-movement may spring up, employing the language and tactics of the original campaigns.

### **Movements in the Global Arena**

What can this analysis tell us about contemporary movements campaigning for global change?

First, despite some of the more excitable analyses, the movement for global change is nowhere near the situation of widespread protest described immediately above. Whether the movement continues to grow and prompts such an upsurge in political activism will depend in large part on how well it meets the conditions above.

It is certainly a movement that has taken advantage of some excellent political opportunities to mobilise in response to grievances across the world. Prime amongst these is undoubtedly the collapse of the Seattle meeting of the WTO in 1999, which saw developing nations take a far more aggressive stance towards the global trade policies of the developed

economies. Famously, this was met with a significant demonstration against the WTO on the streets of Seattle. This not only allowed the demonstrators to claim that they had contributed to the collapse of the meeting but also won them massive worldwide publicity for their views. It also suggested that the movement had new allies amongst the leaders of the developing world.

The 11 September attack, however, has proved to be far more ambiguous. For some aspects of the movement, it may still yet act as a major opportunity to extend protest – especially in Europe and the developing world – against the US war on terror and, more broadly, the foreign and global trade policies of the developed world. However, in America itself, there can be little doubt that 11 September has severely limited the space for dissent at a time of patriotic fervour.

In terms of resources and networks, the movement is also blessed – but only up to a point. The more moderate wing of the movement has benefited enormously from the considerable wealth and sophisticated networks of the larger aid agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith communities. Nowhere was this more significant than in the massive campaign that developed around debt cancellation in the late 1990s. However, the radical wing of the movement remains a shoestring operation and seems still to be struggling to find a strong basis in a key institution or social network.

The vision of the movement for global change may at best be said to be still evolving. The radical wing has a strong message that certainly performs well the three key tasks of a movement vision described above. But questions must remain about the extent to which this vision can have credibility, in a context where increasing numbers of jobs and lifestyles rely heavily on the smooth operation of the global economy.

The moderate wing suffers from a different problem. Although its reformist outlook may prove to have mass appeal for those who want change but not at the cost of economic meltdown, there is no clear vision comparable to that of the radical wing or even of the neo-liberal right. What exists is a mass of single issues united by nothing more than a broad desire to 'do good' on a global scale.

On strategies and tactics, the movement may be on its strongest ground. The Internet has been employed with ingenuity and great effect. The fact that counter-movements have attempted to imitate the political use of the Internet is a clear indication of success in this area. Much of the movement, however, seemed to take Seattle as a sign that the old, staple tactic of mass demonstration was the way forward. For a

variety of reasons, including violence on the part of authorities and some demonstrators, this has proved not to be the case and no doubt more imaginative approaches will develop in time.

Perhaps most worryingly for the movement, however, is its weakness in terms of mobilising structures. This is a highly diverse movement for such an early stage of its existence. Coordinating varied elements and developing a cohesive vision is vital, as all social movements are extremely prone to division and consequent collapse. Unfortunately, organisational and ideological unity have been hampered by institutional rivalry amongst aid agencies and campaign groups on the reformist wing and by the influence of an anarchist-inspired anti-organisation culture on the radical wing.

There are some signs that these problems are

lessening, as NGOs work together in Jubilee 2000 and, more recently, the Trade Justice Movement, and as the anarchist influence on the radical wing wanes in the wake of the violent conflict at Genoa and preceding demonstrations. However, there is still some way to go in creating the necessarily innovative and hardy structures that can mobilise many different forces on a global scale. In short, the movement for global change appears already to be at a turning point in its brief existence.

Ambiguity is currently the key characteristic of all the conditions that can catapult a social movement into the big time. Some of this ambiguity will only be resolved by world events well beyond the control of the movements themselves. Other aspects, however, require hard thinking and concerted action on the part of leaders and core activists.



## **When is a ‘Popular Protest’ Popular?**

*Roger Scruton*

‘Thirty years ago,’ writes Adam Lent, ‘the industrialised world was swept by a wave of youthful movement activity that encompassed women’s liberation, gay and lesbian rights, anti-racism, radical social reform and revolution. Today a worldwide movement demands all these things once again in the new context of globalisation.’

I studied those sentences for some time before grasping what they really mean. In Lent’s view of the world, today’s favoured left-wing causes animated the street revolutions of the 1960s, and these same causes have now been translated into a worldwide protest movement against global capitalism, as promoted by the World Trade Organization (WTO). And I sense here the same wishful thinking that I witnessed in May 1968 in the streets of Paris. The soixante-huitards believed that, because they were united against the ‘bourgeoisie’, they were united in their goals. And because they were united in their goals, their goals formed a unity. They were wrong on both counts.

First, the enemy was a fiction. The ‘bourgeoisie’ was invented precisely for the purpose of unifying the sources of social discontent. Without this literary fiction, to which almost every French intellectual from Molière to Foucault has contributed some decorative touch, the revolution of 1968 would have appeared for what it was, as a carnival of transgressions.

To be united against a fiction is not to possess any real unity of political purpose. On the contrary, it is to lose sight of the fact that political unity comes through negotiation, compromise and law. It comes about

when people ‘agree to differ’. This agreement to differ is the essence of constitutional government, and the real source of political unity in Western societies.

The bourgeoisie was re-imagined in 1968, precisely in order to replace negotiation and compromise with a shared anger. And shared anger, being nourished in imagination, does not survive the moment of reality. This fact has been proven again and again by the revolutionary movements of the 20th century, each of which, on achieving power, has been destroyed by internal conflict, leaving the worst in charge.

Secondly, the goals were neither unified nor internally consistent. The situationists embraced this happily, in a spirit of Rimbaudian *je m’enfoutisme*. But theirs was an opt-out philosophy, both *paresseux* and *parasite*. The official causes – not those causes that Lent, with hindsight or blindsight, imports back to a period which I suspect he did not live through, but those causes which were most fervently proclaimed – were blatantly contradictory. Freedom of the individual, but also destruction of the judiciary; liberation from the ‘structures’, but also state control of economic life; no more private property, but nevertheless each person with his private and protected space.

The contradictory nature of those demands has been so clearly demonstrated by recent history that it is perhaps not necessary to find the proof of it in the writings of the Austrian economists and the English and American Burkeans. But that is incidental to the main point that I want to make.

The fact is that 1968 was not a movement of the masses. It was a movement of the ‘protesting classes’: intellectuals, state functionaries, students, trade union leaders, and others for whom the language of protest harmonised with their preferred form of life and who really, when all is said and done, ran little risk in giving voice to it. The few workers who joined in were quickly disgusted by the violence and the absurdism, as well as by the contempt for law and property. (I vividly remember the appalled response of a striking worker from the Renault car factory, on seeing a gang of students set light to a car – that car might have been his!)

It is in the nature of the protesting classes that they are moved more by ideas than by real and threatened interests. That, I believe, is why they count as ‘pro-active’ in Tim Jordan’s sense. Their activity is directed towards the future, but a future hazily and carelessly described, like Marx’s ‘full communism’. After all, to describe it carefully would lead to hesitation. And what is left of revolution when you hesitate?

### **A Want of Principle**

The precious moment of doubt – that is what is missing from so many protest movements. Lent is right to see the new global protests as the successors of the sixties. For the element of doubt is missing from both of them. Environmental protection for the undeveloped world – great! Development for the undeveloped world – great! But how do you protect the environment and also develop it? Nobody really knows. And the protests themselves are so clearly directed at a fictional enemy that one can almost see the WTO dummy swaying in the sky before those balaclava-ed faces.

Let’s face it, if we are really to consider global protest movements in their entirety, we should include those, such as al-Qaida, which regard the protesting classes with the same contempt as they regard other by-products of the Western political process. But, al-Qaida’s list of grievances won’t include women’s liberation, gay rights or anti-racism.

Not that the protestors at Seattle and elsewhere don’t have a point. But it is precisely their future-directed, intellectualised posture that detaches them from the people whom they claim to represent. Normal people don’t know about the future; but they do know about their present interests, about their customs and habits, and their legitimate expectations. And when they protest, it is not in the spirit of the protesting classes, who want to re-arrange the world, but in order to

protect a perceived interest, a way of life, a pattern of hope, love and decency that is theirs and which shapes their identity.

That is what the indigenous peoples mentioned by Jordan are seeking: restoration of what they have lost. Jordan calls this posture ‘pro-active’, by way of surreptitiously praising it. But the protests of the indigenous are directed to the past (that is what the word ‘indigenous’ implies). And, come to think of it, why were those people who marched through London on 22 September not the indigenous British, also laying claim to about-to-be-stolen rights? Just because their cause was not one of which Jordan approves?

Mass protests by ordinary people, which do not originate in the grievances of the protesting classes, are rare. I have witnessed only two in my lifetime: that of the French people protesting against Mitterrand’s proposals to nationalise the Church schools, which brought half a million peaceful demonstrators on to the streets of Paris, and that recently catalysed by the Countryside Alliance, which did the same to the streets of London.

Although such protests are comparatively rare, they include more people than can be mustered on behalf of the ‘left-wing’ causes mentioned by Lent. Unlike Jordan, I believe the terms ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ to be useful, and see no real improvement in his division of causes into the ‘pro-active’ and the ‘re-active’. Equally useful is the distinction between the ‘progressive’ and the ‘conservative’ mentality. Such labels are useful because they identify contrasting – and equally necessary – human types.

The movement represented by the Countryside Alliance is a movement of people most of whom vote Conservative. But they vote Conservative for a perfectly respectable reason, namely, that they are conservative. They are attached to things as they are, and suspicious of change; they value inherited freedoms, and are prepared to fight when those freedoms are taken away. The small farmers of the Indian subcontinent, the African Bushmen, the people of the Amazon, the nomads of the sub-Saharan and the persecuted Christians of Somalia are the same. And those indigenous people have far more in common with the indigenous English, Welsh and Scots who marched through London on 22 September than they have with the protestors at Seattle.

But this is where I suspect an evasiveness, even a lack of scruple, in the vision of protest movements put before us by Jordan and Lent.



# The Need to Connect: A Response to Roger Scruton

Adam Lent

You wouldn't know it from Roger Scruton's response but my article was a rather distanced account of what conditions allow social movements to grow. It had no particular political point to make. Indeed, if it had been making a political point, it would no doubt have reflected my own rather centrist social democratic and wholly unrevolutionary take on domestic and international politics. Sorry, Professor Scruton, but I am simply not one of those 'balaclava-ed faces' you rightly decry.

I also made no mention of 1968 – this was solely Roger Scruton's assumption. When I wrote in the opening paragraphs about the 'youthful movement activity that encompassed women's liberation, gay and lesbian rights, anti-racism, radical social reform and revolution' that occurred thirty years ago, I was thinking of the long explosion of campaigning that ran from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s, and not solely the student protests of 1968. Roger Scruton is right that those first two causes did not exist in a meaningful form in that particular 'hot summer' but they certainly did by 1970.

However, Roger does raise a very important point about the extent to which movements are connected to genuine social constituencies and their actual interests. He is right that such links are one of the best ways of judging the particular worth of a movement. My own article was not making such normative judgements but it did point out that, when movements are linked to strong social or institutional networks, they have a much greater chance of growth.

And again he is right when he states that 1968 was primarily a movement of 'the protesting classes...moved more by ideas than by real and threatened interests'. But it is vital to register the fact that movements do not operate in a vacuum; development and change are intrinsic to their survival. A movement that starts as a self-indulgent rebellion of the intellectuals may well find roots over time.

Indeed, I would argue, this is precisely what happened when the adolescent sloganeering of 1968 gave way to movements that were based on the 'real and threatened interests' of ethnic communities, women, and gay men and lesbians. This is not to say that some ludicrous ideological posturing did not linger within these movements for some time, but over the years this has given way to the pragmatic and democratic politics of anti-racism, women's rights and gay rights.

## Global Context, New Frame

Roger Scruton claims that the movement for global change is simply a repeat of the shallow campaigning of 1968. Once again he is only partly right. As I stated in my article, this new movement has not found its social base – it has yet to truly articulate the 'real and threatened interests' of a particular section of society. However, it is wise to be cautious here.

First, there is no guarantee it will not find such a base. Few in 1968 could have predicted that the movement would give rise to campaigning around women's and gay rights. It would be more than foolish to assume that the movement for global change will not develop in new directions over the next two or three years.

Secondly, when criticising this movement, it is easier to restrict oneself to its expression in the developed world. But a vibrant movement, both revolutionary and reformist, has gathered for global change in the developing world as well. And significant elements in this movement are rooted in the 'real and threatened interests' of communities and individuals. Indeed, openDemocracy has devoted some of its attention to these movements and the issues they have raised (see, for example, Marlies Glasius, *Global Civil Society Comes of Age*).

In this vein, Roger Scruton claims to have witnessed only two movements in his lifetime which were mass protests by 'ordinary people' and which did not 'originate in the grievances of the protesting classes'. These two are the French protests against the nationalisation of Church schools and the recent Countryside Alliance march in London.

It is hard to know what to make of this analysis, for Roger Scruton has here ruled out dozens of other mass protests: civil rights marches in the US and South Africa, the Eastern European uprisings against communist rule, numerous national liberation protests, mobilisations against dictatorships across the world (Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Burma, Madagascar) and environmental mobilisation against dams, mines, and forest clearance in many developing countries. Of course, all of these protests included elements that were driven by ideology or romanticism (elements not entirely absent from the Countryside Alliance march) but their profound links to the 'real and genuine interests' of 'ordinary people' surely cannot be doubted. Or maybe Roger Scruton's definition of 'ordinary people' only includes the conservative middle classes?

(Courtesy: *Open Democracy*)



## **From Protest to Popular Power**

*Cindy Milstein*

"Direct action gets the goods," proclaimed the Industrial Workers of the World nearly a century ago. And in the short time since Seattle, this has certainly proven to be the case. Indeed, "the goods" reaped by the new direct action movement here in North America have included creating doubt as to the scope and nature of globalization, shedding light on the nearly unknown workings of international trade and finance bodies, and making anarchism and anticapitalism almost household words. As if that weren't enough, we find ourselves on the streets of twenty-first-century metropolises demonstrating our power to resist in a way that models the good society we envision: a truly democratic one.

But is this really what democracy looks like?

The impulse to "reclaim the streets" is an understandable one. When industrial capitalism first started to emerge in the early nineteenth century, its machinations were relatively visible. Take, for instance, the enclosures. Pasture lands that had been used in common for centuries to provide villages with their very sustenance were systematically fenced off - enclosed - in order to graze sheep, whose wool was needed for the burgeoning textile industry. Communal life was briskly thrust aside in favor of privatization, forcing people into harsh factories and crowded cities.

Advanced capitalism, as it pushes past the fetters of even nation-states in its insatiable quest for growth, encloses life in a much more expansive yet generally invisible way: fences are replaced by consumer culture. We are raised in an almost totally commodified world where nothing comes for free, even futile attempts to remove oneself from the market economy. This commodification seeps into not only what we eat, wear, or do for fun but also into our language, relationships, and even our very biology and minds. We have lost not only our communities and public spaces but control over our own lives; we have lost the ability to define ourselves outside capitalism's grip, and thus genuine meaning itself begins to dissolve.

"Whose Streets? Our Streets!" then, is a legitimate emotional response to the feeling that even the most minimal of public, noncommodified spheres has been taken from us. Yet in the end, it is simply a frantic cry from our cage. We have become so confined, so thoroughly damaged, by capitalism as well as state control that crumbs appear to make a nourishing meal.

Temporarily closing off the streets during direct actions does provide momentary spaces in which to practice democratic process, and even offers a sense of empowerment, but such events leave power for

power's sake, like the very pavement beneath our feet, unchanged. Only when the serial protest mode is escalated into a struggle for popular or horizontal power can we create cracks in the figurative concrete, thereby opening up ways to challenge capitalism, nation-states, and other systems of domination.

This is not to denigrate the direct action movement in the United States and elsewhere; just the opposite. Besides a long overdue and necessary critique of numerous institutions of command and obedience, the movement is quietly yet crucially supplying the outlines of a freer society. This prefigurative politics is, in fact, the very strength and vision of today's direct action, where the means themselves are understood to also be the ends. We're not putting off the good society until some distant future but are attempting to carve out room for it in the here and now, however tentative and contorted under the given social order. In turn, this consistency of means and ends implies an ethical approach to politics. How we act now is how we want others to begin to act, too. We try to model a notion of goodness even as we fight for it.

This can implicitly be seen in the affinity group and spokescouncil structures for decision making at direct actions. Both supply much needed spaces in which to school ourselves in direct democracy. Here, in the best of cases, we can proactively set the agenda, carefully deliberate together over questions, and come to decisions that strive to take everyone's needs and desires into account. Substantive discussion replaces checking boxes on a ballot; face-to-face participation replaces handing over our lives to so-called representatives; nuanced and reasoned solutions replace lesser-of-two - (or three) evils' thinking. The democratic process utilized during demonstrations decentralizes power even as it offers tangible solidarity; for example, affinity groups afford greater and more diverse numbers of people a real share in decision making, while spokescouncils allow for intricate coordination - even on a global level. This is, as 1960s' activists put it, the power to create rather than destroy.

The beauty of this new movement, it could be said, is that it strives to take its own ideals to heart. In doing so, it has perhaps unwittingly created the demand for such directly democratic practices on a permanent basis. Yet the haunting question underlying episodic "street democracy" remains unaddressed: How can everyone come together to make decisions that affect society as a whole in participatory, mutualistic, and ethical ways? In other words, how can each and every one of us - not just a counterculture or this

protest movement - really transform and ultimately control our lives and that of our communities?

This is, in essence, a question of power - who has it, how it is used, and to what ends. To varying degrees, we all know the answer in relation to current institutions and systems. We can generally explain what we are against. That is exactly why we are protesting, whether it is against capitalism and/or nation-states, or globalization in whole or part. What we have largely failed to articulate, however, is any sort of response in relation to liberatory institutions and systems. We often can't express, especially in any coherent and utopian manner, what we are for. Even as we prefigure a way of making power horizontal, equitable, and hence, hopefully an essential part of a free society, we ignore the reconstructive vision that a directly democratic process holds up right in front of our noses.

For all intents and purposes, our movement remains trapped. On the one hand, it reveals and confronts domination and exploitation. The political pressure exerted by such widespread agitation may even be able to influence current power structures to amend some of the worst excesses of their ways; the powers that be have to listen, and respond to some extent, when the voices become too numerous and too loud. Nevertheless, most people are still shut out of the decision-making process itself, and consequently, have little tangible power over their lives at all. Without this ability to self-govern, street actions translate into nothing more than a countercultural version of interest group lobbying, albeit far more radical than most and generally unpaid.

What the movement forgets is the promise implicit in its own structure: that power not only needs to be contested; it must also be constituted anew in liberatory and egalitarian forms. This entails taking the movement's directly democratic process seriously--not simply as a tactic to organize protests but as the very way we organize society, specifically the political realm. The issue then becomes: How do we begin to shift the strategy, structure, and values of our movement to the most grassroots level of public policy making?

The most fundamental level of decision making in a demonstration is the affinity group. Here, we come together as friends or because of a common identity, or a combination of the two. We share something in particular; indeed, this common identity is often reflected in the name we choose for our groups. We may not always agree with each other, but there is a fair amount of homogeneity precisely because we've consciously chosen to come together for a specific reason--most often having little to do with mere geography. This sense of a shared identity allows

for the smooth functioning of a consensus decision-making process, since we start from a place of commonality. In an affinity group, almost by definition, our unity needs to take precedence over our diversity, or our supposed affinity breaks down altogether.

Compare this to what could be the most fundamental level of decision making in a society: a neighborhood or town. Now, geography plays a much larger role. Out of historic, economic, cultural, religious, and other reasons, we may find ourselves living side by side with a wide range of individuals and their various identities. Most of these people are not our friends per se. Still, the very diversity we encounter is the life of a vibrant city itself. The accidents and/or numerous personal decisions that have brought us together often create a fair amount of heterogeneity precisely because we haven't all chosen to come together for a specific reason. In this context, where we start from a place of difference, decision-making mechanisms need to be much more capable of allowing for dissent; that is, diversity needs to be clearly retained within any notions of unity. As such, majoritarian decision-making processes begin to make more sense.

Then, too, there is the question of scale. It is hard to imagine being friends with hundreds, or even thousands, of people, nor maintaining a single-issue identity with that many individuals; but we can share a feeling of community and a striving toward some common good that allows each of us to flourish. In turn, when greater numbers of people come together on a face-to-face basis to reshape their neighborhoods and towns, the issues as well as the viewpoints will multiply, and alliances will no doubt change depending on the specific topic under discussion. Thus the need for a place where we can meet as human beings at the most face-to-face level - that is, an assembly of active citizens - to share our many identities and interests in hopes of balancing both the individual and community in all we do.

As well, trust and accountability function differently at the affinity group versus civic level. We generally reveal more of ourselves to friends; and such unwritten bonds of love and affection hold us more closely together, or at least give us added impetus to work things out. Underlying this is a higher-than-average degree of trust, which serves to make us accountable to each other.

On a community-wide level, the reverse is more often true: accountability allows us to trust each other. Hopefully, we share bonds of solidarity and respect; yet since we can't know each other well, such bonds only make sense if we first determine them together, and then record them, write them down, for all to refer back to in the future, and even revisit if need



# **The Movement Against Global Capitalism**

*Brian S. Roper*

During the 1990s the bulk of the Western intelligentsia, both the right and perhaps more surprisingly the left, responded to the collapse of East European Stalinism by declaring capitalism and representative democracy to be triumphant, and socialism dead. There were some of us, a minority even amongst the left, who counter-argued that the classical Marxist vision of socialism had never been more than fleetingly realised in Eastern Europe, that Stalinism did not constitute the practical implementation of classical Marxism. We further argued that capitalism, even in the most highly developed countries, continued to be mired in prolonged economic stagnation and mass unemployment, was generating growing inequality both within and between nations, and was compatible with only very limited forms of democratic governance. But making such arguments was not easy. To deploy a metaphor such as "swimming against the current," would be to thoroughly understate the point. In the class war being conducted at the theoretical level (in economic, social and political theory), our side was under heavy artillery fire, resulting in a serious depletion of our forces, and consequently we were forced to adopt a largely defensive strategy aimed at the preservation of the central core of our position within the wider intellectual landscape.

The inspirational victory in Seattle from November 30 to December 3 1999, and the ensuing globalisation of revolt has fundamentally altered the historical terrain on which the intellectual war is being conducted. At the end of a decade in which the ideologues of neo-liberalism had repeatedly declared that the definitive victory of capitalism over socialism had been achieved, the combined forces of labor, students, farmers, environmentalists, and Third World activists shutdown the World Trade Organization, successfully resisting and defying the coercive might of the world's most powerful repressive state apparatus.

While the protests against the IMF and World Bank in Washington DC (April 2000) were unable to overcome the massive police presence and close the meeting down, the sheer scale of the protests over four rain-swept days, involving around 30,000 protesters, maintained the forward momentum of the movement. The protests against the World Economic Forum staged at the Crown Casino on the banks of the Yarra River in the heart of Melbourne, again involving around 30,000 protesters, closed it down on the first day. While the WEF convention was able to proceed on the second and third days, the scale of

police brutality and the extra-ordinary measures required to get the delegates into the Casino (by boat and helicopter), ensured that it could do so only under siege conditions. Another significant victory for the anti-capitalist movement. This was soon followed by the protests against the World Bank in Prague, bringing together anarchists and socialists from throughout Europe, which so successfully disrupted the convention that it had to be drawn to a close a day earlier than scheduled. There were many other significant protests during 2000, too numerous to discuss here (including mass mobilizations at Millau, Nice, Seoul).

The forward momentum of the movement was maintained during 2001 with the mass and militant protests that successfully disrupted the FTA in Quebec and the reinvigoration of International Workers' Day as real day of action throughout the world. Further protests were held at European Union summit in Gothenburg on the 14-16th of June 2001 and at the G-8 meeting in Genoa from the 20th to the 2nd of July 2001. This series of protests kept up its momentum throughout 2002 and right upto WTO meet at Cancun during 10-14 September 2003.

## **New Movement, New Questions**

Every new movement that emerges on this scale raises new questions on multiple levels. This is also true, to a lesser degree, for any major form of collective action, whether, for example, a protest, strike or occupation. At the most general or "macro" level questions are raised in relation to the issues that are the movement's *raison d'etre*, such as those pertaining to underlying causes and manifestations of social inequality, major social problems, the destruction of the natural environment, major employer and/or government attacks on the interests of workers, students and the oppressed, debt and poverty in the so-called Third World, and so forth. Consider, for example, the intellectual ferment generated by anti-racist, feminist and environmentalist movements since the late 1960s - the questions raised by these movements remain central to contemporary debates within social and political theory.

Broad political arguments must be made at this level for a variety of reasons. First, every movement requires a degree of intellectual clarification in order to enable it to define the empirical scope of problems, identify the underlying causes of these problems, and on this basis propose alternative solutions. Second, and perhaps most importantly, general arguments are required to persuade the undecided within the

movement's potential constituency to become supporters and/or active participants in the movement. Third, those participating in a movement, strike or campaign must be armed with ideas and arguments to counter those being advanced in opposition to the movement, whether by governments and/or employers and/or right-wing intellectuals.

At an intermediate level there are questions of strategy and tactics. There is a need to define objectives, and determine the best way to achieve these objectives. Once objectives have been established and a broad strategy has been worked out, innumerable tactical questions come to the fore. Tactical questions often generate the most heat because differences over tactics are a common concrete manifestation of underlying ideological clashes between different groups participating in a large-scale action. Every major campaign involving collective action raises tactical questions at a "micro" level, on the street, in the workplace, on the picket line, and/or on the campuses. Related to tactical considerations are more mundane logistical concerns: How many placards and with what slogans for a particular march? What chants best express our anger and articulate our demands? Has the PA been organised and is it powerful enough? And as all experienced activists know strategy and tactics are irrelevant if the action is not sufficiently well organised, there being a strong positive correlation between the amount of advertising and build-up work for an action, and the numbers likely to turn up for it. Finally, individual participants are constantly confronted by questions at a personal level: Can I afford to lose or put at risk my job over this? Will I be at risk of arrest? If so, how costly will a conviction be for me? How committed am I to this particular campaign relative to the others that I am also involved with?

One of the most remarkable, and important, aspects of the newly emerging movement protesting against major policy agencies of global capitalism, such as the WTO, World Bank, and the IMF, is the growing recognition sweeping through many formerly disparate movements and organisations that it is global capitalism which is generating the world's major problems. In this respect one of the major achievements of the anti-capitalist movement is the extent to which it has pushed basic questions of crucial importance into the international political arena. Why is global capitalism proving to be so damaging to the world's workers, small farmers and indigenous peoples? Why is it also destroying the natural environment, to the extent of threatening the continued existence of human life on the planet? Why has inequality grown substantially in both the advanced

capitalist societies and the so-called Third World since the mid-1970s? Why is the global capitalist system so evidently unstable and mired in economic stagnation and mass unemployment? To what extent do the governments of particular nation-states retain the degree of autonomy required to regulate the societies that they govern? Why does free trade only benefit the rich? What are the main policy agencies of global capitalism and why do they have so much power? Can the neo-liberal policy agenda that they push be opposed effectively? If so, then how and by whom? What role can and should the union movements of the advanced capitalist societies be playing in this regard? Is there a desirable and feasible alternative to the global capitalist order?

With respect to the broad strategic objectives of the anti-capitalist movement, there are clearly areas of general agreement (opposition to neo-liberalism and free trade, support for workers' rights, environmental protection, melioration of Third World debt and poverty), and other areas of profound disagreement (principally whether to reform or seek the abolition of the WTO, World Bank and IMF). While there has, thus far, been a considerable degree of agreement concerning the main tactical objectives of the major protests, this is likely to prove increasingly difficult to sustain as the bodies that are the principle targets of these protests make at least rhetorical concessions to the movement, seek to divide it by incorporation of the more conservative elements of the movement, and the host states increase the level of coercion directed towards the more radical wing of the movement. Unity will also be difficult to maintain if the forward momentum of the movement is lost.

The importance of the new questions being raised by this new movement demands sound answers, and Marxism is the intellectual tradition that is best placed to provide them, for reasons that will be articulated in the remainder of this article. The continuing relevance of the classical Marxist tradition is particularly clear with respect to explaining inequality, developing a theoretical and strategic conception of the potential power of workers, students and the oppressed, maintaining a close interactive relationship between theory and practice, and the contrast between democracy from above and democracy from below.

### **Their System, Our Suffering**

The central contradictions of capitalism have intensified considerably since the collapse of the post-war long boom in the mid-1970s and onset of prolonged stagnation and mass unemployment. Of these, perhaps none is more obvious than the accumulation of massive wealth in the hands of a small minority, and the growing deprivation of the workers, peasants and

their dependants who constitute the majority of the world's population. The contradiction between potential plenty, and actual poverty, for the workers who produce the surplus product in capitalist society has existed for nearly as long as capitalism, but it has never been more marked. Real incomes for the majority of workers have either remained largely stagnant or have declined. Income and wealth has become much more unequally distributed within the advanced capitalist societies. Government spending on health, housing, education and welfare has been subject to "fiscal restraint" throughout the advanced capitalist world. The majority who live in these societies have to sell their capacity to work on a labor market in order to maintain a reasonable standard of living. We spend a large part of our lives at work and our activity there is typically governed by undemocratic authoritarian administrative and managerial hierarchies. The experience of alienation from work, society and politics is pervasive. Poverty, homelessness, malnutrition, drug abuse, crime and violence are widespread in the midst of societies where labor productivity is higher and the social surplus product is greater than at any previous time in human history.

Marx's theory of surplus value provides a comprehensive and convincing explanation of growing inequality within and between nations. This theory has been subject to ongoing criticism ever since the first volume of *Capital* was published in 1867. But even the critics sometimes grudgingly accept that the central idea underpinning the theory is sound, even if they reject the overall conceptual architecture. Actually, two of the strongest reasons in support of Marx's theory of surplus value are, perhaps, also the most commonly overlooked. The first is the theory's high degree of historical realism. The tremendous inequality generated by capitalism is obvious. In fact, capitalism has an historically unprecedented capacity to produce a surplus product over and above the subsistence needs of the workers who produce it, yet this underlying process of exploitation is hidden and obscured in the labor process by relations in the sphere of circulation that appear to involve free and fair market exchanges between capitalists and workers. The theory of surplus value explains how this inequality originates and how capitalism accentuates it over time.

In the capitalist mode of production labor-power (that is, the potential capacity which a person has to labor for a specified period of time) becomes a commodity that appears to be freely exchanged on the labor market. The worker owns, and is formally free to dispense with her or his labor-power as she or he sees fit. But this apparent freedom and equality

between buyer and seller is illusory. Unlike any other commodity, labor-power in use is capable of producing value over and above its exchange-value. Marx termed this surplus-value, that is the difference between the necessary labor which the worker performs in order to cover the costs of his or her own reproduction and the surplus labor which is the labor performed in the labor-process over and above this necessary labor.

Surplus-value is the social form which surplus labor assumes in the capitalist mode of production and it is appropriated by capitalists, who own and effectively control the means of production within the labor process. The principal phenomenal forms which surplus-value takes in the capitalist mode of production are profit, interest and rent. Hence Marx's theory of surplus-value demonstrates that "The historical specificity of capitalism arises from the fact that its relations of exploitation are almost completely hidden behind the surface of its relations of exchange."

The second reason for continuing to utilize the theory of surplus value is the theory's remarkable degree of political efficacy. Marx interpreted the world in order to change it. The theory of surplus-value enables one to identify an enemy which all victims of exploitation and oppression share in a capitalist society the capitalist class. It demonstrates that the overwhelmingly majority of people who inhabit advanced capitalist societies have a sufficiently broad range of shared social, economic and political interests to make large-scale collective struggles against the capitalist class and state both possible and necessary. In this respect, it provides the analytical foundation for militant trade unionism - highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of various kinds of collective industrial action, as well as unions as a whole. It also remains at the absolute heart of the revolutionary socialist critique of social democratic reformism. Any strategy that accepts the continued existence of capitalism thereby also accepts the continued exploitation of workers, who produce the world's wealth, by capitalists, who appropriate it.

The anti-globalisation protests have highlighted the fact that while capitalist governments always have money for war and weapons, they are not prepared to spend the equivalent of a small fraction of their military budgets to eliminate mass starvation in the so-called "third world." In fact, Western aid to Africa is considerably less than the total amount paid each year by African governments to Western financial institutions in interest payments on debt. At the same time that hundreds of millions suffer from malnutrition, food stockpiling and dumping is common in Europe

and North America.

The Marxist tradition explains this, at the most basic level of analysis, by reference to the central dynamics of capitalist exploitation and accumulation. Hundreds of millions of the world's people go hungry, not because there isn't enough food to feed them, but because food is produced for profit, not need. The world's agricultural and fishing industries are driven by corporate greed rather than human need. Massive Third World debt not only yields a huge net surplus for western financial institutions, it enables the World Bank and the IMF to force Third World governments to shift agricultural production away from food production for the domestic market, towards the production of cash crops for export. Beyond these basic, and relatively uncontroversial points, there are rich debates within the Marxist tradition, that retain a high degree of relevance, concerned with the processes of colonisation, inter-imperialist rivalry, development and underdevelopment, uneven and combined development, and capitalism as a world-system.

The anti-globalisation protests have actively contested the fact that we live in a world of inequality and alienation, highlighting, in particular, the growing contradiction between privatised appropriation by a relatively small number of giant transnational corporations and socialised production by billions of workers and peasants throughout the world. Related to this is another contradiction within the process of globalisation - during the past century the world has "grown smaller" as transportation and communication technologies continue to advance, as the international division of labor continues to become more extensive, as labor becomes more geographically mobile, and as national capital and financial markets become increasingly internationalised. Yet, at the same time, the overwhelming majority of people feel that they have less and less control over the world they live in. This raises two further issues to be explored here: agency and democracy.

### **Their Democracy or Our Democracy?**

A recurrent theme of the Seattle protests concerned the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the WTO; like the IMF and World Bank, it is dominated by the governments of a handful of the world's dominant economic powers and by the interests of global capital. While the limits of representative democracy are widely recognised by those participating in the anti-globalisation protests, these bodies are seen as being even more securely distanced from the influence of the majority of the world's citizens. In contrast, following the closure of the WTO convention in Seattle, protesters were chanting: "This is what

democracy looks like, this is what democracy feels like!" The contrast evident here between the empowerment experienced by a broad mass of people collectively participating in direct political action and the alienation entailed by highly indirect forms of representation is a long-standing one in the history of democracy.

In practice, the way that the clash between representative and participatory democracy is played out revolves around the question of whether to seek reforms of existing social relations and political institutions or their transcendence. This is an old question resurfacing in new forms in the current anti-globalisation movement. To seek the democratisation of bodies like the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and so forth, or their abolition? To seek fair trade rather than free trade? Or to advocate the vision of genuinely democratic workers' (and peasants') governments redistributing the world's food and resources on the basis of need rather than profit?

There is an old question resurfacing in new forms here - reform or revolution? This question is one of the most commonly misunderstood and misrepresented on the left because it actually relates to, not only the ultimate goal of the workers and progressive movements (reformed capitalism versus socialist democracy), but also to the entire array of strategic and tactical questions raised in the short term by struggles for reform as well as the industrial class struggle. For example, how does one place the most pressure on a government to increase state funding for public health, housing, welfare and tertiary education - by lobbying parliamentary representatives and working through existing political parties, or by organising large scale protests, occupations and industrial action? Or to cite another example from a recent industrial dispute on the New Zealand waterfront - to stage "peaceful pickets" unsupported by widespread industrial action in order to dissuade the scabs from working, or to close the entire waterfront down with industrial action and mass pickets to keep the scabs out and maximise the pressure on the company hiring the scab labor?

It can be argued in this regard that revolutionaries, far from abstaining from the struggle for reform, are actually the best fighters for it. But they do insist that ultimately reform is not enough - it can, as Marx pointed out, succeed in improving the terms on which the worker is exploited, but it will never end that exploitation. A world of equality, democracy, and truly sustainable environmental practices can only be achieved through the overthrow of capitalism and creation of socialism.

At a more general societal and historical level every

time that subordinate classes rise against their exploitation and oppression the question emerges in its most complete form as to whether society is going to continue to be ruled from the top down, even if "democratically," or instead from the bottom up through the direct participation of the masses in the governance of society.

### Conclusion

The growing movement against global capitalism has significantly altered the political terrain upon which the intellectual battles between right and left are being fought. It is too early to suggest, as some have, that Seattle constituted a world-historic turning point. Most importantly we have not yet seen the kind of upsurge in the industrial class struggle that characterised the period from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. But it is the case that after many years of having to respond defensively to successive waves of intellectual bombardment, the classical Marxist tradition is likely to experience a revival if there is a revival of the international workers movement and the progressive social movements. This is because it is engagement in "practice and the comprehension of the practice," that, more than anything else, convinces large numbers of people that classical Marxism still has much to offer those struggling for a better world in the twenty-first century.

Anderson once observed that "the first and most fundamental of its characteristics has been the structural divorce of [Western] Marxism from political practice. The organic unity of theory and practice realized in the classical generation of Marxists before the First World War, who performed an inseparably politico-intellectual function within their respective parties in Eastern and Central Europe, was to be increasingly severed in the half-century from 1918 to 1968." Thus far one of the most inspiring and important features of the anti-capitalist movement has been the extent to which it has been prompting a reunification of theory and practice. Lenin once wrote with respect to the 1905 revolution that "undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses

of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything?" While the recent anti-capitalist movement has not assumed an overtly revolutionary form, it has already helped to re-educate many committed socialists. The question is whether or not socialists have anything to offer the movement, and if so, then what. In this respect, it is the classical Marxist tradition, kept alive during the 1980s and 1990s by a broad range of socialist organizations on the far left together with a small number of relatively isolated intellectuals, that has more to offer than the major schools of academic Western Marxism. This is not only because of its organic link between theory and practice, but also because it constitutes a rich intellectual tradition providing crucial insights with respect to the key questions of concern to contemporary activists. At the most basic level activists today need to understand what's wrong with the world, why it is like this, how we can change it, and whether there is a feasible and desirable alternative. And it is precisely this set of questions to which those in the classical Marxist tradition have been providing answers for more than 150 years.

If socialist intellectuals and activists want to contribute positively to the anti-capitalist movement then they will have to firmly reject the unjustified discard of key elements of the classical Marxist tradition that are more relevant now than ever, such as Marx's theories of exploitation and crisis, the strategic conception of the revolutionary potential of the working class, the political vision of socialist participatory democracy as the alternative to capitalism and representative democracy, and the crucially important principle that theory must be tested, and developed through, the experience of political practice. We need, now more than ever, a Marxism that retains these crucial elements of classical Marxist tradition, and that is also willing and able to connect with those, new to the struggle, who want to put them into practice.



*Protests shape identities and discourses and have the potential to create larger movements. An awareness of the environment for which protests evolve can explain the directions taken by a movement. Each protest offers a pivot around which movements attach themselves.*

### **Hong Kong: Protests Force Government Retreat**

*By Eva Cheng*

Hong Kong secretary for security Regina Ip, notorious for her arrogant and bureaucratic handling of the territory's controversial proposed anti-subversion law (article 23 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, the territory's "constitution"), resigned on July 16, 2003.

Her resignation followed three mass mobilisations in less than two weeks in July, which involved nearly 800,000 people opposed to the anti-subversion law. The massive actions undoubtedly contributed to the government's 11th-hour move to suspend legislative proceedings on July 9.

In another move to ease public anger, the territory's financial secretary Antony Leung also resigned on July 16. Leung was at the centre of an alleged tax-dodging scandal. He was found to have bought a luxury car in January, just weeks before he announced increased auto taxes in March.

Between 500,000 and 700,000 people demonstrated against article 23 on the sensitive day of July 1 — the sixth anniversary of China's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong. But the government of Tung Chee-Hwa has vowed to press ahead with the scheduled legislative proceedings to pass article 23.

He did back down partially on July 5 by scrapping a clause which automatically incriminates Hong Kong-affiliates of China-based organisations which Beijing determines to be "subversive". Tung also accepted "public interest" as a valid defence in the event of unauthorised disclosure of classified government information and junked the plan to authorise cops to conduct raids without a court warrant.

On July 9, the day article 23 was scheduled to be tabled in the legislative chamber, Tung suspended the proceedings altogether. But a planned candle-light vigil "to lay siege" to the legislative building that night went ahead, attracting more than 50,000 people, who flooded neighbouring streets, squares and public spaces. There were persistent calls among the protesters for Tung to resign and for popular elections for the territory's legislature and its chief executive.

Another demonstration was held on the evening of July 13 to press for further democratisation of Hong Kong. It attracted more than 20,000 people despite a heat wave.

### **Protests Force Bolivian Leader to Resign Rallies Against Gas Pipeline Were Decisive**

*By Jon Jeter*

*Washington Post Foreign Service*

*Saturday, October 18, 2003*

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia, Oct. 17 -- President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada resigned on October 17, 2003 after he lost the support of key political allies during a revolt by indigenous groups, workers and students. His resignation follows a month of demonstrations over the planned sale of natural gas supplies through Chile to the United States and Mexico.

Sanchez de Lozada had been holed up in his residence this week as the capital erupted in demonstrations. The protests were originally organized by union leaders and opponents in Congress to condemn the government's proposal to build a \$5 billion pipeline and sell natural gas to the United States and Mexico through a port in neighboring Chile, Bolivia's rival for more than a century.

But the demonstrations grew and have been used by organizers for a much broader repudiation of globalization, foreign economic influence and the violent suppression of the protests by security forces.

"Bolivia is not for sale," chanted thousands of protesters who paraded through the streets of the capital. Others shouted, "the murderer must go," referring to Sanchez de Lozada. Some protesters held up sticks of dynamite as they marched.

### **New Wave of Protests in France**

*On October 17, 2003, 1.7 million civil servants took part in a Day of Action*

Less than a year after last autumn's monthlong campaign of mass strikes and demonstrations against government attacks on jobs and social benefits, French workers and students have once again taken to the streets.

When 1.7 million workers took part in a Day of Action on October 17, 2003 airline flights were canceled, trains ground to a halt, schools were closed and other public services were affected. The protests came in response to the new budget of Prime Minister Alain Juppe. The austerity program it sets out is more far-reaching than last year's proposals. In the intervening period, all of the economic and political contradictions which sparked the mass actions of November-December 1995 have grown in intensity.

Juppe's budget provides for state expenditure to be frozen at 1996 levels--a substantial cut when inflation is taken into consideration. The government has reintroduced proposals to privatize the French railways (SNCF). Rail management has already pledged to eliminate 4,500 jobs by the end of this year.

Other public services to be put up for sale are the energy sector, the gas and electricity utilities and nationalized banks, as well as the Thomson electronics group. The budget cuts will also mean the destruction of thousands of jobs in public education and health care.

These measures will further exacerbate the unemployment rate, which has already climbed to 12.6 percent. At the same time, the austerity program introduced by the government last year, the Juppe Plan, has begun to take effect, ripping apart the social safety net. A recent survey predicts that 80,000 people will lose all of their social benefits.

The resistance of the working class has reached the boiling point in spite of the trade unions. These organizations--which betrayed the mass movement last year--are compromised in the eyes of broad sections of the working class. The union bureaucracies have implemented parts of the Juppe Plan. Moreover, their claims of having secured a U-turn from the government on its plans to privatize and downsize the public sector have been exposed as lies.

At the October 17 demonstration, a team consisting of French, British, German and Sri Lankan supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International distributed 5,000 leaflets that detailed the role played by the union bureaucracies and middle class radicals on behalf of the French ruling class. The leaflet explained that the struggle in France could be taken forward only by building a new socialist leadership that would fight to unite the French and international working class against the profit system.

### **Protests Escalate in China**

*By John Chan  
12 February 2003*

According to figures cited by the January issue of the Hong Kong-based journal Cheng Ming, an explosive growth is taking place in the scale and intensity of opposition to the free market social policies of the Chinese Stalinist regime. The number of demonstrations and protests being reported to the journal by its mainland sources in the Chinese Ministry of Public Security has soared from an average of 80 per day in 2001, to more than 700 per day in December 2002.

Such is the level of concern in Beijing that Hu Jintao, the newly installed leader of the Chinese Communist

Party (CCP), convened an emergency 12-hour session of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee on December 12 to take reports from the party's Central Office, State Council Office and Ministry of Public Security.

In the rural areas, peasants across 15 provinces have reportedly engaged in recent protests against low living standards, high taxation and official corruption. Since mid-November, more than 250 rural protests have taken place involving over 1,000 people, including seven estimated at over 10,000 people. According to Cheng Ming, many of the protests assumed militant forms, with peasants storming local government buildings and clashing with police.

The demonstrations reflect the desperation among China's working class and rural poor. The opening up of the country to massive foreign investment and its transformation into the cheap labour manufacturing centre of world capitalism has produced upheaval for hundreds of millions of people. While a thin layer has enriched itself by functioning as the middle-men for the major transnational companies, employment in the former industrial and mining provinces in China's north and north-east is being decimated by the scaling back of state-owned industry, while large numbers of peasants are being driven off the land and into the coastal export economic zones to look for work.

Alongside the unrest in the old industrial and rural areas, the weeks leading up to the Chinese New Year witnessed an outpouring of pent-up discontent in China's major manufacturing cities on the coast, such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Thousands of workers who wished to return to their home towns and villages for the holiday engaged in angry protests against employers who had failed to pay wages in time. According to reports, over 72 percent of workers regularly experience delays in the payment of their wages.

### **Britain: Massive Turnout at Demonstration Against Bush and Iraq War**

*By Mike Ingram  
21 November 2003*

Upwards of 150,000 people participated in a protest demonstration in London on November 20 against the state visit of US President George W. Bush. The turnout far exceeded the organisers' predictions of 100,000. Throughout the day police and media had attempted to play down the scale of opposition to the Bush visit, but the police were begrudgingly forced to acknowledge the presence of at least 100,000 protesters.

As protesters swelled at one end of Malet Street in central London, waiting for police to open roads along

the route so the march could begin, the length of the demonstration stretched back several kilometres to Euston railway station. By the time the demonstration had reached the Houses of Parliament at Westminster, thousands more people had poured onto the streets to join the protest in front of the official march banner.

As the first marchers arrived in the square, several thousand people who had gone there directly from work greeted them. The march effectively began all over again after the close of business, as London workers joined the protest.

"Blair is accountable to us. He is our prime minister and he needs to take on board what we think, and I don't think he is representing the views of the British public. I think the demonstration is having an effect. I just got a call from a friend in Santiago, and these images are going out around the world and it is humiliating for Bush to be confronted with a massive demonstration. It is people of all ages, of all nationalities, so they can't just write us off and say that it is the view of just one section of society."

Supporters of the World Socialist Web Site distributed a statement issued by the Socialist Equality Party in Britain entitled, "An international socialist strategy to oppose militarism and war." The statement stressed the need to build a new workers' party based on the principles of socialist internationalism. Several of those who took the leaflet said they were regular readers of the WSWS and expressed an interest in the forthcoming meeting in London on November 30 to mark 50 years since the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

### **In Brazil, Thousands of Squatters Seek Faster Government Action**

*By Matt Moffett*

*The Wall Street Journal; July 10, 2003*

Presidente Epitacio, Brazil -- Outside of this central cattle town, activists have built a massive squatter

camp, with 3,500 families who say they won't leave until the government gives them property. In other places, protesters demanding land have looted food trucks, seized toll roads, and taken over government agricultural offices. Last week, the nation's president convened an emergency meeting with the group's leaders, who refused to halt their protests.

The Landless Workers Movement, the largest social movement in Latin America, is agitating for sweeping change in a country with one of the world's most inequitable land distributions. "Nobody wants to break the law," says Antonio Carlos Santos, 38 years old, who moved to the camp with his wife and three children last month, after losing his job at a slaughterhouse. "But we'll do what we must to survive."

The rural unrest is shaping up as a critical test for the six-month-old government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's first elected leftist leader. Peasant protests and land occupations are also threatening to disrupt thriving agribusinesses that have turned Brazil into the world's largest exporter of raw sugar, second-largest exporter of soybeans and third-largest exporter of beef. The clash underscores Mr. da Silva's dilemma: Is it possible to impose both economic efficiency and social equity in Latin America's most-populous nation?

The Landless Movement was founded in 1984 with the goal of winning land for impoverished Brazilians. In a country blessed with an abundance of resources -- and cursed with poverty -- the movement has successfully pressed the argument that the government owes people a plot of their own. "Land is as basic of a need as air or water," says Edi Ronan, an organizer of the Epitacio encampment.

Polls have shown most Brazilians to be overwhelmingly sympathetic with the aims of the landless, especially after massacres of peasants by police and landowners in the mid-1990s.



## **Another World is Happening: Network-Based Movements**

*By Graham Caswell*

The vast, coordinated protests that took place on February 15, 2003 worldwide were just the latest manifestation of the power of the loose, non-hierarchical, evolutionary movements that have been enabled by the development of the Internet. And this fundamental social change is just beginning. Between twelve and twenty million people around the world took to the streets to protest the rush to war with Iraq. While the numbers of people involved in the global demonstrations will never be fully known, what is clear is that these were the largest co-ordinated protests in human history.

Yet the question of how these demonstrations came about has been conspicuously absent from discussion of this momentous event. What group is capable of organising such a co-ordinated human effort on such a vast scale? How can so many people from so many backgrounds in so many places work together in such a focused way towards a common goal? And why were politicians, media analysts and even the local organisers themselves so surprised at the vast scale of the protests?

The nature of the group that called for global demonstrations gives an indication of the forces at work. The European Social Forum (ESF), a meeting of over 60,000 trade unionists, peace campaigners, socialists, environmentalists and other activists held in Florence, Italy last November, is one of the new, network-based movements that are revolutionising civil society but which barely appear on the radar of conventional media and political discussion. These movements are non-hierarchical, process-oriented and evolutionary and share a common distrust of large-scale corporations and establishment economic ideology and thinking. They also share a common reliance on the revolutionary communicative dynamics of the Internet for their existence and explosive growth.

The World Social Forum (WSF), of which the European Social Forum (ESF) is an offshoot, was first held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 to shadow the World Economic Forum of world business and political leaders held annually in Davos, Switzerland. It represents a vast variety of non-governmental organisations and groups and presents an alternative to the neo-liberal economic thinking that so many blame for environmental destruction and social inequality. In only two years regional, national and local social forums have blossomed around the world (plans for an Irish Social Forum are underway). Social forums provide an 'open space' for communication, sharing, networking and co-ordinating among diverse groups and individuals working towards environmental sustainability and social justice.

An important common denominator is that network-based movements largely operate outside of the monetary economy, and so are invisible to many conventional measurements of size and impact. For example, Indymedia does not accept advertising and does not depend on sales and so it is not seen as competing with conventional media. Music freely distributed online does not show up in the sales-based charts, and so is largely ignored by the music press. The incessant growth of open source software is not reflected in any stock market valuation and its qualities are not promoted in any advertisement. Because money is not a major part of these movements they tend to be underestimated. Yet they have very real effects.

In millions upon millions of daily creative acts and informational transactions, the online community by-pass conventional media and economics to create what is almost a parallel world. It's not an exact representation of the real world, but then neither is the conventional media and economy.

The Internet can be called a 'meta-medium'. It IS text, but it is more than text. It IS radio, but it is more than radio. It IS television, but more than television. It in fact encompasses all electronic media and more. While bandwidth restrictions constrain the possibilities of the Internet, it is already possible to see an end point in which all electronic content forms are immediately publishable by anyone and accessible to everyone, always and everywhere.

Thanks to only a few decades of mass media, human perspective has become homogenised to a greater extent than ever before, a homogenisation that is reflected in sport, in culture, in politics and in the economy. But by undermining and subverting this 'official view' of how things are, the Internet and the movements that grow from it are fundamentally changing the way in which we see the world, and thus are changing the world itself. The medium is indeed the message and just because the stock market drastically and myopically misunderstood the meaning of the Internet does not mean that it is anything less than revolutionary.

Another world is not only possible -its happening.

### **Asia**

#### **Officials Attack Migrant Workers' Protest**

Over 40 South Korean immigration officials attacked a demonstration of 100 members and supporters of the Equity Trade Union-Migrant Branch (ETU-MB) on December 31. The protest, held outside the Mok-dong Immigration Office in Seoul, was called to oppose a justice department statement earlier that day threatening to detain migrant branch officials.

According to one eyewitness, immigration officials attempted to seize migrant union leaders but were fought off by a number of Korean supporters. Two supporters were detained but later released.

The ETU-MB has been campaigning since November against government moves to deport all undocumented migrant workers. About 90 ETU-MB unionists have been staging a sit-in at the central Seoul church compound since November 15 to demand an end to the crackdown and for the legalisation of all migrant labour. The government has announced a stay on all detentions and deportations until January 15, demanding that about 100,000 undocumented workers voluntarily leave the country.

#### **Indonesian Workers Owed Millions of Dollars in Unpaid Wages**

About 1,000 employees at Jakarta City water supplier PD PAM Jaya are suing the company and its overseas partners, PT Thames Pam Jaya (TPJ) and PT PAM Lyonnaise Jaya (Palyja), to recover unpaid wages. They are claiming 57.4 billion rupiah (\$US6.75 million) for salary increases the company failed to pay last year and 22 billion rupiah for "non-material losses".

On December 29, lawyers for the workers asked the Central Jakarta court to ignore a plea by company representatives that the case be heard in the Jakarta State Administrative Court, pointing out that the three companies were subject to civil law. The companies had hoped to prolong proceedings by diverting the case to the Administrative Court.

#### **Textile Workers Arrested in Thailand**

More than 260 migrant textile workers from Nasawat Apparel at Mae Sot in Thailand's Tak province were arrested and taken from their temporary refuge at a local Buddhist temple this week after striking over unpaid, below minimum wages and exploitative conditions. Police arrived at the temple as employees were completing labour protection complaint forms to claim wages owed for the past two years and to charge their employer over horrific working conditions.

The migrant workers from Myanmar (Burma)—209 women and 60 men—were arrested after Tak provincial

employment department head told police that the workers had been sacked and were now illegal immigrants.

Thailand border police and soldiers carrying M16s were also involved in the attack, with police using electric batons on some female employees. The textile workers have been taken to Immigration Detention Centres in Tak province and the Thailand/Burma border awaiting likely deportation.

#### **Sri Lankan Workers Fight Factory Closure**

Around 150 workers from Reckitt Benckiser (Lanka) Ltd (RBL) held a protest outside the factory on December 18, to oppose the plant's sudden closure. Workers want the facility reopened. "We want our jobs and not the puny VRS [voluntary retirement scheme]," angry workers told the media.

RBL, which makes cleaning products and other consumer items, announced in November that it was outsourcing manufacturing and logistics in order to boost productivity and profitability. The Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers Union has accused RBL of violating a collective agreement with the union.

#### **Sri Lanka Oil Workers Stop Work**

Hundreds of Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) workers at the main storage complex in Kolonnawa in suburban Colombo, went on strike on December 26 to demand immediate payment of overtime arrears. They have not been paid overtime for two years.

Authorities, fearful that other CPC workers would support the strike and panic would spread throughout Sri Lanka over oil shortages, pledged payment of arrears and the strike ended after three hours.

#### **National Teachers Strike in Nepal**

Government teachers in Nepal held national strike action with protests outside District Education Offices throughout the country on December 12 to demand withdrawal of the Education Act 7th amendment. The amendment introduces teacher "licensing," orders teachers to keep out of politics and establishes a legal framework for private schools. Under the licensing system, teachers' qualifications are re-checked. If their qualifications are not in "order," they can be sacked.

Up to 1,600 teachers picketed Mahottari district education office, with similar pickets in Udayapur, Siraha, Gorkha and Sarlahi. Two teachers involved in a sit-in protest in Baglung district were arrested.

The national walkout was one of many strikes held by teachers in recent months opposing the repressive new education laws.

## **Pakistani Contract Doctors Fight for Regularisation**

Contract doctors holding placards demonstrated outside Peshawar provincial assembly on December 18 to demand regular employment. Large numbers of police were mobilised by the government to intimidate the doctors.

Contract Doctors Association president Dr. Taimur Khan told the demonstration that the government had appointed 1,200 doctors on a contract basis in 1995. Despite the fact that most of them had passed public service commission examinations on more than one occasion, their services were yet to be regularised. He pointed out that 746 doctors, including 170 women doctors and 150 dental surgeons, were working in far-flung health facilities on paltry salaries.

## **Australia and the Pacific**

### **State Labour Government Excludes Union Press**

The national nurses union has strongly condemned the Western Australian state Labour government over its decision to exclude reporters from union publications attending government press conferences.

The dispute erupted when a part-time reporter for the Western Nurse was told he could not attend a mid-December press conference held by Labour Premier Geoff Gallop and Health Minister Jim McGinty on elective surgery waiting lists. The government defended its decision this week, declaring that only journalists from “impartial, mainstream news outlets” would be admitted at state government press conferences.

The Western Nurse, which is published by the Australian Nursing Federation, has been critical of the state government’s health cuts and has called for the dismissal of Health Minister McGinty.

### **Solomon Islands Government Refuses Cost of Living Pay Rise**

The Solomon Islands Council of Trade Unions this week threatened to call strike action over the government’s refusal to pay an 8 percent cost of living increase to public servants. The government announced it would award only a 2.5 percent rise. The union council said that while Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza had passed a large budget for 2004, workers have been offered only the “budget’s scraps”. Public servants are angry that the government has approved increases for MPs ranging from \$US1,500 to \$2,000 a year but refused a decent pay rise to state sector workers.

### **Railway Workers Strike Over New Job Cuts**

New South Wales rail workers struck for four hours on December 23 after a breakdown in negotiations with the Transport Minister Michael Costa over job security. The strike affected all City Rail services.

Over 1,500 jobs could be axed through the planned

merger of the State Rail Authority and Rail Infrastructure Corporation, with about 200 employees on workers compensation or long-term sick leave to be the first to lose their jobs. The merger is in line with the state Labour government’s long-term aim of privatising the rail system.

## **United States**

### **Gas Workers Strike Indiana Utilities**

Gas workers in central Indiana voted to strike December 23 after contract talks between Vectren Corporation and both the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and United Steelworkers unions collapsed. The 359 workers rejected the company’s previous offer on December 12 and have been working under an extension of the old agreement that expired December 3. No new talks have been scheduled.

According to Vectren management, their four-year proposal contained yearly wage increases of less than 3 percent and health care premiums that would require workers to contribute between 12 and 16 percent of the cost. The unions have not publicly commented on contract negotiations.

Workers involved in the walkout install gas meters and repair and lay pipe. Vectren provides natural gas and electricity to more than 1 million customers in parts of Indiana and west-central Ohio. The company reported earnings of \$67.1 million for the third quarter of 2003.

### **Immigrant Workers Protest in Arizona**

Nonunion construction workers picketed the construction site of the Mesa Arts Center in downtown Mesa, Arizona to protest the safety and working conditions imposed on them by JD Steel, a Phoenix-based company that provides concrete reinforcement services for the construction industry.

The workers, all immigrants of Mexico, said JD Steel will not provide them with insurance, breaks, vacation and decent pay and has been fighting their attempts to organize under the Iron Workers union. “They don’t respect human rights,” picket Felipe Hernandez told the East Valley Tribune.

Iron Workers Local 75 had filed a complaint with the National Labour Relations Board on March 4 of this year charging JD Steel with threats, intimidation and unlawful discharge. One month later, however, the union withdrew the charge before the NLRB began investigations.

## **Canada**

### **Alberta Government Threatens Jail if Nurses Strike**

According to a recent statement the provincial Tory government of Ralph Kline is threatening to jail nurses if they go on strike. The nurses, represented by the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA), have been threatening walkouts if a deal can’t be reached. Alberta’s Public

Service Employee Relations Act prohibits strikes and lockouts of workers in public services, including nurses.

Registered nurses in Alberta have been in negotiations with the provincial health authorities for nine months over 130 proposed rollbacks in nursing conditions and health care. The rollbacks include cutting guaranteed time off for part-time nurses, giving health employers the power to move nurses from site to site at will and permanent night and evening shifts.

### **Strike by Ottawa Taxi Dispatchers**

Forty-seven Ottawa taxi dispatchers are on strike for wage increases and benefits—they presently earn an average of \$9 per hour and have no benefits. The workers, members of Local 4266 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, are also demanding the return of a member of their bargaining committee who was dismissed during contract negotiations.

The strike began at midnight New Year's Eve after the workers rejected the company's offer of a paltry 23 cents per hour wage increase and no benefits. The day before, workers rejected company demands for significant concessions that included mandatory medical examinations, the elimination of overtime pay, and the exclusion of part-time workers from the bargaining unit.

## **Europe**

### **Air Traffic Controllers in Northern Spain Strike**

On January 4, 2004 air traffic controllers from the Torrejon control centre in northern Spain took strike action in an overtime dispute. The centre controls air traffic in the northern and central region of Spain. The stoppage resulted in the cancellation of 49 flights and the delay of many more national and international flights. Airports affected included Madrid's Barajas where the average delay was 55 minutes, and Barcelona's El Prat airport where sixteen flights were cancelled

### **Depot Workers in Merseyside, England Strike in Pay Dispute**

Depot workers employed by supermarket Sainsbury's in Merseyside began a 24-hour strike on January 7 in a strike over pay. The stoppage was the second such action by the 750 employees, members of the USDAW shopworkers trade union.

The workers' average pay is lower than those employed at similar firms in the region. They are currently paid £5.75 an hour and Sainsbury's proposes to increase

this to £7.55, but not to the regional average of £8 an hour.

### **Manchester Tram Drivers Strike**

Tram drivers in Greater Manchester held a 24-hour strike on New Year's Day in a dispute over trade union recognition. The workers are members of the ASLEF trade union and are protesting that the Transport and General Workers Union has sole negotiation rights for pay and conditions with the employers, Metrolink. ASLEF represents a quarter of Metrolink's 340 staff. The union plans to sanction further strike action over the next two months.

## **Africa**

### **Nigerian Workers Teargassed**

A contingent of approximately 200 Nigerian state forces tear-gassed workers who were picketing outside the premises of the Syrian company, Mikano International Limited, Lagos on the weekend of December 28/29. Two hundred workers were arrested, including President of the National Union of Shop and Distributive Employees (NUSDE) Bright Anokwuru and General Secretary Comrade Babatunde Sule.

According to the Daily Trust (Abuja) the police and soldiers "stormed the venue of the picketing in a military commando manner in a convey of vehicles piloted by a pick-up van ... and started shooting indiscriminately."

Bright Anokwuru was addressing the company employees when the police "started beating him with gun-butt, truncheons and horsewhips, as well as dragging him on the ground across several metres of rough terrain."

## **Latin America**

### **Argentine Bank Workers Strike**

Workers at Argentine foreign banks struck December 31 to demand higher wages. Before walking out the bank employees dumped tons of shredded documents out of windows onto the streets of Buenos Aires.

On December 30, hundreds of bank workers staged protests and briefly occupied the offices of several banks, including US-based Citibank and Spanish-owned Banco Frances.

Workers called on the banks to honor a government decree raising wages by US\$75.70 per month. The Argentine Banking Association, which represents foreign-owned banks, denounced the protest, claiming the salary increases have already been implemented.



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