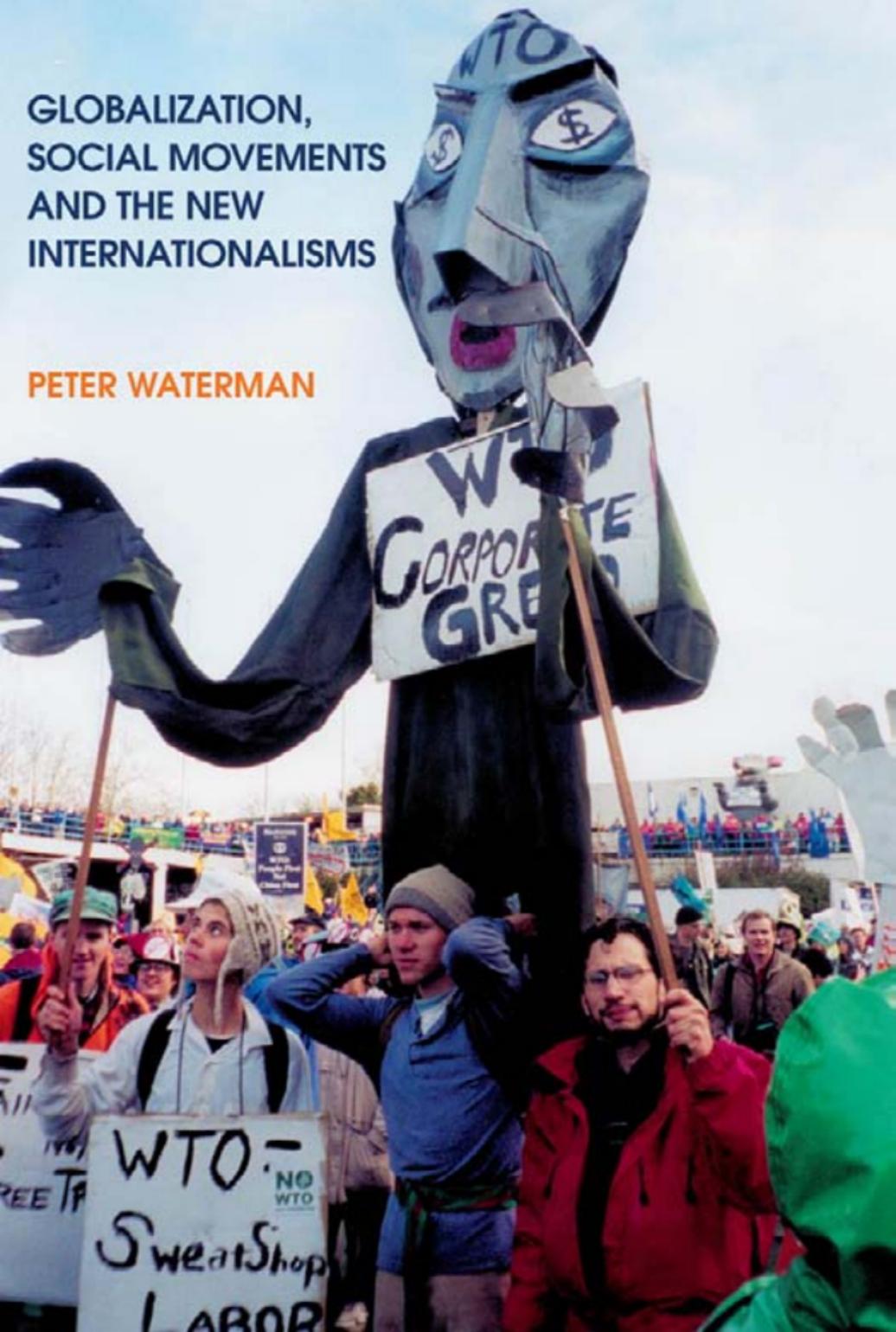


GLOBALIZATION,
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
AND THE NEW
INTERNATIONALISMS

PETER WATERMAN



**GLOBALIZATION, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
AND THE NEW INTERNATIONALISMS**

Employment and Work Relations in Context Series

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Peter Waterman

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PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

The New Global Solidarity Is Already Not What It Used to Be

The world into which this paperback edition of *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms* is being launched is dramatically different from that which saw the hardback published in 1998. I would like to take as indicators of this:

- the Battle of Seattle, November 1999;
- labour again becoming a subject of internationalism;
- the increasing de-iconization of internationalists and -isms;
- the boom in communication on internationalism . . .
- . . . including the reviews of this book;
- the new international dialogue on internationalism;
- the birth of an international of radical-democratic communicators.

'The 21st Century Began at Seattle'

This was the headline over a French newspaper report, in late 1999. The Battle of Seattle (BoS) demonstrated to the world what is argued in this book. If I were to rewrite the book now, it would have to begin with Seattle. The BoS not only contributed to the collapse of the World Trade Organization conference. It was also projected worldwide, by the dominant international (i.e. US) news magazines. The United Nations' Millennial Summit, and its 'civil society' State of the World Forum, in

September 2000, were held in the shadow of the BoS. Seattle, the city, is or was a utopia of globalized, informatized American capitalism. Seattle, the event, revealed the contradictions of such a city and demonstrated its dystopian aspect. Life imitated art: cybercops (presented to the world in a dozen futuristic movies of urban decay and alienation) here demonstrated on the streets their state-of-the-art methods and equipment. This was to brutalize not the handful who destroyed multinational retail outlets, but the hundreds inspired by the Gandhian ethic of non-violent resistance. Major damage was done to both the WTO in particular and neo-liberal *pensamiento único* (single thought) in general. What we witnessed in Seattle was not only a 'cross-movement, cross-border' alliance (the international background and presence were under-reported), but one that was also cross-ideological, cross-strategy, networked, informatized, and cultural in form and content (Borgers, 2000; Danaher and Burbach, 2000; Gunnell and Timms, 2000; Klein, 2000; O'Kane, 2000).

Cross-movement

The national US and international trade unions were neither initiators nor leaders here, even if around half the participants were brought by the unions. That the unions *did* participate and follow demonstrates a new union mood in the US, a new realism and a new modesty. The BoS is going to be a constant reference in the struggle to further transform the US unions and their internationalism. It is likely to play a similar role in moving international unionism in the direction of some kind of 'global social unionism' (*Monthly Review*, 2000; New Labour Forum, 2000; Waterman, 2000a).

Cross-ideological

Having 'fix-it' reformists and 'nix-it' radicals together in one place and time, and pointed at the same general target (neo-liberalism, globalism, corporate capitalism), is quite a breakthrough. Having the demonstration and demonstrators named in the dominant press as 'anti-capitalist' re-introduces into international politics a term that many international social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – and specialists on such – have long avoided or even forgotten. If this sentence seems to contradict the 'cross-ideological' subtitle, then I

would argue this is not your father's anti-capitalist internationalism, because there are now many meanings to 'anti-capitalism': it is inflected in ecological, anarchist, socialist, humanist, pacifist, feminist and even liberal ways. Many of these found expression in Seattle (Danaher and Burbach, 2000).

Cross-strategy

Despite differences, and even mutual recriminations, between the fixers and nixers over appropriate methods of struggle at Seattle, the BoS did seem to reveal the possibility for a combination of what would previously have been thought of as incompatible or even opposed strategies. The leadership of the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) marshalled their massed ranks *away* from where the non-violent resisters had chained themselves together to block the roads. They limited themselves to going down – in an embarrassingly prayerful attitude – on their knees. It is quite difficult to imagine to whom or what they were praying. But there was both worker and union dissidence. The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union closed down the US West Coast ports for a day. And many workers and unions praised the Direct Action Network that was largely responsible for the sophisticated guerilla action that literally ran circles around the authorities (Klein, 2000).

Communicational/cultural

Time ran a front-page special feature on Seattle, and *Newsweek* did the same in both its English and Spanish editions. Although, predictably, they concentrated on the violence, neither magazine did neoliberalism any particular favours. Follow-up analyses in the mainstream US/international corporate media reflected, rather, the crisis of the neoliberal globalization project, and the concern of hegemonic forces (state and capitalist) in the face of the anti-globalist alliance which their dogmatic arrogance had called into being (see also Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1993; CSIS, 2000). That the workers, who formed half of the participants, only received 6 per cent of *Time/Newsweek* illustrated coverage reflects less on 'corporate media bias' than on the failure of the unions to recognize the increasing centrality to social movements of

communication and culture. The slogan ‘Teamsters and Turtles Together at Last’ may have arisen from the streets of Seattle, but it was the turtles that got the media coverage. The BoS suggests as many problems for the future of internationalism as it does solutions. But these are at least twenty-first-century ones. And they are global ones.

Labour as a Subject (in Both Senses) of Internationalism

It is capitalists rather than socialists who have put labour and union questions back on the international political agenda. Under the previous stage of national/industrial/colonial capitalism, workers and unions were successfully confined to their nation-states and statist nationalisms (of business, liberal, social-Christian, communist or radical-nationalist varieties). Deprived of such protection as these might have once provided, the labour movement has begun to confront the globalized, networked capitalism of today (Moody, 1997; Munck and Waterman, 1999). The turn of the century and millennium in 1999–2000 (plus the immediately surrounding years) has seen an unprecedented wave of political or political-cum-academic conferences on labour and globalization. This is one significant meaning of labour as both a *subject of* and a *subject for* internationalism. Being a *subject for* internationalism means that other internationalists (ecological, feminist, student, academic, etc.) are realizing that wage labour and capital – too little, too much, the wrong kind, in the wrong place – are central both to globalist planning and to post-globalist alternatives. But, as we will see, this may mean more a recognition of profound crisis than even the beginnings of a solution to such (Cohen and Rai, 2000; Gills, 2000; Wichterich, 2000).

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) held its Millennial Congress in Durban, South Africa, early in 2000. Whilst making gestures in the direction of a general movement against neo-liberalism, and the necessity of restructuring the dominant international union organization, it reproduced much of the pomp, circumstance, hierarchical ritual and ideological dependency of the previous half-century of its existence. Bill Jordan, a personification, willy-nilly, of the White, Northern, Male Industrial Worker that has long symbolized and dominated unionism internationally, was unanimously re-elected as ICFTU General Secretary. And this was with the participation of the major new radical unions of the South (Brazil, South Africa,

South Korea). The ICFTU is still profoundly fixated on a set of institutions, procedures and principles – the national/ist industrial union, tripartism, collective bargaining, social partnership – from a capitalist era now passing (Greenfield, 1998; South African Labour Bulletin, 2000; Waterman, 1999a).

The ICFTU is also, along with the allied international trade secretariats (ITSs), locked into a symbiotic relationship with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Often represented as a possible and desirable model for a future United Nations (UN) system more generally, the ‘tripartite’ ILO is actually an interstate organization, in which state-approved organizations of employers and unions share 50 per cent of the votes. However one considers the matter, the subaltern status of labour is glaring. In *political-economic* terms, we have 75 per cent of power for the inter/national elite alliance of capital and state. In *representative-democratic* terms, we are presented with 1 per cent (the world’s capitalists/managers) having here as many votes as the other 75 to 90 per cent (its dependent working people). The ILO is dependent on nation-state acceptance and enforcement of its painfully agreed norms, which the US loudly urges on others but itself quietly ignores. Moreover, the ILO is being either subordinated or marginalized by the international financial institutions that are no part of the UN system, but that have both money and teeth. The innovatory, bilingual, international electronic Conference on Organised Labour in the Twenty-first Century, co-sponsored by the ILO and the ICFTU, and which began in 1999 with something of a bang, faded in 2000 with something of a whimper. It failed, precisely, to deal with the big questions confronting either of these bodies in the century to come (Waterman, 1999a).

In so far as the ILO represents a twentieth-century solution to the nineteenth-century ‘social question’, it clearly needs radical reinvention for the twenty-first century, in which new forms of labour go way beyond the unionized and unionizable (U-labour?), and in which labour questions are quite literally out of control of nation-states. One radically democratic notion, that space be made in the ILO for a fourth party – for those international social movement and civil society organizations that attempt to also serve the growing ranks of non-U labour – has, however, been dismissed out of hand; not by the ILO but by the ICFTU’s Millennial Congress. In so far as this organization wishes to be recognized as even *one* legitimate body for unionized labour globally, it

will clearly need to break out of its ghetto. This, evidently, does not so much defend it from rapacious capital and complicit/complacent states, as isolate it from the new dynamic international/ist social movements, and from the flesh and blood workers – of all kinds – who have little demonstrable influence upon it, and often do not even know of its existence (Gallin, 1999a; v.d. Linden, 2000: 516–17).

If the most we can expect from these two twentieth-century institutions is that they will move as far as they are pushed (from below, from their margins, from the outside), what about the *non-institutionalized* international labour networks and conferences that sprang up around the millennium to discuss labour and globalization? It is clear that the networking principle is the one both compatible with the increasingly ‘real virtuality’ (Castells, 1996–8) of a computerized capitalism, and with the flexible, creative, informative, egalitarian, mobilizing, consciousness-raising role of a radical-democratic challenge to such. That these labour networks of dialogue and action have sprung up and taken independent and innovative form reveals the growth of grassroots, shopfloor and community discontent with the new world disorder, and an implicit learning from the non-labour movements. But participation in or observation of half a dozen such events only reinforces my perception that the labour left worldwide still largely inhabits the old world order – with the reality or myth of the national, industrial, welfare state promising protection from the world market and redistribution from national growth. The increasingly common reference point of these events and networks may be a ‘a new international social movement unionism’. But they still seem to be directed to the revival of an institutional form criticized by a Social Democratic sociologist, almost 100 years ago, as exemplifying the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ (Michels, 1915; compare Gallin, 1999b, 2001; Meiksins Wood, Meiksins and Yates, 1998; Moody, 1997).

My strong present inclination is to see the crisis of international labour, labour internationalism or international labourism as *structural* in the most literal sense. We cannot yet do without representative-democratic organizations, any more than we can parties and parliaments (which should not prevent discussion of more popular and radically democratic additions/alternatives to these either). But we cannot expect leadership, inspiration, mobility and creativity from them. They are there, all of them, national and international, to negotiate, codify, institutionalize, monitor and enforce. But if, as and

when we need the new capacities mentioned earlier, we will need to recognize, facilitate and empower international labour networks and networking: within, between and beyond labour.

Beyond the Noble Savages and Promised Lands of North→South Internationalism

Kofi Annan of the UN, Juan Somavia of the ILO and Bill Jordan of the ICFTU may be possible figureheads of a Global Neo-Keynesian Civil Society, but seem unlikely ones for the new global solidarity movements. What, however, of the Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchú? And, if the traditional international labour organizations and institutions provide unlikely models for the new internationalisms, what of Mexico's Zapatistas and the international solidarity movement connected with them?

The small, round, multi-coloured figure of the indigenous woman human-rights champion, and her wide-selling, much-translated testimony (Menchú, 1987), turned Rigoberta Menchú into an icon of the Northern peace and rights movements. Here was a *female, indigenous, non-militaristic* Che Guevara! Her second book (Menchú, 1998) reveals her development from a local heroine into the personification of the new radical-democratic and internationalist movements of the 1980s. But when, in late 1998, a North American academic produced a work revealing that much of her testimony differed from her biography (Stoll, 1998), the left and democratic solidarity movement, in the Americas and Western Europe, was either confused or divided. There were those who simply defended the iconic figure, denied or condemned the exposé (customarily as a service to US imperialism). And there were those who took a more nuanced view of Rigoberta, whilst still recognizing her iconic role. David Stoll (who calls himself a social-democrat) held his ground against those who denounced him and produced a thought-provoking argument concerning the relationship between international solidarity, human rights and historical analysis (Stoll, 2000: 11–13). He assumes, however, that 'solidarity' means unconditional-identification-with, and that it is as such 'not a very good basis for scholarship' (ibid.: 12). He also seems to think that 'scholarship' is the court of last appeal. I beg to differ. But, then, that is because I employ a more complex understanding of solidarity (this book, pp. 230–9), because I see tensions where he poses oppositions, and

because I think that from such an understanding of solidarity one can return to critique 'scholarship'. Nonetheless, one has to recognize his as one of the rare challenges to traditional Northern assumptions about solidarity with the South, and its icons. Interestingly enough, there is another such argument, also about solidarity with Guatemala, and Rigoberta. This is even more exceptional because it is by a Marxist and feminist, and because it is *self-questioning* (Nelson, 1999: Ch. 2).

When the Zapatista guerrillas among the indigenous peoples of *Mexico Profundo* (literally: Deep Mexico) not only appealed to civil society within Mexico but both broadcast and narrowcast (on video and Internet) their internationalist anti-globalization message, a broad swathe of the Northern left (from social-democratic politicians to libertarian anarchists) identified with them as embodying a new kind of social movement and creating a new kind of internationalism. Here, it seemed, was the first revolutionary movement of our globalized, networked capitalist society, employing the latest communication technologies to not only seek defence for itself but propose an international solidarity movement against neoliberalism in general. Western left hyperbole, myth and metaphor were piled on top of that of Marcos himself. Generally absent was anything other than identification with an ideal projected by the Zapatistas. However, critical voices – liberal, socialist, radical-democratic – began to be heard, in Latin America as well as elsewhere. Some claimed to be rational de-mystifiers, providing the name and history of Sub-Commandante Marcos (in which the Zapatista partisans were either uninterested or which they proudly ignored). Others questioned the tendency of some partisans to conflate Marcos, the Zapatistas, the rural poor and indigenous peoples, and even radical Catholicism and the local NGOs. Some young radicals who attended one or other of the Intergalactic Encounters found themselves confronted by behaviour – of Marcos himself, of the Zapatistas, of the encounter-organizers – that seemed to them at odds with either respect for *indígenas* or notions of civil society construction. One Canadian videomaker enabled us to see the contradictions within Chiapas, and the problematic response (to her critical self) of Marcos (Cleaver, 1998; de la Grange and Rico, 1998; Hellman, 1999; Wild, 1999).

So problems do remain, particularly for solidarity on the North–South axis and direction. The Western left, which would be cautious, sceptical or downright suspicious of any would-be icon in the North,

still seems to need, as in the nineteenth century (Billington, 1980) its iconic figures, transformatory (and transformed) movements, its promised (is)lands and highlands. And then to find them in faraway places with strange-sounding names. And to endow them with the purity, simplicity, unity, purpose and capacity that the metropolitan left feels itself to lack.

I believe the new global solidarity movements still need their exemplary personalities, exceptional movements and poetic inspiration. But idolatry is clearly an invitation to iconoclasm (see Hitchens, 1995, on Mother Teresa). And gods to be worshipped inevitably turn into gods that failed (or, in the perennial, if slightly more secular chant of the romantic left, 'betrayed', 'sold out', 'become reformist', 'got incorporated'). So we still need ways of projecting and celebrating such internationalist figures and movements whilst keeping our powder dry. We have to relate to the exemplary figures, particularly if in far-away places with strange-sounding names, as neither saints nor sinners but *compañer@s* (an attractively ambiguous contemporary Latin American form, meaning colleague, friend, comrade and even sexual partner, of either gender). This is today not only necessary but becoming possible (Waterman, 1999b).

Re-articulating the Old Internationalism

What I call the 'new global solidarity' is evidently becoming a many-splendoured thing. Writing my book in the 1990s I had a restricted literature to draw on and therefore had to invent my own names for new (and even old) things. Today I find myself overwhelmed by writings on or related to 'internationalism', most of which conceptualize or articulate this quite differently. To 'articulate', it should be remembered, means both to express and to join. Some connect the new phenomenon with the cautious, bland and untheoretical concept 'transnational' (which does not even have an 'ism' to its name!). Then there is the burgeoning literature on 'global civil society', which frequently foregrounds NGOs rather than social movements. And that on 'cosmopolitan democracy', which does not necessarily refer to either. Finally, there is a literature on international 'resistance to' globalization, on 'anti-globalization' movements, which does not necessarily see beyond this negative. Accompanying the printed literary form is the growing wave of videos, electronic lists and websites, which go far

beyond Seattle. I find these overlapping waves and voices both gratifying and challenging. They look likely to lead to a dialogue now long overdue. (For a meagre sample of what is becoming available, see the Resources list below.)

Amongst the major written works, I have to foreground the monumental trilogy on our new networked capitalist society – or on global society as network – by Manuel Castells (1996–8). Whilst in no sense an activist work, it describes, analyses and theorizes the new global capitalism and its counterpoints in a manner that cannot but provoke activist thinking. There is the perceptive and theoretically sophisticated work on ‘transnational advocacy networks’ by Keck and Sikkink (1998). Even more perceptive and theoretical, perhaps, is the work of Brysk (2000) on indigenous movements in Latin America and on the global stage. This addresses the literature on indigenous identity, social movements and international relations, if not internationalism. Highly significant is the short, accessible but theoretically informed and movement-oriented book on ‘globalization from below’ (Brecher, Costello and Smith, 2000). This spells out – as does no previous one I am aware of – an alternative agenda, in terms of means, relations and ends. Bearing in mind the movement’s nervousness about either specifying these ends or confronting contradictions within and between movements (i.e. utopia as both place and process), this is likely to be an important point of reference in future discussion. Amory Starr (2000) is addressed to ‘anti-corporate social movements’:

- 1 those addressing state institutions to constrain corporations;
- 2 those proposing a new international democratic framework; and
- 3 those seeking to de-link communities from globalization (contrast Katz, 2000).

Dale Hathaway (2000) has produced a rare case study of a *national* labour/popular organization, of internationalist inclination, related to a burgeoning hemispheric internationalism. With the exception (qualified) of Castells, all of these works originate in the USA. From the UK we have two collections that possibly suggest a movement of the literature from a focus on resistance to counter-assertion. Both are movement-oriented, both aware of the (labour and socialist) origins of modern internationalism. Both give considerable importance to contemporary labour. Where the first (Gills, 2000) actually surpasses the ‘resistance’ perspective its title suggests, the second (Cohen and Rai, 2000) explicitly

addresses ‘global social movements’ and their connection with a ‘cosmopolitan politics’ of a democratic kind. Major works from outside the North – indeed from outside the Anglo-Saxon world – are (again with the partial exception of Castells) still to be awaited. Which does not mean there is any absence of relevant political projects or documents (World Forum of Alternatives, 2000, and sites listed in Resources).

What these varied but often overlapping and complementary texts reveal is that – however the rose is named – this is becoming a recognizable political and academic area. What the literature does not yet really reveal is a dialogue (for which see below). Perhaps I should qualify this: the dialogue so far tends to be with, or about, a range of literatures related to internationalism, rather than internationalism as history, as theory or as political project (Brysk, 2000; Olesen, 2000).

Let’s not get carried away. Much of the critical literature on globalization still manages to exclude from the process more than a passing reference to corporations, people, classes and social movements. Thus even a fat reader on ‘global transformations’, and from an important source of innovatory and radical thinking on globalization, devotes to ‘social movements’ but six references, to ‘labour movements’ one footnote, to ‘solidarity’ three references and to ‘trade unions’ five references (several invisible to the naked eye). ‘Workers’ and ‘women’ are marginally better served, but not as agents of global transformation (Held and McGrew, 2000). Seattle may save us from another such closed eye to the most socially contested international process/policy since the World Wars and the defeat of colonialism.

Some Answers to Some Critics

Let me try to convince you, the (I hope) sceptical reader, that criticism of my hardback itself suggests a changing environment. The initial response to the book was overwhelmingly positive. It would be churlish to complain. But I could not help thinking that this had more to do with the then exotic nature of the work than with its quality. Fortunately, three critics have given me pause for reflection. And I am confident that response to the paperback will be more critical (providing me with something else to be non-churlish about).

The first of the three is Immanuel Wallerstein (2000), whose journal launched some of my earlier work on internationalism, and with whom I have occasionally sparred at conferences over the years. After fulsome praise he comments:

I get the feeling that Waterman is a bit depressed about the prospects of his new and far better brand of internationalism . . . Waterman is hurt. But we all need to draw lessons from it . . . [W]e need to reflect on the structural conditions that might allow the message to be received well. (p. 516)

He might find confirmation of my pessimism in what I am saying here also. But I thought, and think, that on this subject, more than others, we need to match maximum pessimism of the intellect with maximum optimism of the will. It is possible that he feels armoured against both by his World System Theory, a school of Marxist political economy I have always felt to be somewhat *hors de combat*. Be this as it may. Having been politically engaged with/in internationalism most of my life, and been occasionally mauled, also by comrades-in-combat, for either invading or defiling their territory, I may be over-cautious about the future of internationalism. I know feminist and environmental internationalists who have been similarly disappointed, or mauled, for speaking truth to counter-power. I think that by combining critical reflection on existing internationalisms with clear address to those engaged in such we can create new understandings of 'structural conditions' that permit us to release agency capable of civilizing such. It will require decades of intensive and sensitive work, in unglamorous places, before we can transform rhetorical declarations and occasional gestures into a new common sense amongst people at the likewise unglamorous shopfloor, community and grassroots level. (On such a new common sense, see Sousa Santos, 1995.)

If Wallerstein represents one extreme of the critical reaction, Kim Scipes (1999) represents the other. Kim, a *compañero* from the shop-floor labour internationalism of the 1980s and a perennial sparring partner, stands at the activist and voluntaristic end of the spectrum. Whilst giving my book a warm welcome, Kim felt I had gravely misrepresented the nature, including the internationalism, of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First Movement, KMU) union centre in the Philippines. I will not repeat the evaluation of the KMU (and its links with insurrectionary Maoism) which is in the book (pp. 125–7). But I felt that, in his almost unqualified identification with the KMU, Kim was reproducing the traditional North-to-South internationalism I have criticized above. In responding to Kim in these terms, however (Waterman, 1999c), I was reminded of my failure to write up my 1989 research on the international communication practices of the KMU. This was