

Focus-on-Trade is a regular electronic bulletin providing updates and analysis of trends in regional and world trade and finance, with an emphasis on analysis of these trends from an integrative, interdisciplinary viewpoint that is sensitive not only to economic issues, but also to ecological, political, gender and social issues. Your contributions and comments are welcome.

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In this Issue

CRITICS OF GLOBALIZATION ARRIVE IN CANCUN

Sandra Rodriguez

MONTREAL: MINI-MINISTERIAL, MICRO-RESULTS, MASS ARRESTS

Aziz Choudry

CHAIRS ABUSE THEIR POWER IN WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Aileen Kwa

SOUTH AFRICA'S SUBIMPERIAL AGENDA: Splitting Africa to launch a new trade round

Patrick Bond

IN THIS ISSUE we have a round-the-world countdown to Cancun: In Mexico, the mobilisations are moving while in Montreal the ministers made no progress.

In Geneva, the heat is on (and it's not just the weather) and in South Africa the people are wondering whose side their government is on.

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CRITICS OF GLOBALIZATION ARRIVE IN CANCUN

Sandra Rodriguez

from 'El Diario de Quintana Roo'

CANCUN, AUGUST 7: With the aim of preparing public demonstrations against the Fifth ministerial of the World Trade Organization, which will be held here from September 10 to 14, Walden Bello, Raul Bennett, and Peter Rosset of the network "Our World is not for Sale" arrived in Cancun yesterday.

After holding a brief meeting with the critics of globalization of the Welcome to Cancun Committee that is organizing the Forum of the People, the activists told the press that they did not come to promote, initiate, or provoke acts of violence. On the contrary, they said that from their experience in previous ministerials of the WTO, it was the government side that infiltrated agitators into the ranks of activists in order to unleash violence and that they themselves had been committed to preventing any violent response from their ranks.

Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South had this to say to the Mexican government: "You should not worry about us, since we come simply to defend our ideas and our rights. You should worry, instead, about defending Mexican sovereignty from the security forces of the United States during the meeting." Bello recounted his experiences in other gatherings, where US security forces took over control of the events and the streets during the protests.

The critics of globalization expressed their confidence that the Mexican government would understand their movement and not repress it, as in previous WTO ministerials. However, they expressed their concern with measures taken by some Cancun hotels against some of the anti-globalization activists, such as canceling their reservations "without giving explanations or saying they were acting under orders of the government, only to be told by the government that it knew nothing about the moves of the hotels. But this will not deter us from coming to Cancun."

According to them, farmers belonging to UNORCA (National Union of Autonomous Regional Farmers' Organizations), which invited them to Cancun, will begin arriving in the first days of September.

In the press conference, Peter Rosset of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, who also acted as Bello's translator, expressed his view that the meeting offered Cancun the opportunity of being not only the most popular tourist destination in the world but also having the distinction of becoming the graveyard of the WTO.

Bello expounded on three elements that contributed to the collapse of the Third Ministerial of the WTO in Seattle in 1999 that were beginning to reappear in the

negotiations on agriculture and other areas in the lead-up to Cancun.

He cited, first of all, the "serious" conflicts between the European Union and the United States as the two parties sought to preserve their subsidies in agriculture.

The second element was the "tremendous resentment" on the part of the governments of the South at the constant pressure on them by the governments of the North to open their markets without their gaining any benefits from the process.

Finally, he said, "We will see whether the third element will emerge in Cancun, and this is the response not only of the people of Mexico but also of the peoples of the world, since the event in Cancun will not only be a Mexican affair but one that involves the whole world against the interests of the big transnational corporations."

MONTREAL: MINI-MINISTERIAL, MICRO-RESULTS, MASS ARRESTS

Aziz Choudry*

Canada's ambassador to the WTO, Sergio Marchi defended the invitation-only nature of the informal mini-Ministerial held in Montreal from 28-30 July, claiming: "Someone has to act as the locomotive for the entire train". As many opponents of neo-liberal globalisation organise to derail the WTO, free trade's true believers must be wondering what happened to the railtrack.

Ministers and officials from 26 WTO member countries met in the Canadian city in an eleventh hour bid to jumpstart seriously lagging trade negotiations before September's Ministerial Meeting in Cancun which has left a deeply divided body struggling with major credibility and image problems.

High on the meeting's agenda remained the vexed issue of agriculture. Meeting host and Canada's Minister for International Trade, Pierre Pettigrew attacked both EU and US agricultural subsidies, and promised a successful meeting (for free traders) "so that when we arrive in Cancun, we are already hot."

But the rug had quite literally been pulled from under Pettigrew's feet little over a week earlier, when Montreal's Queen Elizabeth Hotel backed out of providing the venue, citing concerns about inconvenience to its guests. The nearby Sheraton came to the rescue, but not before the Canadian government and the WTO had been unexpectedly turfed out of one of the city's ritziest establishments. It was the first WTO meeting to be held in North America since Seattle and was accompanied by a major security operation which militarised and disrupted parts of the city for several days.

After Pettigrew's boasting that the anti-globalization movement had "completely disappeared", a well-attended anti-WTO teach-in at the Universite du Quebec a Montreal and a 2000-strong march and rally on the eve of the meeting proved him wrong. On 28 July, a march of a thousand activists attempted to reach the Sheraton to disrupt and if possible shut down the conference but was blocked by a heavy contingent of riot police. While Pettigrew "consulted" 'civil society' - some selected NGOs and business representatives - and posed for a photo-op, police surrounded peaceful protesters and made mass arrests. Demonstrations continued until after the meeting had concluded.

While the Montreal Popular Mobilization against the WTO may not have been able to shut the meetings down, the widely divergent positions of the countries selected to attend the Montreal meeting destined the talks to be a flop.

Pettigrew's apparent optimism about the meeting was shared by almost nobody, and became more muted as the days went by.

A draft Cancun Ministerial text circulated on 18 July had already attracted strong criticism for its predictable tilt towards the interests of the industrialised North, and its failure to reflect the views held by many Southern delegations on many issues. It further revealed the WTO's fundamentally anti-democratic processes which have consistently excluded the delegations from many poorer countries from having any input into its content.

Tension surrounds bilateral discussions between the EU and the USA over agriculture. At the conclusion of the Montreal meeting, Gregor Kreuzhuber, spokesman for EU agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler said that it "should not be misinterpreted that we are trying to cook up a deal between Europe and the US that would leave the other 144 countries in the cold." But that was precisely what happened towards the end of the GATT Uruguay Round, so it seems unlikely that many countries will be convinced. Fischler says that "the two major trading blocs have to lead by example, but it takes 146 to tango." Many countries are tired of dancing to a tune set by the US and the EU, in the interests of their transnational corporations as neo-liberal policies displace and impoverish more and more of their population.

The US favours direct aid to its farmers, while the EU subsidises farm exports and pays farmers for increased production. Both proposed cuts to agricultural subsidies, but in ways which the other party claimed was inadequate and protectionist. The EU is suggesting across-the-board proportionate tariff cuts, while the US seeks a single universal low level for tariffs, with bigger cuts for higher tariffs. Naturally, both formulae favour their respective corporate farm sectors. Meanwhile both demand more agricultural liberalisation - and commitments to open up other sectors - from the Third World, whose farmers are being displaced, plunged into poverty and despair by floods of subsidised food imports.

Other contentious areas showed little signs of "progress". The EU/US dispute over genetically-modified organisms went unresolved. The US remains dissatisfied with the EU, even after a move to allow the sale of GM foods if products containing over 0.9% genetically-modified protein or DNA are labelled. The US says it is pursuing a WTO complaint against what it claims is the EU's unscientific and protectionist stance on biotechnology.

Despite more promises, there was no breakthrough on the issue of poor countries being able to override the patents of pharmaceutical corporations in order to manufacture or import cheaper generic drugs, which has been a major sticking point, especially for countries struggling to cope with HIV/AIDS and other health crises. A few days before the Montreal meetings, Pettigrew accused anti-WTO protesters of screwing African AIDS victims - not the WTO's trade-related aspects of

Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement which upholds drug corporations monopoly patent rights.

India's disinvestment and telecommunications minister, Arun Shourie, claimed the support of China for his government's stance against the attempted introduction of negotiations on the "Singapore issues" (investment, transparency in government procurement, competition policy and trade facilitation), without explicit consensus. He said "there should be no last minute surprises sprung on delegates, which had characterised the past rounds of multilateral trade negotiations." He also warned, "We should not be asked to take the first step without knowing where the journey would end." Arun Shourie argued that unfettered agricultural liberalisation commitments forced upon Third World nations could spell yet more bad news for the millions of Indians dependent on farming for the livelihoods and food security. He spoke of a growing resentment and backlash from the Third World should people feel that the speed of economic reforms is being dictated from outside.

Now, politicians and officials are talking tough and playing hardball as the clock ticks down towards Cancun. A number of Cairns Group (agricultural-exporting) countries are threatening to walk out of WTO talks if they consider that not enough progress has been made on agriculture. Agreement on agriculture remains key to paving the way for commitments to liberalise other sectors, such as services, and to gain leverage for efforts to get talks on the Singapore issues after Cancun.

Canadians have no illusions about the implications of a potential WTO investment agreement. Under the investment chapter of the decade-old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) they have already felt how disgruntled corporations, through an investor-to-state mechanism can sue a government over measures which they claim interfere with rights to make a profit. Perhaps most notoriously, US chemical corporation, Ethyl Corp, used NAFTA to sue Ottawa for a 1997 federal ban on imports of a fuel additive, MMT, because it was toxic and hazardous to public health. Ottawa backed down, removed the ban, paid the corporation US \$13 million (it had demanded \$250 million) and apologised. Agreement to start negotiations on the Singapore issues would herald the repeat of this scenario in 146 countries, and deliver global capital a comprehensive and enforceable bill of rights and freedoms.

If the WTO fails to fire at Cancun, how will this affect the Free Trade Area of the Americas and other trade and investment liberalisation projects? As we head towards the halfway mark for the conclusion of the WTO negotiations set at Doha, after negotiating deadline after deadline has been missed, how will the free trade spindoctors concoct a success story out of failure? How to manage the ongoing resentment of Third World governments and peoples at having their concerns unceremoniously ignored as the EU and US once again take command of the centre-stage at the WTO? More

Doha-style bullying and dirty tactics? And will we see redoubled efforts to stitch up radical bilateral and sub-regional trade and investment negotiations such as the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) which the US hoped to conclude by the year's end?

From August 11, WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, who also came to Montreal, will convene daily meetings for heads of delegations to try to move forward on the gridlocked WTO talks.

In Montreal, South Africa's trade minister, Alec Irwin summed up the state of play, saying, "We have got a major problem".

As the WTO's legitimacy and credibility continues to dwindle in the eyes of the world's neoliberals, we should redouble our efforts to delegitimise the institution and the destructive model of "development" which it promotes.

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CHAIRS ABUSE THEIR POWER IN WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Aileen Kwa*

“Members can say whatever they want (in WTO meetings), but ultimately, what is decided is what the Chair says the meeting has decided” (Recent comment by a developing country negotiator.)

Since Doha, chairs in the WTO have followed the example set by Stuart Harbinson when he was Hong Kong’s ambassador to the WTO and chair of the general council. In the lead-up to the Doha ministerial, Harbinson submitted a draft ministerial declaration to the council “on his own responsibility”. Although this draft was opposed by the majority of members, Mr Harbinson disregarded the principle of decision-making by consensus in the WTO, did not include differing viewpoints on contentious issues (as is the practice), and totally sidelined developing countries’ objections to the text – even those objections which had been expressed in the strongest of terms.

In the eyes of many developed country governments (and a handful of developing countries) the results of Doha, which were very similar to the Harbinson text, was a major success. Another Seattle had been averted and developing country Ministers, under intense pressures, had capitulated.

Since Doha, all chairs of negotiating bodies have adopted Harbinson’s style. Reports and negotiating texts have been put forward “on his/her own responsibility” and have not reflected divergent views. Instead, these have been clean texts giving the Chair’s views of what the outcome of the negotiations should be, or what ‘in the Chair’s judgment’ could be a compromise position. The problem is that Chairs tend to reflect more the positions of the politically and economically stronger members in the WTO. Whether a Member’s position is reflected in the text finally boils down to a Member’s political clout. Wasn’t this what multilateralism was supposed to avoid?

On Friday, 18 July, the Chair of the General Council, Ambassador of Uruguay Perez-del-Castillo circulated a skeletal draft Ministerial Text for the Fifth Ministerial to be held in September. There are several problems:

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

First, the draft still did not include many details on most of the controversial issues on the WTO’s agenda such as TRIPs and health, agriculture and the decision on the Singapore issues.

The exclusion of the contentious issues is highly problematic given that there is only one month to go before Cancun (WTO will be closed in the last week of July and first week of August). Developing country negotiators know that there are drafts being circulated, for instance, on the Singapore issues, but these drafts

have not been shared with them thus far. Negotiators are very apprehensive that these drafts will only be pulled out of the closet at a very late stage and that there will not be enough time to take into account their views. Will the Chair then submit a clean text which excludes their views? What will happen in the Ministerial? Even the biggest developing countries, such as India, feel unable to control the process in Ministerials.

‘OWN RESPONSIBILITY’

Second, the skeletal draft text was circulated to Members on the Chair’s ‘own responsibility’.

This raises the question of whether the chair of the general council intends to follow the example of Harbinson and submit to Cancun a draft ‘on his own responsibility’, a draft that does not have consensus and ignores the views of the majority? All indications to date seem to point in this direction.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OPPOSE CHAIRS RULING OVER NEGOTIATIONS

The issue of the exact role of chairpersons in the WTO was heatedly disputed following the Doha Ministerial. In January 2002, developing country members, still searing from their Doha experience where their ministers came under tremendous pressures to endorse positions they would have preferred not to, wanted to establish some clear rules of procedure that would limit the powers of chairs.

In a statement which revealed the depth of unhappiness, even anger which many negotiators felt about the Doha process and its complete disregard of proper procedures in those negotiations, the African Group, in the first Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) meeting in January 2002 said,

“The African Group, together with other delegations, had made the setting up of ground rules a pre-condition to agreeing to the chairmanship of the Director-General (to the TNC). The Group could not understand why in a rules-based organization some of its partners had been averse to this proposal. The Group noted that the General Council Chairman had set out in his statement some rules in this regard, which were, however, still short of what the Group thought would give the right level of comfort. It maintained convinced, for example, that any Chairperson should not submit on his own authority a negotiating text to a higher body. In the event that there was no consensus regarding the text, then any divergent positions of delegations should be clearly reflected.” (TNC 28 January and 1 February 2002, WTO, TN/C/M/1)

These views were also voiced by the Like Minded Group (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania,

Uganda and Zimbabwe) in its position paper on the role of Chairs and the negotiating process. In it, they said

“The Chairperson of the negotiating groups shall only submit negotiating texts which have the consensus of the group and not texts prepared on his own authority....

“Reports and draft decisions of the negotiating groups to be sent up to higher bodies, should be agreed upon in the concerned negotiating body by consensus. In case there is no consensus on any issue, differing views of members, with alternate suggestions for decision, should be reflected in the drafts to be sent up to higher bodies for decision.” (WTO, TN/C/W/2 29 January 2002)

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' COMPLAINTS ABOUT PRE-CANCUN CHAIRPERSONS

In the current frenzy of consultations organized by 'Friends of the Chair', developing country negotiators, if caught with a minute to spare, have many horror stories to tell of the current negotiating process and the ways in which chairs are abusing their positions.

Trade Facilitation

One negotiator related a meeting which took place on 8 July on trade facilitation. It was yet another informal 'heads of delegations' meeting (where all are invited but only some can attend since the proliferation of such meetings in recent weeks have made it impossible for resource-stretched delegations to be physically present in all of them).

At that meeting, Mr Milan Hovarka, the Czech Republic Ambassador who is facilitating the discussions concluded that from the way discussions are going, in his judgment, consensus on agreement to launch negotiations in trade facilitation is just round the corner.

He was clearly disregarding the fact that just two weeks before, African Union (AU) trade ministers had declared on the subject of the Singapore issues - of which trade facilitation is one - that “taking into account the potential serious implications of these issues on our economies, we call for the process of clarification to be continued” (Grand Baie Ministerial Declaration on the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the WTO, 20 June 2003).

Following such a preposterous statement from the chair, the representative of Pakistan raised his flag and commented that developing countries have many problems with agreeing to binding rules in trade facilitation and have been very vocal about this in the consultations and that he did not see how the Chair could give a factual report without capturing these views.

The EC representative immediately countered Pakistan, saying that Pakistan was misrepresenting the developing countries and that many developing countries are ready to take on rules. As he was speaking, the representative of Costa Rica raised the flag and the EC spokesperson

immediately added that he could see Costa Rica raising its flag to support his view.

A delegate from India intervened at this point, saying that India agreed with Pakistan's assessment of the situation, that a large number of developing countries were not ready for binding rules on this issue.

Immediately after this exchange, the chair closed the meeting, citing reasons of insufficient time.

Agriculture

In Doha, developing countries were promised that special and differential treatment (S&D) provisions would be strengthened, 'making them more precise, effective and operational'. Unfortunately, deadlines for these decisions have lapsed. Currently, four S&D provisions have been referred back to the agriculture committee for decision. In the Agriculture Special Session on 18 July, Harbinson (currently chef de cabinet in the Secretariat, and also Chair of the Agriculture Special Session) said that he had prepared the report to the General Council (GC) – due to meet on 24 July - on those four issues, and he would submit it to the council his own responsibility. This caused some commotion in the meeting. Delegates following S&D reported that they have had only one meeting on these four agriculture S&D issues. Their comments made at that meeting were thus preliminary, and Harbinson had promised more meetings at a later date. These meetings never took place. On 18 July, following Harbinson's announcement of his impending report to the GC on these S&D articles, he was questioned on what basis he was preparing his report, since he had met with members only once on these issues.

Given the concerns expressed, Harbinson read out (but did not distribute) the text he had prepared on those four issues.

According to one delegate, his report was very problematic. The African group had submitted a proposal on Article 6.2 (S&D) and that proposal was missing in Harbinson's verbal report. Harbinson's reasoning was that their proposal was already part of the on-going agriculture negotiations. This reasoning was not acceptable to African delegations.

There was also an article on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) which developing countries had suggested, asking that the SPS Agreement should not be used as a protectionist barrier. Developing countries (African Group, Venezuela and others) want this issue dealt with within the Agreement on Agriculture (in article 14, which makes a reference to the SPS agreement). Developed countries' position is that this should be dealt with in the SPS Agreement. In Harbinson's verbal report, it had apparently been decided that the issue should be discussed in the SPS committee!

Several delegations immediately took the floor and said that the entire process (and substantive outcome) was

unfair, that the Harbinson's proposal should be properly circulated to members and that they should have the opportunity to comment on it before he submits it to the General Council (on 24 July).

After this and other such experiences, delegates in Geneva are convinced that the process is going from bad to worse. In the area of agriculture, many are also extremely concerned. After two and the half years of dealing with Harbinson's style of chairing (as chair of the general council in 2001, and from 2002-2003 as chair of agriculture), there is little faith that their views will be represented in his 'own responsibility' reports. In the last Special Session, (18 July), Harbinson promised that he was preparing a draft of the modalities on agriculture for ministers to agree on in Cancun. Questions are being raised on where his 'own responsibility' modalities would be pitched given that there is no consensus on the controversial agriculture issues. What kind of political games will be played so that the weaker members will not rise-up and revolt (as they did in Seattle)?

One delegate, so disgusted by the current state of affairs said, "This is supposed to be a member-driven organization but chairs are reporting 'on their own responsibility'. This should stop because the chairpersons are just dictating issues. They think they can write what they want because it is 'on their own responsibility', but these reports later become binding on us. When they prepare reports, it should be based on discussions that are taking place. But now, they are giving their personal views. This is unacceptable."

Another delegate said that in the heated negotiations in early 2002 (nominating the Director General as the Chair of the TNC), developing countries attained some procedural guidelines. Though it still falls short of what they wanted, one of the 'principles and practices' the TNC adopted was as follows:

'In their regular reporting to overseeing bodies, Chairpersons should reflect consensus, or where this is not possible, different positions on issues' (WTO, TN/C/M/1 28 Jan and 1 Feb 2002).

His delegation will use this article to pin down chairs if they attempt to overstep their powers and submit a non-consensus document to the Cancun Ministerial.

INFORMALS, INFORMALS AND MORE INFORMALS!

The other major problem with the current process is that the preparatory meetings for Cancun are mainly taking place in informal heads of delegations (HODs) meetings. All informal meetings in the WTO are unrecorded. The reason given by the developed countries is that formal, recorded meetings are not conducive for frank and open discussions.

There are, however, grave political implications for developing country members. If chairs continue their shenanigans, such as putting forward clean texts which do not represent many countries' positions, minutes of meetings help the politically weaker to at a later date justify their inability to accept these chair's texts.

This is very important in an institution where, as the Ministerial is approaching and the blaming game is increasing, blame is put on developing countries if they stall the chairman's texts, or continue insisting on positions that are not 'helping the negotiations move forward'. Negotiators here in Geneva (and their Ministers in Cancun) are/ will be branded as 'not being constructive'.

Records also guard against outright lies or misinformation that is often used in this game, particularly when developed country negotiators meet with their developing country counterparts. For example, EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy or US trade representative Robert Zoellick may tell developing country ministers that there is little disagreement on a certain issue (for example, trade facilitation) when, in fact, much apprehension and outright disagreement may have been expressed in informal, unrecorded meetings in Geneva.

IS A SEATTLE II SCENARIO BAD FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES?

Even as developed countries load up the Cancun agenda by insisting on starting negotiations in new areas (such as investment, competition which developing countries do not want) the blame will be shifted to developing countries should they stand firm in their refusal. A smear campaign, using the media, will be waged against countries that want to preserve their own national policy space, as was done to India in Doha. They will be painted as 'enemies' for threatening the collapse of the multilateral trading system. No developing country minister would relish having such strong accusations pointed at him/her, from its major trading partners.

But is a Seattle II scenario a bad thing? The developing world is right now being forced to liberalise and deregulate, even when their local enterprises cannot compete with the transnational giants. Surely the collapse of their local industries (as has already been taking place) cannot be good for their development?

On the face of things, the WTO is rules-based and democratic. But in reality, it is putting in place rules that are skewed against developing countries interests, and that are rammed through using high-handed tactics and outright exclusion, coupled with backroom bullying, blackmail (such as threats of stopping aid and loans) and bribery (offers of technical assistance).

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SOUTH AFRICA'S SUBIMPERIAL TRADE AGENDA: Splitting Africa to launch a new multilateral round

Patrick Bond*

The September meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Cancun will again reveal how little the African continent has gained from trade liberalisation.

This is not a short-term problem, but one that reflects durable problems associated with globalisation. (1) It also reflects the contradictory position of South Africa, whose trade minister Alec Erwin has achieved an exceptionally important position as a Third World negotiator working against the Third World's material interests. Erwin will, as in the previous WTO summit at Doha, be actively twisting arms and offering soothing commentary to the international media. But on most key issues, if the past few years are any guide, the United States (US) and European Union (EU) will bulldoze Africa, with Erwin pointing the way.

There is no debate about the magnitude of the problem, although interpretations differ markedly as to whether globalisation's ills are cured with more or less globalisation. Africa's share of world trade declined over the past quarter century, while the volume of exports increased. No continent is as oriented to exports as Africa. 'Marginalisation' of Africa occurred, hence, not because of lack of integration (as is often alleged by neoliberals), but because other areas of the world—especially East Asia—moved to the export of manufactured goods, while Africa's industrial potential declined thanks to excessive deregulation associated with structural adjustment. (2) In the process, rapid trade-related integration caused social inequality, in a manner that is now widely accepted even by honest World Bank staff. According to the institution's main econometrician of inequality, Branco Milanovic, 'at very low average income levels, it is the rich who benefit from openness... It seems that openness makes income distribution worse before making it better.' (3)

Openness since the late 1970s has had a devastating impact. The decline in the price index for the main (non-fuel) commodities dropped especially dramatically from 1977 to 1982, while the export prices of developed countries increased steadily. During the 1982-90 global expansion, the terms of trade of Third World countries still fell markedly, by 4% per year. Much of the decline was due to the drop in oil prices that began in earnest in 1986, but non-oil producing Third World countries also witnessed a negative 1.5% annual deterioration in the prices of their prices of exports relative to imports. This trend continued after the 1990-92 global recession, leaving commodity prices at their lowest levels since the Great Depression. (4)

In broader historical terms, the prices of primary commodities (other than fuels) have risen and fallen according to a deeper rhythm. Exporters of primary

commodities, for example, have fared particularly badly when financiers have been most powerful. The cycle typically includes falling commodity prices, rising foreign debt, dramatic increases in interest rates, a desperate intensification of exports which lowers prices yet further, and bankruptcy. The trend to declining terms of trade was especially devastating because of the continent's extraordinary dependence upon a few export commodities. The following countries suffer from reliance upon a single product for at least 75% of their export earnings: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda, and Zambia. The only countries which diversified their exports so that they claim at least 25% of their export earnings from more than four products are the Gambia, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Generally, across Africa, four or fewer products make up three-quarters of export revenues. More than three-quarters of all Africa's trade is with developed countries.

Export-led growth strategies pursued since the 1970s by virtually all Third World countries meant that Africa's market share of world commodity prices also shrunk drastically. In the 1970s and 1980s alone, the African market share of coca fell from 75 to 58%, of palm oil from 58 to 18%, of sisal from 48 to 36%, of coffee from 35 to 20%, of crude petroleum from 15 to 8%, of cotton from 12 to 7%, and of copper from 10 to 6%. The most far-ranging study of terms of trade put the income loss during the 1970s and 1980s at nearly 4% of GDP, about twice as high as that of other regions. (5) Notwithstanding falling prices and market shares, virtually no African economies made the necessary switch from reliance upon primary export commodities.

ALLIANCES FOR CHANGE IN TERMS OF TRADE?

In addition to African trade officials, there were others just as concerned—many of whom have taken to the streets at meetings associated with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and then its successor the WTO. In Bangalore, more than half a million peasants demonstrated in 1994 against GATT provisions that would commodify their access to grain, and many 'IMF Riots' occurred because of trade inequality and the overly rapid removal of subsidies and protection against imports during the 1980s-90s. Tensions came to a head at the WTO meeting in Seattle in December 1999. Not only were concerns about democracy, environment, labour conditions, indigenous people's rights and other social struggles not taken seriously by trade negotiators, protesters alleged. So too were Third World delegates alienated from the high-level 'Green Room' discussions conducted with a select group of influential delegates (from the US, EU, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Singapore, India and South Africa). (6)

In particular, disrespectful treatment of especially the African delegation led to a formal 'denial of consensus' by African and other Third World negotiators. (7) The Africa Group of ministerial-level negotiators used stern

language about the lack of transparency, which Erwin managed to moderate slightly, although he could not persuade the continent's delegates that his Green Room negotiations were in their interest. Erwin's final plenary statement at Seattle condemned civil society protesters as well as the US government, for its 'bad management.' The protests, he baldly and sarcastically misinterpreted, were 'designed (sic) to give us some insight into the pressures' on northern negotiators from their own constituencies. (8)

Erwin was not the only irritable leader in Pretoria. As South Africa's finance minister Trevor Manuel told a seminar eleven months later, in a prepared speech that reflected a distinct lack of understanding of the Seattle conflict, 'If the governments and civil society of the developed world are serious about the fight against global poverty, they should be more comfortable taking a dose of the "free trade" medicine that they so liberally prescribe to the developing world.' (9) Tellingly, however, memories are selective on this point. Environment minister Valli Moosa claimed in a 2002 interview, 'Seattle clearly struck a chord with many of us in developing countries, even in government. Frankly, those people in the streets of Seattle were speaking for us.' (Moosa's intention was to distinguish the good Seattle protesters from the bad Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development protesters who 'were trying to replicate the dramatic events of Seattle in a completely wrong context.')

(10) The tension between Erwin on the one hand, and African negotiators and civil society activists on the other, grew before and after Doha. (11) As Dot Keet, trade analyst with Cape Town-based Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) put it, Pretoria 'failed, within and after Seattle, to use its political/moral weight and democratic kudos to actively prioritise real institutional reforms as an essential pre-condition to any other discussions in or on the WTO.' Erwin also failed by accepting a 'Friend of the Chair' position within what Keet described as Doha's 'even more flagrantly inequitable and undemocratic processes.' (12) An African civil society summit declaration repeated this point in June 2003: 'The manipulative and undemocratic practices initiated at Doha, such as the appointments of Friends of the Chair in informal working groups, which make undemocratic decisions on key issues, is being institutionalised at the WTO in the run up to Cancun.' (13)

As the November 2001 Doha conference agenda emerged, social movement critics united with the more ambitious of African delegations. Erwin viewed their arguments with disdain: Africans and other Third World delegates 'merely articulate extremely basic positions and very seldom get beyond that.' (14) Pretoria chose to work most closely with Egypt, even though the more aggressive—and reportedly most effective—African ministerial delegations to the WTO meetings were from Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe. During the five months prior to Doha, several regional meetings were held in which Erwin attempted to put forward the pro-WTO ('new round', or 'broad-based agenda') position: Pretoria

(Southern African Development Community trade ministers), Zanzibar (LDC trade ministers), Cairo (COMESA trade ministers), (15) and Abuja (African trade ministers). (16)

There was some question, less than two months after the September 11 terrorist attacks, whether Doha would even take place. The United States government and its leading multinational corporations were willing to bend over backwards, stylistically, to maintain the pretense of international cooperation. But with respect to content, the Doha agreement amplified the free-trade agenda that had generated such intense unevenness, inequality, eco-destruction and women's suffering over the previous decades. SEATINI's Raj Patel explains that the agreement—which adds many new areas of trade and investment liberalisation—will have the effect of bullying the world's weakest countries even more:

"In Seattle, Southern governments refused to sign a declaration not because they opposed the entrenchment of neoliberalism and the elite class bias that comes with it, but because they had been roughly treated. Delegates had not been able to enter meetings, and the US negotiating team had rubbed Southern inferiority in their faces..."

"In Doha, by contrast, United States Trade Representative Robert Zoellick was a dealer, a broker of accord, a merchant of consensus. This new-found humility evidently pushed the buttons of the developing country elite. So they signed. This should come as no surprise. These are the elites that milk and pimp the majority of people in their countries. It's hard to see why putting them in five-star accommodation and making them feel important might make them less venal." (17)

Most developing country governments hadn't taken a principled stand against neoliberalism. And yet their officials grappled with the issues and repeatedly pointed out the obvious: neoliberalism was killing their constituents. In the run-up to the ministerial summit, the Africa Group proposed that 'patenting of life forms would be prohibited' and that the Trade in Intellectual Property Rights agreement should not 'prevent Members from taking measures to protect public health.' (18) Thanks in large part to consistent grassroots activist pressure, the latter demand was, at least, grudgingly conceded by the US, EU and Japan. (19)

There was also an unsuccessful attack on the General Trade in Services agreement. Officials from the Like-Minded Group (LMG), plus new friends Cuba, Haiti, India, Kenya, Peru and Venezuela, offered an eloquent critique of the services agreement that is worth excerpting at length. It appears a rare case of Third World elites speaking truth to power (even if they crumbled under pressure in the final hours):

"Developing countries have clearly not received the benefits they thought they would. Developed countries continue to be heavily regulated in the form of maintaining

trade barriers especially in several sectors of interest to developing countries. For example, technical standards and licensing in certain professional services, is used to effectively restrict entry by developing countries into the industry...

“The regulatory initiatives taken by developing countries would already seem to be having a negative impact on them since many developing countries have adopted regulations that have turned out to be more suited to the needs and level of development of services industries of the developed countries...”

“There is the danger that re-regulation as promoted in Article VI could in fact become deregulation [and that this] could be fundamentally incompatible with the requirement or the desire of many governments to provide basic public services for their people, especially since certain sections of their population may not be able to afford to pay market prices for these services...”

“Many services markets are dominated by only a few large firms from developed countries and a number of small players. The top 20 service exporters are mainly from developed countries...”

“Liberalisation under these circumstances of unequal competition has aggravated the alarming divide in supply capacity between developed and developing countries...”

“Developing countries’ small suppliers are also disadvantaged in other ways, such as through discriminatory access to information channels and distribution networks...”

“Under conditions of liberalisation, privatisation of services could very easily happen since foreign corporations which are more competitive are likely to enter the new market and take over from the local company. This could have consequences on access to basic services for those who may not be able to afford these commercial prices of services.

“In addition, investments, when they come in, have often not been in sectors that could most benefit the host countries...”

“For the rural sectors in many developing countries, these basic services may not even be provided by the state, but by communities and local authorities which use currently common resources, such as water, minerals, fuels...”

“Through marketisation, previously available public goods are put out of reach of many when these are commodified in the process of privatisation. The experience of several developing countries with structural adjustment already shows that large segments of the population are having serious difficulties gaining access to basic commodities and services at prices they can afford.” (20)

Another fight picked, and lost, in Doha by the countries noted above, and El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal and Sri Lanka—concerned agriculture:

“These talks remain dominated by the EU on the one hand, and the US and Cairns group of exporting countries on the other. As a result, these negotiations have ignored developing country concerns about the problems our small subsistence farmers are facing... Since before Seattle, we have been pushing for a ‘Development Box’ to be included in the Agriculture Agreement, but our proposal has been sidelined. The WTO is supposed to ensure equity in trade, but the present agricultural trading system in practice legitimises the inequities, for instance, by allowing the dumping of agricultural products from the North.” (21)

The Third World bowed to its knees on this occasion, and indeed whenever, subsequently, the US and EU held firm to unfair trading relationships. One reason that, aside from the medicines concession (a pyrrhic victory for South Africa, as noted below), Doha provided systemic defeats for the Third World was that Alec Erwin had acquired what the WTO’s then director-general, Mike Moore, termed ‘very useful African leadership.’ (22) Someone needed to demobilise the vigorous organising by African state and civil society groups against the draft text to be considered at the ministerial summit. (23) Erwin openly admitted, ‘Our overall approach was to defend the overall balance in the draft text’, (24) and he was made a Friend of the Chair for this purpose, responsible for negotiating WTO rules. Civil society critics called him one of five ‘Green Men,’ since the function of the WTO chair’s ‘friends’ was to take the place of the hated Green Rooms.

Thanks to the WTO-pliant Green Men, the modus operandi had changed somewhat from Seattle, but the insider-elite retained various sources of power against the world’s majority. Dissenting delegates were threatened that trade preferences would be withdrawn. At one point, a live microphone picked up Moore’s discussion with the Qatari host trade minister about how to stop the Indian delegation from taking the floor.

The main trade analyst at Save the Children UK, John Hilary, concluded that ‘Bullying and blackmail have become an integral part of how the WTO works, as we saw all too clearly at the Doha ministerial. Time and again, developing countries have been forced to abandon their negotiating positions as a result of economic, political and even personal threats to their delegates.’ (25) Aileen Kwa of Focus on the Global South reports that “What broke Africa in the final two days, was when the US and the EU contacted heads of states such as President Obasanjo of Nigeria and other African leaders. This led to delegations in Doha receiving calls from their capitals. While Nigeria had earlier been quite firm in its opposition, it suddenly went silent in the final 13th November meeting.” (26)

The ground had been prepared when Erwin met the African, ACP and Least Developed Countries (LDC) group on the final day of the Doha negotiations. According to Keet, he “advised them that they had no choice but to accept the text, which was ‘the best possible outcome for them in the circumstances.’ According to participants and eyewitnesses, there were a number of angry responses to the South African minister, some even asking rhetorically who he represented and whose interests he was serving... The joint meeting dissolved in disarray. This was the final maneuver that dissipated the resistance of a major grouping of developing countries that many had hoped would repeat in Doha their role in Seattle. This was not to be. But all the pressures and persuasions, manipulations and maneuvers only managed to secure what one European MEP characterised as ‘a resentful acquiescence.’” (27)

SUBIMPERIAL SOUTH AFRICA

Erwin’s own Doha agenda was first exposed to local audiences in the Johannesburg weekly Mail and Guardian, which reported that although ‘Africa got a sop in the form of a promise to the developing world to help build capacity,’ the overall outcome was negative. The appearance of subimperial manipulation was even acknowledged at a Johannesburg think-tank notorious for egging Pretoria into precisely that role, according to the Mail and Guardian:

“The original strategy of most African countries, along with much of the developing world, was to block a new WTO negotiations ‘round’ until issues—still unresolved after the 1986-1994 Uruguay round and perceived as essential to boost developing nations’ interests in the world trade system—are addressed. But on the eve of the WTO’s fourth ministerial meeting, held in Doha from November 9 to 13, the South African government embarked on a broad drive to get African countries to consider, after all, a new round of WTO trade negotiations.

“The South African government managed to take the SADC along with it, but failed to reach consensus with other African countries, says the South African Institute of International Affairs... This situation, says institute researcher Carin Voges, ‘might signify to the Africa group of countries that South Africa, a prominent leader of the continent, does not have their best interests at heart, thereby compromising the future of the African renaissance.’” (28)

Erwin, meanwhile, described the ‘Doha Developmental Agenda’—for all practical purposes the ‘new round’ so strongly opposed by African and civil society critics of the WTO—as a ‘fantastic achievement’. (29) This meant, according to a fanciful Business Day reporter, that ‘South Africa is now part of the Big Five of global trade’ (alongside the US, EU, Japan and Canada). (30)

In reality, Keet concluded, ‘South Africa’s role is not so much a bridge between the developed and developing countries, but rather as a bridge for the transmission of

influences from the developed to the developing countries’. (31) The pro-WTO analyst Peter Draper likewise warned of likely worsening ‘African suspicion’ of Erwin in the run up to the next summit, Cancun, given divergent interests: ‘It will be difficult for South Africa to cooperatively develop and maintain common African positions in the WTO negotiations.’ (32)

US/EU GRATITUDE

Erwin’s agenda was not, however, succeeding – even on its own limited terms. Faced with a protectionist onslaught from the US mere weeks after Doha—huge steel, apparel and footwear tariffs and agricultural subsidies which negated claims of progress at the WTO summit—Pretoria’s trade minister announced an alliance with Brazil, Australia, and the 18-nation Cairns group of food exporting countries: ‘We will fight this out.’ (33) Yet a year later, Erwin confessed defeat: ‘The position is not particularly favourable... I think we are heading for a very difficult time in Cancun.’ (34) In 2002, other deadlines were also missed by trade negotiators concerning the ‘special and differential treatment’ required by the Third World, and the health sector’s need for exemptions from Trade in Intellectual Property Rights pharmaceutical patent provisions. Even in mid-2003, there were still no clear rules of procedure, a Cancun chairman’s text was being foisted upon Cancun delegates (instead of the chair facilitating a member’s text), and invitation-only mini-ministerials further eroded the legitimacy of the decision-making processes.

Difficulties with the US in particular were obvious throughout the post-Doha period. US Treasury undersecretary John Taylor explained the Bush regime’s hypocrisy quite casually, ‘You take steps forward and move back. That’s always the case.’ (35) Just before the G8 Summit at Evian, France, Bush and Blair announced their opposition to host president Jacques Chirac’s plan to halt dumping of subsidised Western food in Africa. (36) Yet Bush proposed increasing his own government’s aid-related subsidies on agricultural exports and also argued that ‘European governments should join—not hinder—the great cause of ending hunger in Africa,’ by both dropping their internal agricultural subsidies and permitting trade in genetically-modified foodstuffs. (37)

As a result, according to six leading African Global justice movements that met near Evian, ‘The 2003 G8 was ultimately a disaster for African farmers. It failed to adopt even limited proposals for a moratorium on reducing European and American tariff duties and subsidies for US and European agriculture. These policies are perverse. While millions of African farmers, most women’s livelihoods, are ruined by these policies, European livestock are ensured major state subsidies.’ (38)

Another example of the Bush regime’s imposition of unsustainable development on Africa was the genetically-modified (GM) food controversy. The EU, Australia, Japan, China, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia (i.e., more than half

the world) had banned GM trade and production, so Bush was clearly desperate for new markets in Africa, as he revealed to the US-Africa Business Summit shortly before his July 2003 trip:

“To help Africa become more self-sufficient in the production of food, I have proposed the initiative to end hunger in Africa. This initiative will help African countries to use new high-yield bio-tech crops and unleash the power of markets to dramatically increase agricultural productivity.

“But there’s a problem. There’s a problem. At present, some governments are blocking the import of crops grown with biotechnology, which discourages African countries from producing and exporting these crops. The ban of these countries is unfounded; it is unscientific; it is undermining the agricultural future of Africa. And I urge them to stop this ban.” (39)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference replied, ‘We do not believe that agro-companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food that is needed in the 21st century. On the contrary, we think it will destroy the diversity, the local knowledge and the sustainable agricultural systems that our farmers have developed for millennia and that it will thus undermine our capacity to feed ourselves.’ Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, interpreted, ‘The Bush administration is not straightforward. It is not poverty in Africa that is the most important issue for the administration but business considerations on behalf of the US technology and agricultural sector.’ As InterPress Service reported, ‘Zambia, citing health concerns, rejected GM corn in both grain and milled forms. One year later, President Levy Mwanawasa announced last week that this year Zambia will nearly double the 600,000 tonnes of grain it harvested last season, providing new fuel to the argument that GM technology is not necessary for reducing hunger in Africa.’ (40)

Bush continued his speech to the US-Africa Business Summit with a defunding threat, insofar as ‘money will go to developing nations whose governments are committed to three broad strategies: First, they must rule justly. Second, they must invest in the health and education of their people. And third, they must have policies that encourage economic freedom.’ (41) The latter would trump the first two, it could be confidently predicted. Meanwhile, South Africa, under Erwin’s direction, continued its irresponsible invitations to Monsanto and other genetically modified food producers both to import and to grow the foods on African soil.

TRADING LIFE AND DEATH

The most important example of how Northern-dominated trade rules generate underdevelopment—indeed mass death—must be the corporate application of intellectual property rights that prevent use of affordable medicines

in the South. According to a Business Day report, Erwin conceded that ‘a key issue for the developing world was agreement to allow developing countries to import or manufacture generic drugs to deal with major public health crises without running into patent problems. Erwin urged those pharmaceutical companies which were applying pressure to block a deal to come on board. The US government is holding up a deal, under pressure from its pharmaceutical lobby.’ (42)

This was true, of course. Although Bush promised \$15 billion in new AIDS funding from 2003-06, this would be mainly to the benefit of US pharmaceutical corporations. In any case, Bush quickly backpeddled on his pledge by cutting the 2003-04 allocation in half and underfunding the Global Fund set up to combat AIDS, malaria and TB by the United Nations. (43)

In May 2003, NGO critics accused the Bush regime of having ‘an almost blind belief in the Intellectual Property system, without regard for the reality for patients in desperate need of newer, more effective health technologies and access to existing essential medicines. In view of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and the massive problems expressed by many World Health Assembly delegates in guaranteeing equitable and sustainable access to affordable antiretroviral medicines, this text gives the impression that the US has lost touch with reality.’ While the US insisted that intellectual property protection was the best way to promote pharmaceutical research and development, according to NGO critics, ‘Of the 1,393 new drugs approved between 1975 and 1999, only 16 (or just over 1%) were specifically developed for tropical diseases and tuberculosis, diseases that account for 11.4% of the global disease burden.’ (44)

Equally, Erwin had lost touch with his own constituents, for he consistently refused to use his regulatory power in the 1997 Medicines Act to lower drug prices. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) accused him of failure to prevent the ‘premature, predictable and avoidable deaths’ of several hundred thousand people who died of AIDS during the early 21st century. On Human Rights Day in 2003, at the commemoration of 69 people shot dead at Sharpeville in 1960, Erwin and health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang were charged by TAC with culpable homicide. According to the docket filed at police stations, ‘During the period 21 March 2000 to 21 March 2003 in all health care districts of the Republic of South Africa, both accused unlawfully and negligently caused the death of men, women and children. They also breached their constitutional duty to respect, protect, promote and fulfill the right to life and dignity of these people.’ Erwin, specifically, ignored ‘repeated requests’ to issue compulsory licences for anti-retroviral treatment and also ‘to ask pharmaceutical companies to give voluntary licences for the manufacture of generics.’ Erwin ‘consciously ignored the efforts of scientists, doctors, nurses, trade unionists, people living with HIV/AIDS, international agencies, civil society organisations, communities and faith leaders.’ Instead, he and Tshabalala-Msimang ‘repeatedly delayed the

implementation of the Medicines and Related Substances and Control Amendment Act and its Regulations.’ Erwin was ‘aware of the measures implemented in other countries like Brazil to increase access to essential medicines, including anti-retrovirals, but has denied offers by such countries to transfer technology and provide other assistance.’ Instead, he and Tshabalala-Msimang ‘directed their will towards ensuring government policy is the non-provision of anti-retrovirals. Accused knew and foresaw that this would cause the deaths of many people but remained undeterred by this probability.’ Erwin’s ‘conduct in failing to make these medicines available to people who need them does not meet the standards of a reasonable person,’ TAC concluded. (45) Characteristic of the growing paranoia in Pretoria, the police did not take the case seriously, and instead clubbed peaceful TAC protesters in Durban, as if Sharpeville Day was an excuse to remind the masses of the state’s monopoly on violence.

A WAY FORWARD—DEGLOBALISATION AND DECOMMODIFICATION

There appear no ways of changing the rules of the WTO from the inside and no basis for trusting South Africa’s subimperial government to use its substantial international influence in Africa’s favour.

Is there an alternative? In 1985, Africa’s leading political economist, Samir Amin, famously argues for a ‘delinking’ strategy that ‘is not synonymous with autarky, but rather with the subordination of external relations to the logic of internal development... permeated with the multiplicity of divergent interests.’ (46) In 2002, a restatement of Amin’s delinking theme came from Focus on the Global South director Walden Bello, in his book *Deglobalization*: ‘I am not talking about withdrawing from the international economy. I am speaking about reorienting our economies from production for export to production for the local market.’ (47)

In practical terms, there are numerous African activists committed to taking forward campaigns against the WTO. The Africa Trade Network, for example, has been active opposing AGOA. A well-organised movement in Mauritius prepared a major protest against George W. Bush’s attempt to establish free trade with Africa in January 2003. Inequitable capitalist trade relations are also tackled regularly by an important NGO from Accra, Isodec, which is affiliated to the Penang-based Third World Network. The Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network includes key participants—the African Organisation on Debt and Development (Harare); Africa Trade Network (Southern Africa); Alternative Information and Development Center; Associacao para Desenvolvimento Rural de Angola; church and ecumenical groups from most countries; trade unions; the Gender and Trade Network (Southern Africa); Jubilee groups from Angola, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia; Ledikasyon pu Travayer (Workers Education-Mauritius); Mwelekeo wa NGO (Mwengo-Zimbabwe); the Swaziland Youth Congress and Swaziland Campaign Against Poverty and

Economic Inequality; and the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development—which resolved at an alternative trade summit in Windhoek in August 2000,

“that the governments of our countries have for long mainly engaged in rhetorical declarations about national development, and development cooperation and regional integration, with few effective achievements; are mainly concerned with preserving and promoting their own individual and group status, power and privileges, and their personal and aspirant-class appropriation of our nations’ resources; and, for these reasons, are frequently engaged in divisive competition and even dangerous conflicts amongst themselves at the expense of the interests of the people at national and regional levels;

are, at the same time, committed to supporting and defending each other whenever the interests and power of the ruling elites come into conflict with the human rights, and the democratic and development aspirations of their own populations; and are using SADC as a self-serving ‘old boys’ club’ for such mutual support; are increasingly responsive and subordinate to external inducements and pressures from governmental agencies in the richest industrialised countries, and their global corporations, banks and other financial organisations, and the ‘multilateral’ institutions dominated and used by them.”

The tough criticism is increasingly matched by active campaigning for alternative politics, policies and development strategies. Resistance to the commodification of nature and society appears to be advancing well in many African countries, so that the WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services—which would privatise water, electricity, healthcare and many other services—is being repelled by mass-popular struggles (as well as the sheer difficulty of extracting profits from the world’s poorest people). According to the World Bank, private sector investments in Third World utilities dropped in 2001 to half the \$120 billion level of 1997. ‘We have agreed to take the commercial risk, but it is the political risks that kill you,’ according to Mike Curtin of Bechtel Group (which suffered such large losses in the April 2000 anti-privatisation revolts in Cochabamba, Bolivia). ‘My fear is that the private sector is being driven out of the water sector.’ (48)

In Africa, the key sites of these struggles are Ghana (where a Campaign Against Privatisation of water has extensive popular support) and South Africa. (49) The latter hosts active movements aiming for free access to lifeline water, electricity, anti-retroviral medicines, education, housing, land and even a ‘basic income grant’ (of \$12 per month). The debt-cancellation movement Jubilee continues to organise, and reparations lawsuits against firms that profited from apartheid investments and loans have begun to worry the global elites—especially the South African branch. During an April 2003 parliamentary discussion, Erwin pronounced that Pretoria was ‘opposed to and contemptuous of the litigation’ against apartheid profiteers, and any findings against companies ‘would

not be honoured' in South Africa. (50) When 20,000 people marched against the World Summit on Sustainable Development and Nepad in August 2002, in spite of the banning of the march until the last moment and periodic South African state repression of non-violent protest during prior weeks, it confirmed that the 'anti-capitalist' global movements for justice had arrived in Africa. (51)

In recent years, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe have also witnessed conflicts between popular movements and ruling parties. The continuation of IMF Riots suggests that both local grievances and the leftist critique of neoliberalism remain crucial to Africa's future. (52) The continent's increasingly desperate labour movement is also becoming more militant. (53) Some of the most impressive recent upsurges of protest have been in areas of what can be termed environmental justice. Illustrative examples come from Nigeria's Delta region, where in mid-2002, women conducted sit-ins at the local offices of multinationals just prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and in early 2003, oil workers revolted at several Delta platforms over wages and broader community demands, and took hostage numerous multinational corporate managers. South Africans in the Environmental Justice Networking Forum and far-sighted NGOs like groundWork work closely with counterparts elsewhere over environmental racism, dumping of toxics, compensation for asbestos, anti-incinerator campaigns and air pollution.

If the nascent African Social Forum continues to draw together some of the continent's leading activists, especially in regional and national formations that allow the Social Forum phenomenon to reconstitute from the bottom-up, it is quite likely that an 'African People's Consensus' will emerge organically from the cutting-edge struggles against the commodification of life. The WTO, Nepad and South African subimperialism together represent a formidable array of opponents to African activists, but a prior alignment of US-EU economic power with the white minority regime in Pretoria was also a seemingly invincible force. If the struggle against racial apartheid was successful on the basis of combined local revolt and internationalist solidarity, so too must Africa's battle against global class apartheid succeed, if the continent's people are to attain any kind of dignity. (54)

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NOTES

1. I make this argument in more depth in Bond, P. (2003), *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*, London, Pluto Press and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press; Bond, P. (2003), *Against Global Apartheid: South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance*, London, Zed and Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press; and Bond, P. (forthcoming), *Sustaining Global Apartheid: South Africa's Frustrated International Reforms*.
2. Arrighi, G. (2002), 'The African Crisis: World Systemic and Regional Aspects,' *New Left Review* 2, 15; Saul, J. and C. Leys (1999), 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Global Capitalism,' *Monthly Review*, July.
3. Milanovic, B. (2002), 'Can we Discern the Effect of Globalisation on Income Distribution?, Evidence from Household Budget Surveys,' *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2876*, April.
4. Barratt-Brown, M. and P. Tiffen (1992), *Short Changed: Africa and World Trade*, London, Pluto, p.3.
5. Elbadawi, A. and B. Ndulu (1996), 'Long-run Development and Sustainable Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa,' in M.Lundahl and B.Ndulu (eds), *New Directions in Development Economics: Growth, Environmental Concerns and Governments in the 1990s*, London, Routledge, p.6.
6. Tandon, Y. (1999), 'A Blip or a Turnaround?,' *Journal of Social Change and Development*, 49, December.
7. The story is told in detail in Keet, D. (2002), *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, Cape Town, Alternative Information and Development Centre.
8. Erwin, A. (1999), 'Statement to the World Trade Organisation Plenary', Seattle, December 1.
9. Manuel, T. (2000), 'Address to the Seminar on South Africa's Relations and Creation of National Wealth and Social Welfare,' *Rand Afrikaans University Centre for European Study in Africa*, Johannesburg, 20 October.
10. *New Agenda*, 8, 2002.
11. Further coverage of Erwin's negative role at Doha can be found in Bond, P. and M.Manyanya (2003), *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*, London, Merlin Press, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Harare, Weaver Press, pp.142-145.
12. Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, p.23.
13. *The Nation*, 19 June 2003.
14. *New Agenda*, 3, 2001.
15. At the COMESA meeting, Erwin successfully requested of the chair that all African NGO delegates be excluded (Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, p.26).
16. The Abuja meeting included an incident described by Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation* (p.28): 'In their determination to prevent African trade officials and ministers from hearing the views of NGOs, members of the SA delegation were openly hostile towards the NGOs present. This included a direct personal attack on internationally recognised NGO expert on the WTO, Martin Khor, director of the Third World Network based in Malaysia, who had actually been invited by the OAU to provide specialist advice to the African trade officials.'
17. http://voiceoftheturtle.org/articles/raj_doha.shtml
18. Africa Group (2001), 'Proposals on TRIPS for WTO Ministerial,' <http://www.twinside.org.sg>, 19 October.
19. http://voiceoftheturtle.org/articles/raj_doha.shtml
20. Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, Uganda, Venezuela and Zimbabwe (2001), 'Assessment of Trade in Services,' *Special Communication to the World Trade Organisation*, 9 October.
21. Friends of the Development Box (2001), 'Press Statement,' Doha, 10 November.
22. *Business Day*, 12 February 2002.
23. Hormeku, T. (2001), 'Text a Slap in the Face for African Countries', *Business Day*, 8 November.
24. Cited in Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, p.35.
25. Cited in Lynas, M. (2003), 'Playing Dirty at the WTO,' *Third World Network Features*, Penang, Malaysia, June.
26. Kwa, *Power Politics in the WTO*, p.24.
27. Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, p.35.
28. *Mail and Guardian*, 16 November 2001.
29. *Business Report*, 16 November 2001.
30. *Business Day*, 7 March 2002.
31. Keet, *South Africa's Official Role and Position in Promoting the World Trade Organisation*, p.44.
32. Draper, P. (2003), 'To Liberalise or Not to Liberalise? A Review of the South African Government's Trade Policy,' *SA Institute of*

- International Affairs Working Paper, Johannesburg, p.18.
33. http://enn.com/news/wire-stories/2002/05/05222002/reu_47285.asp
 34. Business Day, 20 May 2003.
 35. New York Times, 1 June 2003.
 36. That plan failed, in any case, to gain even EU support. According to George Monbiot (*The Guardian*, 3 June 2003), 'Chirac's proposals addressed only part of the problem, but they could have begun the process of dismantling the system which does so much harm to our pockets, our environment and the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people. We might, then, have expected Tony Blair, who created a major diplomatic incident last year when he rightly savaged Chirac for refusing to budge, to have welcomed the lost and heavily subsidised sheep into the free-market fold. But our prime minister, instead, has single-handedly destroyed the French initiative. The reason will by now be familiar. George Bush, who receives substantial political support from US agro-industrialists, grain exporters and pesticide manufacturers, was not prepared to make the concessions required to match Chirac's offer. Had the EU, and in particular the member which claims to act as a bridge across the Atlantic, supported France, the moral pressure on Bush may well have become irresistible. But as soon as Blair made it clear that he would not back Chirac's plan, the initiative was dead. So, thanks to our conscience-stricken prime minister, and his statesmanlike habit of doing whatever Bush tells him to, Africa is now well and truly stuffed.'
 37. *The Guardian*, 23 May 2003.
 38. African Womens Communication and Development Network, African Womens Empowerment Network, Congress of South African Trade Unions, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition and Mwelekeo wa NGO (2003), 'Joint Statement: G8 Summits 2002 to 2003: From a Trickle to a Drop,' Geneva, 3 June.
 39. Bush, 'Remarks by the President to the Corporate Council on Africa's US-Africa Business Summit.'
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