

ALTERNATIVES TO ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION: [A BETTER WORLD IS POSSIBLE]

IN OCTOBER 2002, the International Forum on Globalization released *Alternatives to Economic Globalization [A Better World is Possible]*. This book details real alternatives to the current rules and institutions of economic globalization. Written over the past three years by 19 leading researchers and activists from around the world, the book is a bold answer to critics who assert that the anti-corporate globalization movement does not have alternative proposals.

Written, not as separate essays, but by group consensus, by Jerry Mander, John Cavanagh, Sarah Anderson, Debi Barker, Maude Barlow, Walden Bello, Robin Broad, Tony Clarke, Teddy Goldsmith, Randy Hayes, Colin Hines, Andy Kimbrell, David Korten, Sarah Larrain, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Simon Retallack, Vandana Shiva, Vicky Tauli-Corpuz and Lori Wallach, the book offers detailed proposals for both domestic and international policy changes necessary to bring about a better world and allow the alternatives to economic globalization that already exist, to thrive.

Each chapter is summarized here in the most basic and straightforward layman's terms.

CHAPTER 1: A CRITIQUE OF CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION

Corporations have too much power, and corporate values are pushing community values aside at the local, state and national level across the planet.

The institutions and agreements of international trade policy, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), actively promote these corporate values. They are unaccountable to the people they affect the most, and they are not equipped to safeguard the community values that are being lost.

CHAPTER 2: TEN PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

An outline of ten principles to guide decisions and restore community values and local control to the way the world does business.

Democracy—Democracy means more than just governments and elections, but should also be applied to decisions about local control of natural resources, civil rights, and economic self-reliance. Central to this principle is the need for real accountability in decision-making.

Subsidiarity—Subsidiarity refers to local control, self-reliance and self-determination. Instead of international trade agreements having precedence and international institutions calling the shots, the needs and capacities of local economies should guide decision-making. Whatever decisions can be made locally, should be. Whatever power can reside at the local level, should reside there. Cooperation with other communities, as well as regional, national and global cooperation, are necessary and central to this concept. Bringing economic decisions back to the local level—where people are closer to the sources of power—offers far greater opportunity and promise for democratic participation than today's domination by corporations.

Ecological Sustainability—Economic activity needs to be balanced with environmental protection. Today, economic activity is based on ever-increasing consumption. As a result clean air, clean water, natural resources

and healthy ecosystems are sacrificed in the pursuit of corporate profits. The health of both the economy and the environment for future generations relies on our ability to achieve balance today.

Common Heritage—Natural resources, human history and basic needs such as public health, education, social security, and safety constitute a common heritage and right for all people. The right to use and share in this common heritage for one's livelihood carries with it a responsibility to act as a steward on its behalf. Corporations who seek to privatize these components and turn people's basic rights into commodities threaten this common heritage, and their actions should be strictly limited and in some cases deemed unacceptable.

Diversity—Cultural, biological, social, and economic diversity are central to healthy, functioning communities.

Human Rights—People tend to have strong, personal definitions for human rights; the term can stand on its own.

Jobs, Livelihood, Employment—Protect the rights of workers. Reverse economic policies that displace independent farmers from their land and fishers from their fisheries. Support economic activity that employs greater numbers of people. Restrict economic activity that harms traditional, subsistence livelihoods.

Food Security and Safety—International trade rules and industrialized agriculture are shutting down family farms. Biotechnology and pesticides that are used to maximize productivity are introducing new and dangerous health and environmental risks. Monopoly control of food systems threatens the food security and safety of tens of millions of people. New trade rules in agriculture must place a higher value on local production for local communities, and protect independent farming and food safety as basic human rights.

Equity—Fairness is missing wherever one looks in the global economy. Governing institutions, trade agreements and laws favor those with money and harm those without. Women make up the majority of food producers, assembly line workers and household caretakers, yet the majority of their work is unpaid and the overwhelming majority of corporate CEOs and global bureaucrats are male. Greater equality and fairness—between nations, between classes, between women and men, between ethnic groups—are cornerstones of sustainable societies in the future.

The Precautionary Principle—Look before you leap. When a practice or a product poses a potential threat of harm to human health or the environment, it should be restricted, banned or fixed. The standards of proof should be high, and the burden should rest with those who are promoting new products or practices, not those who will suffer the consequences.

CHAPTER 3: THE COMMONS

Natural resources, human history and basic needs such as public health, education, social security and safety constitute a common heritage and right for all people. The right to use and share in this common heritage for one's livelihood carries with it a responsibility to act as a steward on its behalf. Corporations who seek to privatize these components and turn people's basic rights into commodities threaten this common heritage, and their actions should be strictly limited and in many cases deemed unacceptable.

CHAPTER 4: SUBSIDIARITY

Subsidiarity refers to local control, self-reliance and self-determination. Instead of international trade agreements having precedence and international institutions calling the shots, the needs and capacities of local economies should guide decision-making. Whatever decisions can be made locally, should be. Whatever power can reside at the local level, should reside there. Cooperation with other communities, as well as regional, national and global cooperation, are necessary and central to this concept. Bringing economic decisions back to the local level—where people are closer to the sources of power—offers far greater opportunity and promise for democratic participation than today's domination by corporations.

CHAPTER 5: CORPORATE STRUCTURE AND POWER

The system by which corporations are legally structured, and the rules by which they legally operate, are fundamentally flawed and require fundamental change. This chapter outlines these fundamental flaws and proposes how people can use the democratic process to put checks and balances on the uncontrolled growth and power of corporate rule, and begin to make fundamental changes to restore community values to the way the world does business.

CHAPTER 6: ALTERNATIVE OPERATING SYSTEMS

It is not enough to just reform the corporations, institutions and laws governing the global corporate power structure. Basic operational economic systems, including energy, agriculture and food, transportation, and manufacturing, plus the measurements and indicators that society uses to evaluate its overall economic performance, need to be redesigned so that community values can be restored.

CHAPTER 7: FROM BRETTON WOODS TO ALTERNATIVES

Bretton Woods gave us the IMF, World Bank and eventually the WTO and, in turn, these institutions have helped create a global corporate power structure that is unaccountable, irresponsible and self-serving. People in every corner of the world are feeling the consequences of this unchecked global corporate power and its move away from community values. The Bretton Woods institutions should be decommissioned. But international institutions can and should have a place in the stewardship of global economic activity. Their highest priority should be the restoration of community values to the way the world does business, and they should be developed through the United Nations. ▲