

## *The Case Against the Global Economy and For a Turn Toward the Local*

Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (Editors)  
Sierra Books, 1996

I read this book because I wanted to understand what is happening to national economies worldwide under the new regimes of GATT, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization (WTO), Maastricht, and the old World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, established at the Bretton Woods Conference after WWII. I was not disappointed.

The editors are co-founders of the International Forum on Globalization, a new international organization of activists opposed to the global economy. Jerry Mander is a senior fellow at the Public Media Center in San Francisco and director of the Deep Ecology Foundation. Edward Goldsmith is founder and publisher of *The Ecologist*, Europe's leading environmental journal. He is author of fifteen books and a recipient of the Right Livelihood Award. Sierra Club Books invited them to compile this case against the global economy. Unfortunately, there are no articles explaining the European Common Market.

I learned the histories of the organizations named and how they evolved into the menaces they are to labour, farmers, the environment and nations. I learned how they are threatening democracies in every part of the globe as their legislatures rubber-stamp "free trade" agreements, in reality fashioned by the lobbyists of international corporations. To my dismay, I learned that protecting "international property rights" is more about patents

on biogenetic new life forms (seeds, animals, and microbes) than movies, CDs or video tapes. Heretofore forms of life had been considered *common property*, not patentable. Intellectual property rights agreements are the latest attempt to privatize our heritage, the gifts of Creation.

In one chapter, the history of corporations in the U.S. is explained as well as how citizens rights to control corporations have been eroded. Originally, corporate charters were granted for limited times, mandated to serve the public good, and dissolved if the company caused harm. After our Civil War, the courts began establishing corporate law, overturning those passed by state legislatures, though corporations are still chartered by individual states. Judicial law now protects owners of corporations against liability, charters them in perpetuity, and has given them all the rights of *natural persons* (freedom of speech, property ownership, etc.). Thus international corporations become super monsters, fictitious humans and inhumane; ruling and ruining national economies with the aid of their dispute-resolution agencies NAFTA, GATT, and the WTO.

However, we shouldn't be surprised at corporate antisocial behaviour, and no amount of pleading will change their ways. Information Age technology has only permitted them to become more efficient in their nefarious efforts at control. Corporations do what

corporations are set up to do - make a profit. They do so by keeping labour costs low, by depleting natural resources without regard to sustainability, and by polluting the environment, using the planet as a sink for wastes, without regard for the health of life forms.

What recourse do we have against the super monsters?

The book suggests building regional economies, tariffs to protect farmers and wage-earners, revitalizing local political and economic control, self-sufficiency, and ecological health. Sounds good but no one suggests *how*, given the insecurity of individuals worldwide.

The world has forgotten the wisdom of Henry George. As Fred Foldvary has pointed out: "The benefits of free trade do not go to the worker because of tax and land-tenure policy that concentrates benefits to owners of property rather than to labour. The remedy presented by Henry George is true free trade, with the rent benefits of the global economy being shared by all." Dr. Foldvary teaches a class on the Global Economy at John F. Kennedy University in California. Unfortunately, Foldvary was not one of the 43 authors in this book.

Jeremy Rifkin in his chapter on "New Technology and the End of Jobs" asks, "Who will be the last service worker?" He ends his article by saying, "Throughout the world there is a sense of momentous change taking place - change so vast in scale that we are barely able to fathom its ultimate import."

So forgive the Russians and Albanians for not understanding the corporate propaganda about the benefits of free trade and the free market system, because neither do we.

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