

On Friday night and Saturday, November 26th and 27th the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) held a Teach-In at Benaroya Symphony Hall in Seattle on the subject of Economic Globalization and the Role of the WTO. The following is a hypertext transcript of Maude Barlow, second speaker in Friday night's event discussing "The Multiple Impacts of Economic Globalization". She was introduced by the Acting Director of the IFG, Jerry Mander. In the real player recording of this available on the web, the following begins at 29 minutes, 28 seconds and runs up to 50 minutes, 43 seconds.

The ratitor *urges one-and-all* to join the IFG. It's Board of Directors and Associates comprise a unique and unparalleled-in-the-life-of-our-time collaboration of research, intelligence, and concern, magnificently articulated by scholars, diplomats, writers, academics, scientists, farmers, geneticists, businesspeople, and lawyers. By joining this collective, we support the further expansion of life's needs and thus become more infused with the energy to serve and honor all the life expressing itself throughout our planetary home.

The order form for the cassette tape recordings of this entire Teach-In is available at <http://www.ifg.org/tof4.html>. **They are magnificent.** Maude Barlow's 46-page *BLUE GOLD - The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply* is a Special Report issued by the IFG in June 1999. It is required reading for everyone concerned about the water of life that nourishes and sustains us, and without which there would be no life, as we define it, on Earth. *Everyone* is urged to purchase all these resources from the IFG. Listen to the tapes multiple times, study and scrutinize BLUE GOLD, learn what they communicate, share with your friends. The information in these publications is *extremely valuable!!!*

The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply

Maude Barlow speaking at the Seattle IFG Teach-In

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And now I'll introduce Maude Barlow who is surely one of the most inspiring battlers against globalization on the whole planet. Once she found out about the infamous Multilateral Agreement on Investment a few years she became like a whirlwind: she gave speeches in every Canadian city, a whole lot of American and European ones; she wrote two books together with Tony Clarke (also on the program tomorrow); she was on every TV station in Canada; she's tough, she's brilliant and she's fun too -- and she wins. Now she's on the same kind of campaign about the privatization and globalization of the planet's remaining fresh water. You can get her booklet *Blue Gold* through the IFG. Maude is a major public figure in Canada. She is national chair of the 100,000-member Council of Canadians in Ottawa. She was the leading battler against the US-Canada Free Trade agreement and against NAFTA. She is the author of five books on trade and education issues. And most Canadians I know say she could run successfully for Prime Minister of Canada -- if she only would!

Well hello Seattle. Wow. This is just dynamite and I want to say they should be very worried. They should be. I'd like to start off tonight by saying some thank yous on your behalf to a few people. Too many to name so I'll just name a few. I do want to say to Jerry Mander and Debi Barker and Victor Menotti and all the people at the International Forum on Globalization who have put this fabulous weekend together, Thank you for all of us.

I also want to say on behalf of all of us a tremendous thanks to Lori Wallach and Mike Dolan and Margrete Strand-Rangnes and Sally Soriano and all the people at Public Citizen and the organizing committee here in Seattle who have put together the incredible week that you're about to witness, Thank you.

I have a third thank-you to somebody who has been a Trojan Horse for us, a trade warrior for us for many many years, who brought many of us into this fight and who has

single-handedly taken on the WTO in an incredible way, who spent the last six months in Geneva sending out to us daily submissions on what was happening -- Martin, you might have been lonely but we love you -- Martin Khor thank you very, very much.

I've got two things on my jacket. The first is a button that says "Seattle, 11-30-1999, The Day the WTO Stands Still", let's make it happen. And I've also got a gold ribbon on my lapel. I spoke last night in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to the National Farmer's Union and a Canadian Farmwomen's Conference. The women asked me to take this ribbon to Seattle, to wear it all week to give me courage and remind me what we're doing here. They reminded me and I will tell you that although we have had record exports of agricultural products in the last year we have the lowest net farm income at the Farm Gate since 1926 when Canada first started taking any kind of statistics on this. So something is really wrong and I wear this proudly on behalf of the farmers of my country.

I came across a little quote from Woodrow Wilson in 1907. I thought it might set the tone for us as we get ready for this week. Woodrow Wilson said this about trade:

Since trade ignores national boundaries and manufacturers insist on having the world as a market, the flag of the nation must follow him and the doors of the nations which are closed against him must be battered down. Concessions obtained by financiers must be safe-guarded by Ministers of State, even if the sovereignty of an unwilling nation be outraged in the process. Colonies must be obtained or planted in order that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.

He sure got his dream, didn't he?

Here we are on the eve of the millennium, we're gathered to confront the largest concentration of corporate power ever assembled. Trade ministers and the negotiators of 135 countries are going to be greeted by the WTO host committee, co-chaired by Bill Gates of Microsoft and Phil Condit of Boeing Corporation. These folks have [boo's ensue from the audience] -- I know indeed, my dears -- They have promised their corporate friends that for a certain amount of money (and the more you pay the higher access you get), you can speak directly to the politicians and the trade negotiators. Needless to say there is no such official welcoming host committee made up of environmentalists and justice advocates and union activists, although I dare say we're going to give them the odd, unofficial welcome this week.

The WTO has become the most powerful institution in the world and I think we need to remember why we are here and why it is so dangerous because it now touches every part of our lives. What makes the WTO so powerful *and* so dangerous is that it has both the legislative and judicial power to challenge the laws, policies and programs of countries that do not conform to the lowest common denominator rules set by the WTO and to strike them down if they're seen as being hostile to unregulated trade.

In fact, as we know, the WTO has become the most powerful tool of transnational capital. These corporations work hand-in-hand with trade bureaucrats in Geneva and Washington and Ottawa and everywhere that they exist, to establish what is in essence a system of global corporate governance.

At the heart of the WTO is an assault on everything left standing in the commons, in the

public realm. Everything is now for sale. Even those areas of life that we once considered sacred like health and education, food and water and air and seeds and genes and a heritage. It is all now for sale. Economic freedom -- not democracy, and not ecological stewardship -- is the defining metaphor of the WTO and its central goal is humanity's mastery of the natural world through its total commodification.

I want to take my few minutes here tonight to sound the alarm about one aspect of this. You're going to hear so many different areas of concern around the WTO. What I want to address is the potential impact of the WTO on the very source of life which is water. The destruction of aquatic ecosystem health, of the increasing water scarcity, are in my opinion the most pressing environmental problems facing human kind.

The first myth to counter is that there is a lot of water to go around -- we're treating it badly but there's lots of water. This is not true. The amount of fresh water available in the world is only one-half of one percent of the total world's water stock. And every year that needs to stretch to welcome 85 million new people into the world. Yet we are depleting, diverting and polluting that finite supply at an astonishing rate.

Today 31 countries are facing water stress and scarcity and over a billion people lack access to clean drinking water. We know that 5 million people, most of them children, die every year from illnesses caused by poor drinking water. If we do not change our ways, by the year 2025, as much as two-thirds of the world will be living in either water scarcity or total water deprivation. This is the major environmental crisis of our time.

Ground water over-pumping and aquifer depletion are now an urgent problem in the world's most intensive agriculture areas. Water is being depleted many, many times faster than nature can replenish it. This means that instead of living on water *income* we are now living on water *capital* and we are facing water *bankruptcy*.

The global expansion in mining and manufacturing is increasing the threat of pollution and these underground water supplies are contaminating aquifers all over the world. 90% of most of the world's communities still dump their raw sewage directly into the waterways of the world.

At the same time, over-exploitation of the planet's major river systems is threatening another finite source of water. From the Nile in Egypt to the Ganges in south Asia to the Yellow River in China and the Colorado in America, these are just some of the major rivers that no longer reach the sea. And we've diverted and over-tapped and dammed our waterways to the point that they no longer exist in their natural forms.

All through Latin America, China and Asia massive industrialization is affecting the balance between humans and nature in rural communities. Agribusiness growing crops for export is claiming more and more of the water once used by family and peasant farmers for food self-sufficiency and industry is creeping up the major river systems drinking them dry as they go.

Already as big industrial wells probe the water millions of Chinese farmers have found their wells pumped dry and 80% of China's major rivers are so degraded that they no longer

support fish. Similarly 75% of Russia's lake and river water is unsafe to drink.

There is simply no way to overstate the danger of this water crisis to the planet today. The World Bank and many others have said that the wars of the next century will be about water. I want to emphasize that no piecemeal solution is going to prevent the collapse of whole societies and ecosystems and that a radical re-thinking of our values, priorities and political systems is urgent.

And yet -- and yet -- just as humanity is beginning to face this stark crisis, political leaders of just about every stripe have embraced the ideology of economic globalization. They are integrating their national and local economies into a single, deregulated global market thereby freeing transnational capital from the constraints of domestic law.

All over the world, governments are dismantling environmental legislation while allowing industry to police itself, essentially commodifying nature. In fact, forces are already at work that would see water become a private commodity to be sold and traded on the open market, controlled by transnational corporations and guaranteed to the private use of capital through global trade and investment agreements of the WTO.

In industries ranging from municipal water and waste water services, to an explosion in bottled water, to the mass bulk water removals by tanker, corporations are lining up to exploit the increasingly desperate global demand for water. "Water is the last infrastructure frontier for private investors", says the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development president.

The world of privatized water is overwhelmingly dominated by two transnationals from France, Vivendi SA, and Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux, the General Motors and Ford Company of the water world. They are joined by mega-energy industries like Enron that has just set up a water division headed by the dreaded Rebecca Mark who swears she will not rest until the entire world's water is privatized. Then, of course, there are global shipping companies eager to begin the global trade in commercial bulk water.

Governments and international government agencies are paving the way for the commodification of water. The UN Economic and Social Council Commission on Sustainable Development actually proposes that governments turn to large multi-national corporations for capital and expertise and called for an open-market in water rights. At a recent UN conference in Paris, governments proposed to turn water into a global commodity driven by market forces and higher prices and they called for an enlarged role for the private sector.

Now in this they have a good friend in the World Trade Organization. Because high on the list for negotiations this week in Seattle are Services. And high on the list within the Services sector is an item called "Environmental Services" which includes water. If environmental services are put on the table every member-country of the WTO will have to open its municipal water services -- and in fact the governance of all its natural resources -- to global private competition. And the transnational corporations will have the right to bid for public funding in these areas. By the way, this same service agreement is talking about opening up health, education and social programs as well.

Further, both the WTO and the North American Free Trade Agreement have adopted the GATT definition of a "good" which includes water. Now this is very important. Because Article 11 of the GATT specifically prohibits the use of export controls for any purposes and eliminates quantitative restrictions on imports and exports. The WTO and NAFTA both ensure what's called "national treatment" to transnational corporations which means they basically can help themselves to a country's water the moment it issues its first permit.

The GATT does have a provision called Article 20 which purportedly allows countries to use certain measures to protect natural resources. But the use of Article 20 can be challenged as a disguised barrier to trade and every time any country has tried to protect an environmental or health law by using Article 20 against a WTO challenge the WTO has won. In any case, the few measures allowed by Article 20 are not permitted under NAFTA which gives additional rights to North American corporations to sue for financial compensation if these rights are denied to them.

Already we have a huge case in Canada. Sun Belt Water of Santa Barbara, California is suing the Canadian government for 10.5 billion dollars in damages because the company lost a contract to export bulk water when the government of British Columbia banned its export in 1993. The corporation rightly says that NAFTA gives it the right to involve itself in Canadian government policy. I quote the President, Jack Lindsay, who says, "Because of NAFTA we are now stakeholders in the national water policy of Canada."

But Americans have equal cause for concern. Alaska has become the first jurisdiction in the world to pass legislation permitting the export of bulk fresh water for commercial purposes. A British Columbia company called Global Water Corporation has signed a contract with Sitka, Alaska to export 18 billion gallons of glacier water per year and ship it by tanker to be bottled in one of China's infamous free trade zones.

The company boasts on its website that the deterioration of the world's water quality is a great investment opportunity and I quote "Water has moved from being an endless commodity that may be taken for granted to a rationed necessity that may be taken by force." If Alaska were to change its mind, under the international trade rules as they exist, Global Water Corp could sue the U.S. government for all lost profit, present and future. And yet when several governors around the Great Lakes asked Mr. Clinton this past week if he would allow the water issue to be raised at the talks this week, he said No.

This must not be allowed to happen. Water must be exempted from both NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, as I might add, so must the trade in genes, seeds, air, health, education, social services, natural resources, and culture.

This is not to say that those of us living in water-rich areas of the world don't have a responsibility to those living in areas of water-deprivation. Particularly since we have to recognize that it's the corporations of the First World that have done such damage in the Third. But there is a world of difference between *water sharing* and *water trading*. You can be sure that under the WTO it would not be the world's poor who would gain access to water. Rather, countries, water-intensive corporations, free trade zones and wealthy communities able to pay top dollar, would win that prize.

This is just the first step to prevent the commodification of the world's water. In Canada we formed a coalition of civil society groups called Water Watch. We're developing what we call a Water Ethic based on the principle that water belongs to the Earth and all species, is a vital part of the Earth's heritage, and is a fundamental human right. Therefore, water must be preserved in the public domain for all time and protected by strong local, national, and international law.

At stake is the whole notion of the commons: the idea that through our public institutions, we recognize a shared human and natural heritage to be preserved for future generations. We believe that citizens and communities around the world must be the keepers of our waterways and must establish community organizations to oversee the wise and conserving use of this precious resource.

I quote to you a lovely way of describing how water is so personal to us by Michael Parfit from the *National Geographic*. He says

Watersheds come in families, nested levels of intimacy. On the grandest scale the hydrologic web is like all humanity -- Serbs, Russians, Koyukon Indians, Amish, the billion lives in the People's Republic of China -- it's broadly troubled, but it's hard to know how to help. As you work upstream toward home, you're more closely related. The big river is like your nation, a little out of hand. The lake is your cousin. The creek is your sister. The pond is her child. And, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, you're married to your sink.

In closing I want to say that it is my fervent hope that civil society, you and me and all of us who are gathering here this week in Seattle, will adopt this Water Ethic and make our mark as never before in this international gathering. And just who are we, coming together from all over the world, here in Seattle? We are the seed-keepers of democracy. We are educators and front-line health care workers. We are First-Nations people. We are anti-poverty and social-justice activists. We are committed environmentalists. We are working people from every corner of the Earth. We are old and young and everything in between. We represent the majority of the Earth's people and we demand to be heard in the corridors of power. We stopped the MAI in its track, and we found that we prefer winning to losing.

We put these people on notice we will be here beyond Seattle. And we are committed with our lives to building a different model and a different future for humanity, the Earth, and other species. We have envisaged a moral alternative to economic globalization and we will not rest until we see it realized. Thank you.

Tape recordings of IFG Teach-Ins are produced by Maria Gilardin's TUC Radio. As Maria explains, "When looking for a name, I came across a pilot's handbook and found the acronym TUC, an aeronautical term. 'Time of Useful Consciousness' is the time between the onset of oxygen deficiency and the loss of consciousness. These are the brief moments in which a pilot may save the troubled plane." Contact TUC Radio for a copy of the TUC catalog and a schedule of upcoming TUC broadcasts at Box 410009, San Francisco, CA 94141 Call (415) 861-6962 or E-mail tuc@tucradio.org or go to the TUC website at www.tucradio.org

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