

## **Preface**

### **Fences of Enclosure, Windows of Possibility**

This is not a follow up to *No Logo*, the book about the rise of anti-corporate activism that I wrote between 1995 and 1999. That was a thesis-driven research project; *Fences and Windows* is a record of dispatches from the front lines of a battle that exploded right around the time that *No Logo* was published. The book was at the printer's when the largely subterranean movements it chronicled entered into mainstream consciousness in the industrialized world, mostly as a result of the November 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. Overnight, I found myself tossed into the middle of an international debate over the most pressing question of our time: what values will govern the global age?

What began as a two-week book tour turned into an adventure that spanned two and a half years and twenty-two countries. It took me to tear-gas-filled streets in Quebec City and Prague, to neighbourhood assemblies in Buenos Aires, on camping trips with anti-nuclear activists in the South Australian desert and into formal debates with European heads of state. The four years of investigative seclusion that it took to write *No Logo* had done little to prepare me for this. Despite media reports naming me as one of the "leaders" or "spokespeople" for the global protests, the truth was that I had never been involved in politics and didn't much like crowds. The first time I had to give a speech

about globalization, I looked down at my notes, started reading and didn't look up again for an hour and a half.

But this was no time to be shy. Tens and then hundreds of thousands of people were joining new demonstrations each month, many of them people like me who had never really believed in the possibility of political change until now. It seemed as if the failures of the reigning economic model had suddenly become impossible to ignore—and that was before Enron. In the name of meeting the demands of multinational investors, governments the world over were failing to meet the needs of the people who elected them. Some of these unmet needs were basic and urgent—for medicines, housing, land, water; some were less tangible—for non-commercial cultural spaces to communicate, gather and share, whether on the Internet, the public airwaves or the streets. Underpinning it all was the betrayal of the fundamental need for democracies that are responsive and participatory, not bought and paid for by Enron or the International Monetary Fund.

The crisis respected no national boundaries. A booming global economy focused on the quest for short-term profits was proving itself incapable of responding to increasingly urgent ecological and human crises; unable, for instance, to make the shift away from fossil fuels and toward sustainable energy sources; incapable, despite all the pledges and hand-wringing, of devoting the resources necessary to reverse the spread of HIV in Africa; unwilling to meet international commitments to reduce hunger or even address basic food security failures in Europe. It's difficult to say

why the protest movement exploded when it did, since most of these social and environmental problems have been chronic for decades, but part of the credit, surely, has to go to globalization itself. When schools were underfunded or water supply was contaminated, it used to be blamed on the inept financial management or outright corruption of individual national governments. Now, thanks to a surge in cross-border information swapping, such problems were being recognized as the local effects of a particular global ideology, one enforced by national politicians but conceived of centrally by a handful of corporate interests and international institutions, including the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The irony of the media-imposed label "anti-globalization" is that we in this movement have been turning globalization into a lived reality, perhaps more so than even the most multinational of corporate executives or the most restless of jet-setters. At gatherings like the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, at "counter-summits" during World Bank meetings and on communication networks like [www.tao.ca](http://www.tao.ca) and [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org), globalization is not restricted to a narrow series of trade and tourism transactions. It is, instead, an intricate process of thousands of people tying their destinies together simply by sharing ideas and telling stories about how abstract economic theories affect their daily lives. This movement doesn't have leaders in the traditional sense—just people determined to learn, and to pass it on.

Like others who found themselves in this global web, I arrived equipped with only a limited understanding of

neo-liberal economics, mostly how they related to young people growing up over-marketed and underemployed in North America and Europe. But like so many others, I have been globalized by this movement: I have received a crash course on what the market obsession has meant to landless farmers in Brazil, to teachers in Argentina, to fast-food workers in Italy, to coffee growers in Mexico, to shantytown dwellers in South Africa, to telemarketers in France, to migrant tomato pickers in Florida, to union organizers in the Philippines, to homeless kids in Toronto, the city where I live.

This collection is a record of my own steep learning curve, one small part of a vast process of grassroots information sharing that has given swarms of people—people who are not trained as economists, international-trade lawyers or patent experts—the courage to participate in the debate about the future of the global economy. These columns, essays and speeches, written for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The Los Angeles Times* and many other publications, were dashed off in hotel rooms late at night after protests in Washington and Mexico City, in Independent Media Centres, on way too many planes. (I'm on my second laptop, after the man in the cramped Air Canada economy seat in front of me pressed Recline, and I heard a terrible crunching sound.) They contain the most damning arguments and facts I could get my hands on to use in debates with (neo-liberal) economists, as well as the most moving experiences I had on the streets with fellow activists. Sometimes they represent hurried attempts to assimilate information that had arrived in my inbox only hours earlier, or to

counter a new misinformation campaign attacking the nature and goals of the protests. Some of the essays, especially the speeches, have not been published before.

Why collect these ragtag writings into a book? In part because a few months into George W. Bush's "war on terrorism", a realization set in that something had ended. Some politicians (particularly those who have had their policies closely scrutinized by protestors) rushed to declare that what had ended was the movement itself: the concerns it raised about globalization's failures are frivolous, they claimed, even fodder for "the enemy." In fact, the escalation of military force and repression over the past year has provoked the largest protests yet on the streets of Rome, London, Barcelona and Buenos Aires. It has also inspired many activists, who had previously registered only symbolic dissent outside of summits, to take concrete actions to de-escalate the violence. These actions have included serving as "human shields" during the standoff at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, as well as attempting to block illegal deportations of refugees at European and Australian detention centres. But as the movement entered this challenging new stage, I realized I had been witness to something extraordinary: the precise and thrilling moment when the rabble of the real world crashed the experts-only club where our collective fate is determined. So this is a record not of a conclusion but of that momentous beginning, a period bookended in North America by the joyous explosion on the streets of Seattle and catapulted to a new chapter by the unimaginable destruction on September 11.

Something else compelled me to pull together these articles. A few months ago, while riffing through my column clippings searching for a lost statistic, I noticed a couple of recurring themes and images. The first was the fence. The image came up again and again: barriers separating people from previously public resources, locking them away from much needed land and water, restricting their ability to move across borders, to express political dissent, to demonstrate on public streets, even keeping politicians from enacting policies that make sense for the people who elected them.

Some of these fences are hard to see, but they exist all the same. A virtual fence goes up around schools in Zambia when an education "user fee" is introduced on the advice of the World Bank, putting classes out of the reach of millions of people. A fence goes up around the family farm in Canada when government policies turn small-scale agriculture into a luxury item, unaffordable in a landscape of tumbling commodity prices and factory farms. There is a real if invisible fence that goes up around clean water in Soweto when prices skyrocket owing to privatization, and residents are forced to turn to contaminated sources. And there is a fence that goes up around the very idea of democracy when Argentina is told it won't get an International Monetary Fund loan unless it further reduces social spending, privatizes more resources and eliminates supports to local industries, all in the midst of an economic crisis deepened by those very policies. These fences, of course, are as old as colonialism. "Such usurious operations put bars around free

nations," Eduardo Galeano wrote in *Open Veins of Latin America*. He was referring to the terms of a British loan to Argentina in 1824.

Fences have always been a part of capitalism, the only way to protect property from ~~would-be~~ bandits, but the double standards propping up these fences have, of late, become increasingly blatant. Expropriation of corporate holdings may be the greatest sin any socialist government can commit in the eyes of the international financial markets (just ask Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or Cuba's Fidel Castro). But the asset protection guaranteed to companies under free trade deals did not extend to the Argentine citizens who deposited their life savings in Citibank, Scotiabank and HSBC accounts and now find that most of their money has simply disappeared. Neither did the market's reverence for private wealth embrace the U.S. employees of Enron, who found that they had been "locked out" of their privatized retirement portfolios, unable to sell even as Enron executives were frantically cashing in their own stocks.

Meanwhile, some very necessary fences are under attack: in the rush to privatization, the barriers that once existed between many public and private spaces—keeping advertisements out of schools, for instance, profit-making interests out of health care, or news outlets from acting purely as promotional vehicles for their owners' other holdings—have nearly all been levelled. Every protected public space has been cracked open, only to be re-enclosed by the market.

Another public-interest barrier under serious threat is the one separating genetically modified crops from crops that

have not yet been altered. The seed giants have done such a remarkably poor job of preventing their tampered seeds from blowing into neighbouring fields, taking root, and cross-pollinating, that in many parts of the world, eating GMO-free is no longer even an option—the entire food supply has been contaminated. The fences that protect the public interest seem to be fast disappearing, while the ones that restrict our liberties keep multiplying.

When I first noticed that the image of the fence kept coming up in discussion, debates and in my own writing, it seemed significant to me. After all, the past decade of economic integration has been fuelled by promises of barriers coming down, of increased mobility and greater freedom. And yet twelve years after the celebrated collapse of the Berlin Wall, we are surrounded by fences yet again, cut off—from one another, from the earth and from our own ability to imagine that change is possible. The economic process that goes by the benign euphemism "globalization" now reaches into every aspect of life, transforming every activity and natural resource into a measured and owned commodity. As the Hong Kong-based labour researcher Gerard Greenfield points out, the current stage of capitalism is not simply about trade in the traditional sense of selling more products across borders. It is also about feeding the market's insatiable need for growth by redefining as "products" entire sectors that were previously considered part of "the commons" and not for sale. The invading of the public by the private has reached into categories such as health and education, of course, but also ideas, genes, seeds, now purchased,

patented and fenced off, as well as traditional aboriginal remedies, plants, water and even human stem cells. With copyright now the U.S.'s single largest export (more than manufactured goods or arms), international trade law must be understood not only as taking down selective barriers to trade but more accurately as a process that systematically puts up new barriers—around knowledge, technology and newly privatized resources. These Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights are what prevent farmers from replanting their Monsanto patented seeds and make it illegal for poor countries to manufacture cheaper generic drugs to get to their needy populations.

Globalization is now on trial because on the other side of all these virtual fences are real people, shut out of schools, hospitals, workplaces, their own farms, homes and communities. Mass privatization and deregulation have bred armies of locked-out people, whose services are no longer needed, whose lifestyles are written off as "backward," whose basic needs go unmet. These fences of social exclusion can discard an entire industry, and they can also write off an entire country, as has happened to Argentina. In the case of Africa, essentially an entire continent can find itself exiled to the global shadow world, off the map and off the news, appearing only during wartime when its citizens are looked on with suspicion as potential militia members, would-be terrorists or anti-American fanatics.

In fact, remarkably few of globalization's fenced-out people turn to violence. Most simply move: from countryside to city, from country to country. And that's when they come

face to face with distinctly unvirtual fences, the ones made of chain link and razor wire, reinforced with concrete and guarded with machine guns. Whenever I hear the phrase "free trade," I can't help picturing the caged factories I visited in the Philippines and Indonesia that are all surrounded by gates, watchtowers and soldiers—to keep the highly subsidized products from leaking out and the union organizers from getting in. I think, too, about a recent trip to the South Australian desert where I visited the infamous Woomera detention centre. Located five hundred kilometres from the nearest city, Woomera is a former military base that has been converted into a privatized refugee holding pen, owned by a subsidiary of the U.S. security firm Wackenhut. At Woomera, hundreds of Afghan and Iraqi refugees, fleeing oppression and dictatorship in their own countries, are so desperate for the world to see what is going on behind the fence that they stage hunger strikes, jump off the roofs of their barracks, drink shampoo and sew their mouths shut.

These days, newspapers are filled with gruesome accounts of asylum seekers attempting to make it across national borders by hiding themselves among the products that enjoy so much more mobility than they do. In December 2001, the bodies of eight Romanian refugees, including two children, were discovered in a cargo container filled with office furniture; they had asphyxiated during the long journey at sea. The same year, the dead bodies of two more refugees were discovered in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in a shipment of bathroom fixtures. The year before, fifty-four Chinese refugees

from Fujian province suffocated in the back of a delivery truck in Dover, England.

All these fences are connected: the real ones, made of steel and razor wire, are needed to enforce the virtual ones, the ones that put resources and wealth out of the hands of so many. It simply isn't possible to lock away this much of our collective wealth without an accompanying strategy to control popular unrest and mobility. Security firms do their biggest business in the cities where the gap between rich and poor is greatest—Johannesburg, São Paulo, New Delhi—selling iron gates, armoured cars, elaborate alarm systems and renting out armies of private guards. Brazilians, for instance, spend US\$4.5 billion a year on private security, and the country's 400,000 armed rent-a-cops outnumber actual police officers by almost four to one. In deeply divided South Africa, annual spending on private security has reached US\$1.6 billion, more than three times what the government spends each year on affordable housing. It now seems that these gated compounds protecting the haves from the have-nots are microcosms of what is fast becoming a global security state—not a global village intent on lowering walls and barriers, as we were promised, but a network of fortresses connected by highly militarized trade corridors.

If this picture seems extreme, it may only be because most of us in the West rarely see the fences and the artillery. The gated factories and refugee detention centres remain tucked away in remote places, less able to pose a direct challenge to the seductive rhetoric of the borderless world. But over the past few years, some fences have

intruded into full view—often, fittingly, during the summits where this brutal model of globalization is advanced. It is now taken for granted that if world leaders want to get together to discuss a new trade deal, they will need to build a modern-day fortress to protect themselves from public rage, complete with armoured tanks, tear gas, water cannons and attack dogs. When Quebec City hosted the Summit of the Americas in April 2001, the Canadian government took the unprecedented step of building a cage around, not just the conference centre, but the downtown core, forcing residents to show official documentation to get to their homes and workplaces. Another popular strategy is to hold the summits in inaccessible locations: the 2002 G8 meeting was held deep in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and the 2001 WTO meeting took place in the repressive Gulf State of Qatar, where the emir bans political protests. The “war on terrorism” has become yet another fence to hide behind, used by summit organizers to explain why public shows of dissent just won’t be possible this time around or, worse, to draw threatening parallels between legitimate protesters and terrorists bent on destruction.

But what are reported as menacing confrontations are often joyous events, as much experiments in alternative ways of organizing societies as criticisms of existing models. The first time I participated in one of these counter-summits, I remember having the distinct feeling that some sort of political portal was opening up—a gateway, a window, “a crack in history,” to use Subcomandante Marcos’s beautiful phrase. This opening had little to do with the

broken window at the local McDonald’s, the image so favoured by television cameras; it was something else: a sense of possibility, a blast of fresh air, oxygen rushing to the brain. These protests—which are actually week-long marathons of intense education on global politics, late-night strategy sessions in six-way simultaneous translation, festivals of music and street theatre—are like stepping into a parallel universe. Overnight, the site is transformed into a kind of alternative global city where urgency replaces resignation, corporate logos need armed guards, people usurp cars, art is everywhere, strangers talk to each other, and the prospect of a radical change in political course does not seem like an odd and anachronistic idea but the most logical thought in the world.

Even the heavy-handed security measures have been co-opted by activists into part of the message: the fences that surround the summits become metaphors for an economic model that exiles billions to poverty and exclusion. Confrontations are staged at the fence—but not only the ones involving sticks and bricks: tear-gas canisters have been flicked back with hockey sticks, water cannons have been irreverently challenged with toy water pistols and buzzing helicopters mocked with swarms of paper airplanes. During the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, a group of activists built a medieval-style wooden catapult, wheeled it up to the three-metre-high fence that enclosed the downtown and lofted teddy bears over the top. In Prague, during a meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Italian direct-action group Tute Bianche decided not to confront

metaphors

the black-clad riot police dressed in similarly threatening ski masks and bandanas; instead, they marched to the police line in white jumpsuits stuffed with rubber tires and Styrofoam padding. In a standoff between Darth Vader and an army of Michelin Men, the police couldn't win. Meanwhile, in another part of the city, the steep hillside leading up to the conference centre was scaled by a band of "pink fairies" dressed in burlesque wigs, silver-and-pink evening wear and platform shoes. These activists are quite serious in their desire to disrupt the current economic order, but their tactics reflect a dogged refusal to engage in classic power struggles: their goal, which I began to explore in the final pieces in this book, is not to take power for themselves but to challenge power centralization on principle.

Other kinds of windows are opening as well, quiet conspiracies to reclaim privatized spaces and assets for public use. Maybe it's students kicking ads out of their classrooms, or swapping music on-line, or setting up independent media centres with free software. Maybe it's Thai peasants planting organic vegetables on over-irrigated golf courses, or landless farmers in Brazil cutting down fences around unused lands and turning them into farming co-operatives. Maybe it's Bolivian workers reversing the privatization of their water supply, or South African township residents reconnecting their neighbours' electricity under the slogan Power to the People. And once reclaimed, these spaces are also being remade. In neighbourhood assemblies, at city councils, in independent media centres, in community-run forests and farms, a new culture of vibrant direct democracy is emerging,

one that is fuelled and strengthened by direct participation, not dampened and discouraged by passive spectatorship.

Despite all the attempts at privatization, it turns out that there are some things that don't want to be owned. Music, water, seeds, electricity, ideas—they keep bursting out of the confines erected around them. They have a natural resistance to enclosure, a tendency to escape, to cross-pollinate, to flow through fences, and flee out open windows.

As I write this, it's not clear what will emerge from these liberated spaces, or if what emerges will be hardy enough to withstand the mounting attacks from the police and military, as the line between terrorist and activist is deliberately blurred. The question of what comes next preoccupies me, as it does everyone else who has been part of building this international movement. But this book is not an attempt to answer that question. It simply offers a view into the early life of the movement that exploded in Seattle and has evolved through the events of September 11 and its aftermath. I decided not to rewrite these articles, beyond a few very slight changes, usually indicated by square brackets—a reference explained, an argument expanded. They are presented here (more or less in chronological order) for what they are: postcards from dramatic moments in time, a record of the first chapter in a very old and recurring story, the one about people pushing up against the barriers that try to contain them, opening up windows, breathing deeply, tasting freedom.

# Seattle

## The coming-out party of a movement

December 1999

*attempts to define*

"Who are these people?" That is the question being asked across the United States this week, on radio call-in shows, on editorial pages and, most of all, in the hallways of the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle.

Until very recently, trade negotiations were genteel, experts-only affairs. There weren't protesters outside, let alone protesters dressed as giant sea turtles. But this week's WTO meeting is anything but genteel: a state of emergency has been declared in Seattle, the streets look like a war zone and the negotiations have collapsed.

There are plenty of theories floating around about the mysterious identities of the fifty thousand activists in Seattle. Some claim they are wannabe radicals with sixties envy. Or anarchists bent only on destruction. Or Luddites fighting against a tide of globalization that has already swamped them. Michael Moore, the director of the WTO, describes his opponents as nothing more than selfish protectionists determined to hurt the world's poor.

Some confusion about the protesters' political goals is understandable. This is the first political movement born of the chaotic pathways of the Internet. Within its ranks, there is no top-down hierarchy ready to explain the master plan, no universally recognized leaders giving easy sound

bites, and nobody knows what is going to happen next.

But one thing is certain: the protesters in Seattle are not anti-globalization; they have been bitten by the globalization bug as surely as the trade lawyers inside the official meetings. Rather, if this new movement is "anti" anything, it is anti-corporate, opposing the logic that what's good for business—less regulation, more mobility, more access—will trickle down into good news for everybody else.

The movement's roots are in campaigns that challenge this logic by focusing on the dismal human rights, labour and ecological records of a handful of multinational companies. Many of the young people on the streets of Seattle this week cut their activist teeth campaigning against Nike's sweatshops, or Royal Dutch/Shell's human rights record in the Niger Delta, or Monsanto's re-engineering of the global food supply. Over the past three years, these individual corporations have become symbols of the failings of the global economy, ultimately providing activists with name-brand entry points to the arcane world of the WTO.

By focusing on global corporations and their impact around the world, this activist network is fast becoming the most internationally minded, globally linked movement ever seen. There are no more faceless Mexicans or Chinese workers stealing "our" jobs, in part because those workers' representatives are now on the same e-mail lists and at the same conferences as the Western activists, and many even travelled to Seattle to join the demonstrations this week. When protesters shout about the evils of globalization, most are not calling for a return to narrow nationalism but for the

borders of globalization to be expanded, for trade to be linked to labour rights, environmental protection and democracy.

This is what sets the young protesters in Seattle apart from their sixties predecessors. In the age of Woodstock, refusing to play by state and school rules was regarded as a political act in itself. Now, opponents of the WTO—even many who call themselves anarchists—are outraged about a lack of rules being applied to corporations, as well as the flagrant double standards in the application of existing rules in rich or poor countries.

They came to Seattle because they found out that WTO tribunals were overturning environmental laws protecting endangered species because the laws, apparently, were unfair trade barriers. Or they learned that France's decision to ban hormone-laced beef was deemed by the WTO to be unacceptable interference with the free market. What is on trial in Seattle is not trade or globalization but the global attack on the right of citizens to set rules that protect people and the planet.

Everyone, of course, claims to be all for rules, from President Clinton to Microsoft's chairman, Bill Gates. In an odd turn of events, the need for "rules-based trade" has become the mantra of the era of deregulation. But the WTO has consistently sought to sever trade, quite unnaturally, from everything and everyone affected by it: workers, the environment, culture. This is why President Clinton's suggestion yesterday that the rift between the protesters and the delegates can be smoothed over with small compromises and consultation is so misguided.

NOT

Paris 10

## FENCES AND WINDOWS

The faceoff is not between globalizers and protectionists but between two radically different visions of globalization. One has had a monopoly for the past ten years. The other just had its coming-out party.

## **Making—and Breaking—the Rules Mr. Prime Minister, We are not anti-globalization, We are the true internationalists**

October 2001

*In September 2001, the European Union President and Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt wrote an open letter to the "anti-globalization" movement. "Your concerns as anti-globalists are extremely valid," he said in the letter, "but to find the right solutions to these valid questions we need more globalization, not less. That is the paradox of anti-globalization. Globalization can, after all, serve the cause of good just as much as it can serve the cause of evil. What we need is a global ethical approach to the environment, labour relations and monetary policy. In other words, the challenge that we are faced with today is not how to thwart globalization but instead how to give it an ethical foundation." (To read the prime minister's letter in full, see [www.premier.fgov.be/topics/press/e\\_press23.html](http://www.premier.fgov.be/topics/press/e_press23.html). After the letter sparked considerable controversy, Verhofstadt convened the "International Conference on Globalization" in Ghent, Belgium, and invited a series of speakers, including Naomi Klein, to respond to his letter. This is the speech (slightly expanded) delivered at the event.*

Prime Minister Verhofstadt,

Thank you for your letter to "the anti-globalization protesters." It is extremely significant that you have initiated such a public debate. I must admit that I have, over the past few years, gotten used to something else from world leaders: either being dismissed as part of a marginal travelling circus, or invited into closed-door negotiations that lack any accountability.

I had begun to think that marginalization and co-optation were the only two choices available to globalization critics. Oh, and criminalization. Make that three choices. Genuine debates on these issues—the open airing of different world views—are extremely rare amid the tear gas and posturing.

But perhaps there aren't as many anti-globalization protesters here today as you would have liked, Mr. Prime Minister. I think that's partly because many in the movement don't see us here as their representatives. Many are tired of being spoken for and about. They are demanding a more direct form of political participation.

There is also much debate about what this movement stands for. For instance, I strongly object to your term "anti-globalization." The way I see it, I am part of a network of movements that is fighting not against globalization but for deeper and more responsive democracies, locally, nationally and internationally. This network is as global as capitalism itself. And no, that's not a "paradox," as you claim.

It's time to stop conflating basic principles of internationalism and interconnectedness—principles only Luddites and narrow nationalists oppose—with a specific economic

model that is very much in dispute. At issue is not the merits of internationalism. All the activists I know are fierce internationalists. Rather, we are challenging the internationalization of a single economic model: neo-liberalism.

If we are to have genuine debates like this one, what we are calling "globalization" must be recast not just as an inevitable stage in human evolution but as a profoundly political process: a set of deliberate, debatable and reversible choices about how to globalize.

Part of the confusion about what we mean when we use the term "globalization" stems from the fact that this particular economic model has a tendency to treat trade not as one part of internationalism but the overarching infrastructure of it. It gradually swallows everything else—culture, human rights, the environment, democracy itself—inside the perimeters of trade.

When we debate this model, we are not discussing the merits of trading goods and services across borders but the effects of profound corporatization around the world; the ways in which "the commons" is being transformed and rearranged—cut back, privatized, deregulated—all in the name of participating and competing in the global trading system. What is being designed at the WTO is not rules for trade but a template for one-size-fits-all government, a kind of "McRule." And it's this template that is under dispute.

Post September 11, Americans are getting an up-close look at these trade-offs as their hospitals, post offices, airports and water systems struggle to deal with a terrorist threat that preys on holes in the public sector. And as millions lose their jobs, many more are learning that the social safety net is no

longer there to catch them—another trade-off made in the name of trade. In Canada, we are currently making the ultimate trade-off: control over our borders in exchange for continued free trade with the U.S.

Hundreds of thousands are taking to the streets outside trade meetings not because they are against trade itself but because the real need for trade and investment is systematically being used to erode the very principles of self-government. "Govern our way or be left out completely" seems to be what passes for multilateralism in the neo-liberal age.

As we discover the vulnerabilities of this economic model, are we able to learn from our mistakes, to measure this model against its own stated objectives and ask if the trade-offs have been worth it? It seems not. The response from politicians since September 11 has been more of the same: tax breaks for businesses and further privatized services, in the U.S. and around the world.

One of the top items on the agenda at next month's [November 2001] World Trade Organization meeting is the General Agreement of Trade in Services, the side agreement that steadily pushes for more market access to public services, including health care, education and water. It also restricts the ability of governments to set and enforce health and environmental standards.

But countries need trade, you say, particularly poor countries, and to have trade there must be rules. Of course. But why not build an international architecture founded on principles of transparency, accountability and self-determination, one that frees people instead of liberating capital?

That would mean enforcing those basic human rights that make self-determination possible, like the right to form independent trade unions, through the International Labour Organization (ILO). It would mean eliminating the policies that systematically keep democracies in shackles: debt, structural adjustment programs, enforced privatization. It would also mean making good on long-delayed promises of land reform and reparations for slavery. International rules could be designed to make genuine democracy and empowerment more than empty phrases.

No doubt you agree with this sentiment, Mr. Prime Minister. In fact, reading your letter, I was struck by the similarity of our stated goals. You call for "a global ethical approach to the environment, labour relations and monetary policy." I want those things too. So the real question is why are we here, then—what's to debate?

Sadly, what's to debate and what must be debated, or there will never be peace outside the summits, is the track record. Not words but deeds. Not good intentions—there's never any shortage of these—but the grim and worsening facts: wage stagnation, dramatic increases in the disparity between rich and poor and the erosion of basic services around the world.

Despite the rhetoric of openness and freedom, we see new and higher fences constantly going up: around refugee centres in the Australian desert, around two million U.S. citizens in prisons, fences turning entire continents like North America and Europe into fortresses, while Africa is locked out. And, of course, the fences that are erected every time world leaders get together to have a meeting.

Globalization was supposed to be about global openness and integration, and yet our societies are steadily becoming more closed, more guarded, requiring ever more security and military might just to maintain the inequitable status quo.

Globalization was also supposed to be about a new system of equality among nations. We were coming together and agreeing to live by the same rules, or so it was said. But it is more evident than ever that the big players are still making the rules and enforcing them, often enforcing them on everyone but themselves—whether it's agricultural and steel subsidies or import tariffs.

These inequalities and asymmetries, always bubbling under the surface, are now impossible to avoid. Many countries that have been through, or are going through, economic crisis—Russia, Thailand, Indonesia and Argentina, to name just a few—would have appreciated the extreme government intervention just launched to save the U.S. economy, instead of the austerity prescribed by the IMF. The governor of Virginia explained the U.S.'s tax cuts and subsidy measures by saying that America's recession "is not a routine economic downturn." But what makes an economic downturn extraordinary, in need of lavish economic stimulus, versus "routine," in need of austerity and bitter medicine?

The most striking of these recent defiant displays of double standards relates to drug patents. According to World Trade Organization rules, countries are free to break drug patents on life-saving drugs when there is a national emergency. And yet when South Africa tried to do it for AIDS drugs, it faced a lawsuit from the major drug companies. When Brazil tried to do likewise, it was hauled in front

of WTO tribunals. Millions living with AIDS have essentially been told that their lives count less than drug patents, less than debt repayment, that there is simply no money to save them. The World Bank says it's time to focus on prevention, not cures, which is tantamount to a death sentence for millions.

And yet earlier this month, Canada decided to override Bayer's patent for Cipro, the favoured antibiotic to treat anthrax. We ordered a million tablets of a generic version. "These are extraordinary and unusual times," a spokeswoman for Health Canada said. "Canadians expect and demand that their government will take all steps necessary to protect their health and safety." It should be noted that Canada still hasn't had a single diagnosed case of anthrax.

Although the decision was later reversed after Bayer lowered its prices, the same logic was at work: when it comes to rich countries, rules are for other people. Vulnerability to abstract economic theory has become the great class divider. The rich and powerful countries seem to be able to pick and choose when to follow the rules, but poor nations are told that economic orthodoxies must govern their every move, that they must throw themselves at the mercy of a free market ideology that even its architects disregard when it's not convenient. Poor countries that put the needs of their citizens before the demands of foreign investors are vilified as protectionists, even communists. And yet the protectionist policies that fuelled Britain's industrial revolution were so rampant, that it was illegal to bury a corpse without first proving that the funeral shroud had been woven in a British mill.

What does this have to do with our debate? Too often, we pretend inequalities persist and deepen only because of national idiosyncrasies, or because we haven't happened on the right set of rules, the perfect formula, as if these inequalities were little more than some cosmic oversight, or an irregularity in an otherwise functioning system. Always missing from this discussion is the issue of power. So many of the debates that we have about globalization theory are actually about power: who holds it, who is exercising it and who is disguising it, pretending it no longer matters.

But it's no longer enough to say that justice and equality are around the corner and not offer anything but good intentions for collateral. We have just been through a period of tremendous economic prosperity, a time of expansiveness and plenty when core contradictions in this economic model should have been addressed. Now we are entering into a period of contraction, and greater sacrifices are being asked of those who have already sacrificed far too much.

Are we really supposed to be placated by the promise that our problems will be solved with more trade? Tougher protections on drug patents and more privatization? Today's globalizers are like doctors with access to a single drug: whatever the ailment—poverty, migration, climate change, dictatorships, terrorism—the remedy is always more trade.

Mr. Prime Minister, we are not anti-globalization. In fact, we have been going through our own globalization process. And it is precisely because of globalization that the system is in crisis. We know too much. There is too much communication and mobility at the grassroots for the gap to hold. Not just the gap between rich and poor but also

## FENCES AND WINDOWS

between rhetoric and reality. Between what is said and what is done. Between the promise of globalization and its real effects. It's time to close the gap.