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Union Organisations, Social Movements and the Augean Stables of Global Governance¹

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The Augean Stable was one of the Twelve Labours of Hercules. Hercules's task was to clean out a stable that had been soiled by years of neglect. Hercules succeeded by using a boulder to gouge out a trench, diverting a river through the stable.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augean_Stable

Abstract: *The traditional international union organisations are currently engaged in a series of 'social partnership' initiatives at global level. Prominent amongst these is that addressed to 'global governance'. This project comes from outside and above the unions, is addressed to the existing hegemonic interstate instances, and is carried out primarily by lobbying. This orientation is increasingly challenged by a 'global justice and solidarity movement', more concerned with the democratisation of the global, and more oriented to consciousness-raising and mobilising than lobbying. The new movement, moreover, operates in places and spaces, with forms and understandings, that relate rather to a contemporary globalised-informatised capitalism than to the old national-industrial-colonial one which gave rise and shape to the international unions. Trade unions will have to abandon the discourse of global governance for that of global democracy, and to operate on the terrains of this new movement, if they are to effectively defend and advance worker rights and power under the new global dispensation.*

Introduction

After the unacknowledged failure of its 15-year campaign to obtain a 'social clause' (international labour rights) within the hegemonic global institutions of capitalist free trade, the traditional international union organisations are now reproducing its logic in a whole series of 'social partnership' initiatives at global level.

Prominent amongst these is their commitment to 'global governance'.² This project, however, comes from a UN system trying to make itself functional to capitalist globalisation (Corporate Watch 1999, Judge 2001). It therefore originates with forces outside and above the unions. The unions are addressing themselves to hegemonic capitalist and interstate instances, and are doing so by lobbying.

Today this dependent orientation is increasingly challenged by a global justice and solidarity movement, more interested in the democratisation of the global, and primarily involved in public consciousness-raising and mobilisation. The new movement, moreover, operates in places and spaces, with forms and understandings that relate rather to a contemporary globalised and informatised capitalism than the old one which gave rise and shape to the unions.

If they are to effectively advance – even defend - worker rights and power under the new global conditions, the international unions will have to abandon the discourse of global governance for that of global democracy, and operate on the terrains of this new movement.

This argument is advanced by consideration, firstly, of the position on global governance of the traditional union organisations, secondly, that of the new movement, as revealed in a wide range of movement positions, thirdly, by consideration of the new places, spaces and forms of emancipatory thought and action. The conclusion suggests that even if the hegemonic international union institutions are here reproducing an unacknowledged error, the historical social-democratic tradition can still make a specific contribution to global democratisation.

1. The ‘traditional international trade union organisations’ and ‘global governance’

I will be here talking about ‘traditional international trade union organisations’ (briefly TIUs) because they are *old* (originating a century or more ago, during the national, industrial, colonial phase of capitalism), are literally *inter-national* (being confederations of nationally-based and nationally-oriented unions) and are *formal institutions* (as distinguished from looser or networked movements). But I will also distinguish individual organisations where appropriate. Indeed, in talking about attitudes to global governance, it is difficult to avoid starting with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) the associated Global Union Federations (for separate industries), themselves parts of the Global Unions (GU) network. These form the dominant contemporary international union alliance.

The ICFTU, its affiliates and associates are heavily committed to the notion of ‘social partnership’ - those between labour and capital and/or state. And they are energetically promoting these at the regional and global level. This has so far been done without consideration of why such partnerships are in crisis, or have failed, at national level, where workers have had more power (at least over their unions). Nor has there been argument, as distinguished from assumption, about why they should succeed at the regional or global levels (where they are much more in the minds and hands of union officers). ‘Social partnership’ has always meant the subordinate contribution of labour, as junior partner, to the development of capitalism and the state, as senior partners.³ Indeed, it has to be asked whether it was not faith in the ideology of social partnership at national level that was responsible for, or at least facilitated, neo-liberal globalisation - the rise and rise of an aggressive, destructive and anti-democratic capitalist world order.

The TIUs are heavily committed to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. This was a commission with some 26 members, of which two are from trade unions (General Secretaries of the South African Cosatu and the US AFL-CIO), and two from 'civil society'. The other 24 or so are (ex-)Presidents, CEOs, Academics, a British (Labour) Lord and other representatives of the global elite. Whereas labour has a 25 percent representation within the ILO as a whole, it had here less than 10 percent. The World Commission's report is perhaps the most important argument for a global neo-Keynesianism – for a globalised capitalism with redistribution from growth. Unlike Keynes himself in a less-mealy-mouthed period, however, the Commission confines the word 'capitalism' to a bibliographical footnote.⁴

There seems to be some kind of literal 'division of labour' between the ILO, on the left of globalisation and the UN, on the right. Yet the ICFTU appears to be as committed to the Global Compact of the right globalisers (<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>)⁵ as it is to the World Commission of the left ones. The attraction seems to be the very existence of any international forum the TIUs are invited to join or any body they are permitted to lobby.

This love-in between the TIUs and the international elite is, in at least some instances, enthusiastically (if diplomatically? hypocritically?) reciprocated. Thus World Bank President, Wolfensohn, was invited to a congress of the international organisation of education workers, Education International, and had this to say:

I am very happy to greet you at this 4th World Congress of Education International [...] The first thing I'd like to [note is] ... the very close identity between the objectives of our institution and the objectives of Education International...We've had the opportunity, in these last six months, of working with your colleagues in trying to do some research and establishing a research program which deals with the elements of what makes good conditions for teachers [...] We also, for our part, need to think in terms of the financing of the education system and we also need to say to you - to all of you - that this bringing together of the education system together with the financial system is something where "no doubt" there will be important areas in which trust between us will be very important [...] My colleagues and I at the Bank are really thrilled that we have this building relationship between our institution and your's. (James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank Porto Alegre, Brazil, 22 July 2004, as recorded on an Education International CD of the event)

For historical background to such relationships we have to remember the failed campaign for the 'social clause' (Hodkinson 2005, Forthcoming, Waterman 2001, 2004).⁶ That 15-year period of wasted effort (and un-reported financial cost!) was intended to achieve international labour rights within the World Trade Organisation (WTO, previously GATT). The WTO was, of course, not only clearly intended to destroy labour rights but is so structured as to guarantee this. In their

attendance at, address to and commitment to such hegemonic instances, the TIUs would seem to be playing the role of what the Dutch call 'town mayor in wartime' - a mediating role between an autocratic power and an otherwise unrepresented and powerless citizenry.⁷

Concerning the prime exemplar of the global governance it is identified with, the ICFTU said in 2002

The Global Compact is...an initiative that is based on dialogue, including social dialogue, built around the core labour standards of the ILO as well as other universal standards relating to human rights and the environment. This is an important opportunity for the social partners and other parties to develop relationships that will resolve problems inside companies and industries as well as to develop dialogue on compelling policy issues.

Global social dialogue has taken concrete form in 14 framework agreements signed by major companies with global union federations. The agreements are important not only for what is on paper but for the social dialogue that produced them and that continues to make them living agreements. They are pioneering ventures that contribute to good industrial relations. <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991215023&Language=EN>⁸

In its more recent guide to globalisation for unions, the ICFTU devotes much space to the Global Compact. Here it reveals certain qualifications but also the liberal ideological framework within which these are contained. Thus:

The trade union experience with the Global Compact has been mixed. Throughout the activities of the Compact, too much attention has been devoted to promoting the CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] industry while not enough attention has been spent on genuine dialogue. Opportunities for dialogue were often bypassed. For example, many national "networks" were launched without involving the trade unions, the representative employer organisations or the relevant NGOs that should have been involved. (ICFTU 2004: 77)⁹

But its underlying concern seems to be the defence of a traditional liberal-pluralist notion of social dialogue *within industry* from some neo-liberal attempt to distinguish between workers as 'internal stakeholders' and unions as 'external stakeholders'. Unions, the ICFTU insists

are part of industry, as well as of civil society. By definition, social dialogue involves management and workers, which are the two sides of any business. (76)

Whilst this might imply that the ICFTU wants to negotiate inter/nationally on both an industrial and a political stage, any notion of a socio-structural, ideological or ethical difference between the 'social partners' on either stage is left out of consideration. And, in any case, the enthusiastic commitment of the ICFTU to an increasingly neo-liberalised UN was shortly afterwards restated on a global stage. At the 60th anniversary of the UN, New York, September 2005, Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the ICFTU, was talking from inside the box. He was proposing the reform, improvement, implementation of some global neo-Keynesian capitalist utopia taken as existing, at least potentially:

Joining together to achieve [social] justice is our [UN plus nation-states and unions? PW] best contribution to making sure that we and our children can live in a world free from poverty, desperation and conflict in future years. Let us all rise to the challenge. The UN has known its greatest successes, and won its lasting authority from those occasions when its member states have risen above narrow self interest to the uplands from which the vision of a better common future becomes clear. This Summit must be one such occasion. It is in your hands to make it so.

<http://www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements.html>

This language suggests the continuing faith of the social-reformist ICFTU in a UN system adjusting itself to the corporations and in a neo-liberalised capitalist democracy. Today, however, there are other actors on the global scene and other voices can be heard.

2. The 'global justice and solidarity movement' and 'global governance'

Here also we need to first consider the names of our subjects.

There are problems in comparing institutions with movements and, in particular, the TIUs with the 'anti-globalisation movement' – even with its most institutionalised and documented expression, the World Social Forum (WSF). This is because of the fluidity of social movements in general, and the self-denying ordinance under which the WSF avoids taking common policy positions. There is a problem even in naming the movement. The conventional term used above suffers, as do all negative definitions, from dependence on that against which it is posed. Which is why I prefer the name that came out of the World Social Forum process itself in 2002, the 'global justice and solidarity movement' (GJ&SM).¹⁰

There is a major problem, also with 'governance', global or not. Governance is not simply a neutral new political science term, intended to focus attention on power relations even beyond existing inter/national¹¹ institutions: it is a concept that leans heavily toward 'management'. It tends to de-politicise its subject matter. It clearly conceals any understanding here of 'hegemony', with the latter's implications of domination (military, political, ideological).¹² The neutralising new term therefore threatens to turn social movements, unions and non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), into ‘managers of global discontents’ (to update Wright Mills 1948 on the US unions of his day). In identifying, finally, the position/s of the GJ&SM on global governance, I am bound to be presenting snapshots, although it seems to me that there it is possible to see a family relationship between the positions I cite below.

It has been argued, to begin with, that the concept of ‘governance’ is specifically linked to the ideology and institutions of neo-liberalism:

[G]overnance, far from representing a paradigm shift away from neoliberal practices, [is a] central element of the neoliberal discourse in a particular phase of it, when neoliberalism and capital in general face particular stringent problems of accumulation, growing social conflict and a crisis of reproduction. Governance sets itself the task to tackle these problems for capital by relaying the disciplinary role of the market through the establishment of a “continuity of powers” based on normalised market values as the truly universal values. Governance thus seeks to embed these values in the many ways the vast arrays of social and environmental problems are addressed. It thus promotes active participation of society in the reproduction of life and of our species on the basis of this market normalisation. Neoliberal governance thus seeks co-optation of the struggles for reproduction and social justice and, ultimately, promotes the perspective of the ‘end of history’. (De Angelis 2003:24)

An alternative focus, on the relations of social movements with a ‘global civil society in the making’, would seem to me hypothetically more open – less reproductive of failed national social-democratic projects and failing liberal-pluralist thinking – than a focus on governance (see, for an attempt, Waterman and Timms 2004). This needs to be said because there is a parallel capitalist project, ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) intimately linked with ‘global governance’, and with which both the old and the new international social movements are intertwined. Charkiewicz (2005) characterises CSR as

a paradigmatic example of how policy dialogues increasingly operate as virtual spectacles where governance is performed according to carefully scripted rules and norms. NGOs [and unions – PW] are offered voice without influence. Concepts such as poverty reduction or CSR have taken a discursive life of their own and by so doing pretend that poverty or CSR and accountability is addressed. The virtual performance of governance makes the differential effects of the organisation of the global production and consumption on the realities of people’s livelihoods invisible, as it assumes that these are addressed. [...]

While...policy discourses such as CSR are conducted in the name of caring for life, and claim to deal with the social and environmental effects of production and consumption, at the same time they obscure that in order to generate value and profits life has to be killed.

Inextricably linked with the caring face of global governance which operates through biopolitical security discourses such as the one on CSR is the global economy which operates as war on livelihoods. (Charkiewicz 2005:81)

Another such theoretical critique, from the position of the Situationist International of the 1968 era, declares that

Central to 'global governance' as a hegemonical strategy is a broad attempt to assemble a global civil society in which to embed neo-liberal concepts of control. Key here are twinned processes of severance and recomposition. At once, the making of global civil society involves i) cutting off social forces and organizations willing to work within a global market framework from other social contexts and ii) re-assembling the lot into a functional and efficient whole that will work to solve global problems and, in the process, fix the terms of social and political interaction in the world economy. In governance's schemes, then, global civil society is to be anything but an autonomous realm, or a theater of history (in Marx's sense of civil society), but a collection of atomized organization with little or no autonomous sense of itself... (Drainville 2006)

The Indian ecofeminist, and 'localist', Vandana Shiva, goes beyond capitalist (or statist) democracy, favouring a 'living democracy':

We need international solidarity and autonomous organising. Our politics needs to reflect the principle of subsidiarity. Our global presence cannot be a shadow of the power of corporations and Bretton Woods institutions. We need stronger movements at local and national levels, movements that combine resistance and constructive action, protests and building of alternatives, non-cooperation with unjust rule and cooperation within society. The global, for us, must strengthen the local and national, not undermine it. The two tendencies that we demand of the economic system needs to be central to people's politics -- localisation and alternatives. Both are not just economic alternatives they are democratic alternatives. Without them forces for change cannot be mobilised in the new context.

<http://www.zmag.org/content/GlobalEconomics/ShivaWSF.cfm>.

Patrick Bond, of the Centre for Civil Society in South Africa, is a libertarian socialist. He has been closely associated with the recent wave of movements and campaigns against neo-liberalism, nationally and internationally (Bond, Brutus and Setshedi 2005). Targeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UN, he argues against civil society participation in and legitimation of such, and for movement 'decommodification' struggles:

To illustrate, the South African decommodification agenda entails struggles to turn basic needs into genuine human rights including: free anti-retroviral medicines to fight AIDS (hence disempowering Big Pharma); 50 litres of free water per person per day (hence ridding Africa of Suez and other water privatisers); 1 kilowatt hour of free electricity for each individual every day (hence reorienting energy resources from export-oriented mining and smelting, to basic-needs consumption); extensive land reform (hence de-emphasising cash cropping and export-oriented plantations); prohibitions on service disconnections and evictions; free education (hence halting the General Agreement on Trade in Services); and the like. A free 'Basic Income Grant' allowance of \$15/month is even advocated by churches, NGOs and trade unions. All such services should be universal (open to all, no matter income levels), and to the extent feasible, financed through higher prices that penalise luxury consumption. This potentially unifying agenda – far superior to MDGs, in part because the agenda reflects real, durable grassroots struggles across the world - could serve as a basis for widescale social change... (Bond 2005)

In a forthcoming work, the Neo-Gramscian political-economist, Susanne Soederberg devotes a chapter to the Global Compact, tracing its origins, structure, ideological functions – and particularly its domination by the International Chamber of Commerce and exclusion of nation-states as actors. She concludes:

What the Compact does, albeit inadvertently, is to accept certain demands from below – such as the need to enforce human rights, labour, and environmental protection through established state sanctioned principles like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – while also encouraging counter-hegemonic movements to restrict their struggle to the electronic terrain of the learning network. This in turn prevents the dominance of neoliberalism from being challenged, while TNCs are granted ever more freedom to pursue neoliberal strategies in the South. (Soederberg 2006:92)

The Neo-Marxist or Thirdworldist theorist and activist, Samir Amin, has critiqued the relationship between 'structural adjustment', 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers', the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and governability in Africa:

Unquestionably even more serious, the NEPAD document lines up with liberal thought on the discourse of "good governance." This is a concept that is useful as a way to dissociate democratic progress from social progress, to deny their equal importance and inextricable connection with one another, and to reduce democracy to good management subjected to the demands of private capital, an "apolitical" management by an anodyne civil society, inspired by the mediocre ideology of the United States. This discourse comes at the

very moment when the interruption in the construction of the state (begun in the Bandung period) imposed by structural adjustment has created, not conditions for a democratic advance but, instead, conditions for the shift towards the primacy of ethnic and religious identities (para-ethnic and para-religious, in fact) that are manipulated by local mafias, benefit external supporters, and often degenerate into atrocious “civil wars” (in fact conflicts between warlords)...The NEPAD document’s exposition, its hesitations or anodyne character, acquires its meaning in this context. For example, the wish to alleviate the debt is expressed, but this is done precisely because the debt has fulfilled its function of imposing structural adjustment. NEPAD also proposes an “integrated” (Pan-African) development, just like the EU, giving its preference to arrangements with regional African groups. But, in the end, this document remains, as far as its proposals on trade, capital transfers, technology, and patents are concerned, aligned with liberal dogmas.

Here, finally, are two voices from the international consumer movement. The first addresses the food multinational, Nestlé, and argues that

[T]he Global Compact is based on and propagates the credo that there is no fundamental contradiction between profit-maximisation and the will and ability to ‘voluntarily’ respect human rights and foster human development and democratic decision making [...] Replication of the Global Compact model all over the world risks creating new networks of elite governance, entrenching corporate-led neoliberal globalisation and eroding democratic structures. (Richter 2003:44)¹³

The second concerns the chemicals multinational, Bayer, a signatory of the Global Compact:

Bayer considers itself a ‘founding member’ of the UN Global Compact, but its dedication to the Compact’s nine human rights and environmental principles should be seen in the context of an extremely controversial corporate history. The Coalition Against Bayer Dangers (CBG)...has found that Bayer has been using its “membership” in the Compact to deflect criticism by watchdog groups, without addressing the substance of the criticism. Bayer’s use of the Global Compact is a classic case of “bluewash” -- using the good reputation of the United Nations to present a corporate humanitarian image without a commitment to changing real-world behaviour. (Minkes 2002)

Finally, we might consider information embedded within an article by a well-respected reformist critic of the UN system, Richard Falk (2005/6). The box considers the problems and prospects of the Global Compact, pointing out that whilst French companies are seriously over-represented amongst endorsers, those of the USA are just as seriously under-represented. Major multinationals, such as energy giant

Haliburton, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Puma and Adidas, are absent. It is therefore suggested that

If hundreds of thousands of workers, predominantly in the developing world, remain excluded from the minimal protection offered by the ten principles of the Global Compact, then it is difficult to see what difference this initiative could make. (Leveringhaus 2005/6)

It is not without significance that this item, was published within the broadly social-democratic Global Civil Society yearbook, based within the historically social-democratic London School of Economics!¹⁴

There is, thus, a considerable ideological variety and geographical spread amongst critics and critiques of the orientation toward global governance taken by TIUs. This surely demonstrates that TIU positions have been dependent not on any international labour, left or democratic approach but on a Western neo-liberal one, modified by some social-liberal aspiration.¹⁵

3. Global places, spaces and forms of emancipatory thought and action

It would seem that we have considerable tension – not to say an antagonistic contradiction - between the TIU position on global governance and that of the GJ&SM. *Firstly*, however, it seems to me, such a contradiction cannot be seen as Manichean (vice v. virtue), nor as simply or primarily ideological. As I might have already suggested, there are people of the social-democratic tradition on both sides of this contradiction. *Secondly*, we have to recognise that the ICFTU and its affiliates or associates are not only prominent participants in the WSF process but even represented on its International Council!¹⁶ Many such inter/national unions participate in anti-war or anti-privatisation protest initiatives of the broader GJ&SM. The TIUs may have a foot within the World Economic Forum and the Global Compact, but they have at least a toe within the spaces of ‘a global civil society in the making’ (Waterman and Timms 2003/4). *Thirdly*, it seems to me that, in addressing the present global institutional order, the GJ&SM has not yet moved from ‘protest to proposition’ on global governance, or, in this case, global democratisation. Considering the movement’s ‘One No and Many Yesses!’, it is easy to find and identify with the No but quite difficult to discern even one distinct Yes.¹⁷

Whilst I favour dialogue, this does not mean either that there is or should be a compromise *halfway between* the two orientations I have sketched. Given the diffuse nature of even the WSF, some such kind of negotiated compromise, seems anyway unlikely. What the more general GJ&SM ‘represents’, after all, is not simply one or more new *positions* but new places, spaces, forms and understandings of emancipation globally (meaning both worldwide and holistic).

I have already mentioned one of the *places*, the events organised worldwide within the WSF process. It seems, increasingly, that the old institutionalised international unions are using the WSF to launch or publicise their policy proposals,

including such as the ILO one on ‘decent work’ (critiqued Waterman 2005a) or ‘Labour’s Platform for the Americas’ (see below). Another such place would or could be the increasing number of academic events, on or against neo-liberal globalisation, commonly with union participation. I have been critical of some such for their narrow or self-congratulatory nature (Waterman 2005b). Yet, given the current crisis of unionism, it is nonetheless possible to find, in the interstices of such conferences, more autonomous expression. It was thus that I discovered Khanya College, Johannesburg. This is an adult-education, research and publication operation, with one foot in the traditional labour and community movements, one in the new social movements of South Africa. Apart from the resources it might provide to such traditions in the country itself, it has a Southern African solidarity programme. A special issue of the quarterly *Khanya* magazine, distributed at the colloquium I criticised, was devoted to South(ern) African unions (Khanya 2005). National and international union activist, Maria van Driel, argues here

that social dialogue, which is the policy of the main South African trade unions, cannot advance the interests of the working class under conditions of neo-liberalism’ (van Driel 2005:27).

Whilst this issue may not have been concerned with the global, or internationalism in general, it projected a national orientation that suggests how the trade union organisations could learn from the newest social movements.

As for *spaces*, we have to consider that potentially emancipatory space, *Cyberia*. TIU websites provide increasing amounts of information and ideas, including, as this paper reveals, those about global governance. However, these sites have two common limitations. One is the lack of space for dialogue, or feedback. The other is that they are subordinated to the institutions: they are seen merely as tools.¹⁸ Even the autonomous, sophisticated, innovative – and widely respected – international labour site, LabourStart <http://www.labourstart.org/>, confines itself to the institutionalised trade union organisations and only deals with such autonomous labour or social movements as might be acceptable to the TIUs. Indeed, a search within it failed to identify an innovatory international union declaration on neo-liberal globalisation, ‘Labour’s Platform for the Americas’ <http://www.gpn.org/research/orit2005/>! However, this document, co-signed by the ICFTU’s regional body in the Americas, the ORIT, and associated bodies, has failed, *at time of writing, to reach the website of the ICFTU itself!*¹⁹

As we move deeper into *Cyberia*, we will find sites closer to the GJ&SM. Whilst the Global Policy Network (GPN) and associated Economic Policy Institute (EPI) are closely associated with the TIUs, distance implied by their institutional autonomy and/or research function is apparently permitting them to go where no TIU has gone before. And their websites are permitting us (at the base, at the margins, far away) to see what they have to say. Thus the GPN both facilitated and now hosts the above-mentioned Platform. And the EPI has published a book entitled *The Global Class War* (Faux 2006), described as follow:

Faux explains how globalisation is creating a new global political elite—"The Party of Davos"—who have more in common with each other than with their fellow citizens. Their so-called trade agreements (like NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization act as a global constitution that protects only one kind of citizen—the corporate investor. The inevitable result will be a drop in American living standards that will have dramatic political consequences. Faux concludes with an original strategy for bringing democracy to the global economy beginning with a social contract for North America. http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/books_global_class_war

Here there is at least an implicit challenge to TIUs still clinking wine glasses at the cocktail party of the global elite.

These two cyberspaces are, however, both 1) based in the USA and 2) primarily addressed and functional to traditional inter/national union institutions. Rather than now considering all those sites and networks that might cover the workers and issues, or provide the dialogical possibilities suggested by the GJ&SM, let us consider one in the further reaches of Cyberia. This is Prol-Position, http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=2453, an anarcho/communist/autonomist (I think) portal that concentrates on inter/national labour conditions and struggles, regardless of whether these are within the boundaries or vision of the TIUs. In a piece addressing regional, if not global, governance (the so-called Bolkestein Directive, aimed at levelling down European Union rights and conditions in the interests of the most ruthless multinationals), Laure Akai (2006) says:

Within the context of protest politics, we often find even radical activists calling for “protection” and “rights”, which rests on the assumption that there is a body, be it the nation state or an extra-national institution, which regulates for the good of society, above the interests of capital. This illusion is becoming more and more appallingly naïve; money making and capital interests are firmly entrenched in government. The moments where the state plays social protector are acts of cheap PR played out with our public funds which we have worked for and earned and opposition to the bottom line can only take place in relation to the power and wealth of the society; in this, some nation states are at a distinct disadvantages in the spectacle known as “protecting its subjects”.

Many leftists envision the transition of the state from power broker and capital enabler to social protector and insurer. While this (arguably) may be a considerable improvement in its role, there is also the perspective of decommissioning it and replacing it with workers’ self-government and international federalism. The underlying principle, the creation of a libertarian society, would presuppose various mechanisms for the elimination of material deprivation and

disparity, and, most importantly, the elimination of the causes of inequity....: the key to the creation of any future socially equitable society lies in divesting capital and state of its powers.

It is this kind of voice that the internet allows us to hear, possibly for the first time. And the Prol-Position site, on which I found Akai, has a front-page feedback feature. But it is not the existence of this or that labour, social movement, or civil society site, or even networks of such, that reveal the manner in which the web as a space, and communication as a practice, go beyond the political and institutional order within which the TIUs have lived for 50 to 100 years.

The fact is that we live in an increasingly networked world order or disorder (Castells 1996-8, Escobar 2004). This implies that both dominating power (power over) and emancipatory power (power to) are increasingly expressed and exercised here. Recognition of this can, once again, be implicitly found in those places and spaces in which the TIUs and the GJ&SM do meet.

The next case addresses itself to new ways of labour and social movement being and doing, in other words of their recognition of the new terrains of struggle. This is a special issue of a publication of the French Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (BDIC) on the internet and social movements (Matériaux 2005). The compilation includes both empirical accounts and conceptual discussion of a global and movement-informed civil society in construction. And it recognises, both implicitly and explicitly, that cyberspace represents a privileged place for labour struggle under the informatised networked capitalism of the 21st century.²⁰ The collection deals with new forms of informatised work, with the practices of French trade unions and parties and with inter/national social movements. Although this is, of course, in traditional print form, some of the contributions in English are on the website of the Feltrinelli Foundation (see Websites and Lists below). And whilst, as I have said, the collection may not address global governance, it does recognise the centrality of the web for contemporary social movements:

The use of Net tools has been very useful also, evidently, for the development of transnational militancy (of which, in addition to the nation-state, the scales of action are on the local or global level). Without going too far, one could thus say that if alter-globalisation was not born from the Internet, it certainly could not have existed without it. (Matériaux 2005:7)

Finally, I mentioned *forms of emancipatory thought and action*. I think it must by now be evident that the forms common to the TIUs in their address to the global are not in any sense emancipatory (meaning setting free from the power of another). Defensive, certainly, and in the past resulting in amelioration. But the adequacy of such defence within the places or spaces designed and dominated by capital and state are finally being questioned, at least at the periphery of these institutions (the Faux book?). And it would be difficult to argue that the trade union impact internationally

is today one of amelioration, unless this word is stretched to mean the reduction of pain, or return to some golden, if tarnished, past.

Now, one has to recognise within the history of the international labour movement two major traditions in relation to wage-labour. The first was 'A Fair Day's Wage for a Fair Day's Work', and it finds contemporary expression within the ILO campaign, endorsed by the TIUs, for 'Decent Work'. The other one was 'Abolition of the Wage System', the contemporary expression of which might be 'The Liberation of Time from Work' (Gorz 1999, discussed Waterman 2005a). The first tradition seeks solace – sometimes salvation – through work for capital, the second in productive and creative activity freed from capitalist exploitation and alienation. Whilst the WSF and the more general GJ&SM may not have addressed itself adequately to the *emancipation of labour*, it has certainly expressed itself for *emancipation from capital* – at least in its most aggressive current forms. And it has considered such emancipation over a very wide, if not complete, variety of areas of human existence, of capitalist alienation and of social protest and counter-proposition. These encompass the emancipation of women and the sexually discriminated; indigenous, local, immigrant and other minority rights; peace, cultural and communication rights; the environment; health; participatory and direct democracy, and different forms of labour (the traditionally waged, migrant, the old casual and the new precarious, rural, urban petty-commodity). Many of these, and other issues, find at least some mention in the so-called Bamako Appeal (2006), which whilst not 'representing the position' of the GJ&SM, certainly addresses itself energetically and provocatively to labour (**Appendix 1**).

Bearing in mind the extent to which the GJ&SM is reinventing social emancipation for the age of a globalised and networked capitalism, it would certainly seem to provide the space within which it would be possible to discuss, formulate and put into action a set of complementary propositions for a radically-democratic reinvention of the global – and in such a way as to empower the regional, the national and local places. This would, of course, be a space within which the key term would be not global governance but global democracy.

Conclusion

A re-invention of the inter/national union organisations as a global labour movement, a re-assertion of labour in the global arenas of information-communication-culture, would seem to be the alternative to reiteration of old formulas. Only thus, it seems to me, can we surpass the nightmare scenario I have sketched elsewhere:

The trade unions turn out to play football against the capitalists, only to find that the football field has been turned into an ice stadium. The capitalists are kitted out for ice hockey and are whizzing around the footballers, practicing their devastating shots. Appealing to the neutral – or at least pluralist – umpire, the unions complain against this un-negotiated change in the nature of the game. 'But what can I do?', the

umpire complains, 'If I don't let them play here they will simply shift somewhere else'.

This is a cruel parable but actually inadequate to the case. The capitalists may be still playing football in a national, or ice hockey in an international, stadium. But what they are primarily doing is playing computer games in global cyberspace. The reinvention of the international labour movement in the light of contemporary capitalism requires that movement invent new places/spaces, new rules, and that it then address itself to, and empower all, working people: there is a world out there, urgently needing to be saved.

Finally, it has to be said that if the grand old tradition of social democracy is in a serious condition, it is not dead.²¹ This has been suggested earlier. Amongst the contributors to its re-invention has been the one-time General Secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF), an energetic contributor to international debates on labour. As he says in the preface to a collection on the future of organised labour globally:

Those who are developing the concept of global social movement unionism, or of the global justice movement, are seeking to rebuild a labour movement with a shared identity and shared values – not the lowest common denominator, that is what we have today and this movement, as it is, can only lose. Beyond the lowest common denominator, we need an alternative explanation of the world, alternative goals for society and a programme on how to get there that all can subscribe to. A new international labour movement, armed with a sense of a broader social mission, can become the core of a global alliance including all other social movements that share the same agenda. Such a movement can change the world. It can again be the liberation movement of humanity it set out to be hundred and fifty years ago. (Gallin Forthcoming).

The task of boulder-seeking, trench-digging and river-diversion is one to which many traditions are going to contribute. This requires a Herculean effort. And Hercules did not do this from *within* the Augean Stable. The means he required came from outside. He achieved the task without much 'Augean Dialogue' with the hegemon, who had for so long been befouling the stable and leaving the surrounding lands unfertilised. As a more extended paraphrase of the case reveals,²² the contract that King Augeas made with Hercules was broken unilaterally by the king. Hercules, apparently, did not get involved in any concession bargaining, nor did he even complain about the failure of the king to act in the word or spirit of the contract. The king's son considered the power that Hercules had demonstrated and decided it would be wise to honour the contract. This was a compromise. I have no doubt they shook hands. Hercules, however, was not *compromised* by the settlement. Nor, as far as we are informed, did he henceforth consider Royal Contracts as ideal, or even suitable, one for heroic labour. One assumes that he preserved his autonomy – power deriving from forces outside the contractual relationship – for any future dealings with devious monarchs.

Inspiration for a necessary and possible future can, it appears, be drawn not only from contemporary parable but even from a mythical past.

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Appendix 1

Extract from the Bamako Appeal

[Note: The Bamako Appeal, like numerous other initiatives associated with the World Social Forum, cannot be attributed to any of its leading instances, any more than it is likely to be adopted or approved by the WSF. It is an initiative of a group of intellectuals, many coming from the thirdworldist tradition of the 1970s. Despite its origin, it must be clearly considered a response to the global justice and solidarity movement. And it is thus available for discussion. The chapter below, it seems to me, is just such a challenge, both to the WSF and to the traditional international union organisations. One would like to see it being discussed at the WSF, within the TIUs, and, of course, online anywhere. PW]

6. TO BUILD A WORKERS' UNITED FRONT

Two of the principal weapons in the hands of workers are the right to vote and the right to form trade unions. Up to now democracy and trade unions were built mainly within the national states. Now, however, neo-liberal globalization has challenged the workers the world over, and globalized capitalism cannot be confronted at the national level alone. Today, the task is twofold: to strengthen organizing on a national level and simultaneously globalize democracy and reorganize a worldwide working class.

Mass unemployment and the increasing proportion of informal work arrangements are other imperative reasons to reconsider the existing organizations of the laboring classes. A world strategy for labor must consider not only the situation of workers who work under stable contracts. Employment out of the formal sectors now involves an increasing portion of workers, even in the industrialized countries. In the majority of the countries of the South, the workers of the informal sector – temporary labor, informal labor, the self-employed, the unemployed, street salespeople, those who sell their own services — together form the majority of the laboring classes. These groups of informal workers are growing in the majority of the countries of the South because of high unemployment and a two-sided process: on the one hand, the decreasing availability of guaranteed employment and increased informal employment, and on the other hand, the continuous migration from the rural areas to the towns. The most important task will be for workers outside the formal sector to organize themselves and for the traditional trade unions to open up in order to carry out common actions.

The traditional trade unions have had problems responding to this challenge. Not all the organizations of the workers—except in the formal sectors--will necessarily be trade unions or similar organizations and the traditional trade unions will also have to change. New perspectives for organizing together, based on horizontal bonds and mutual respect, must develop between the traditional trade unions and the new social movements. For this purpose, the following proposals are submitted for consideration:

1. An opening of the trade unions towards collaboration with the other social movements without trying to subordinate them to the traditional trade-union structure or a specific political party.
2. The constitution of effectively transnational trade-union structures in order to confront transnational employers. These trade-union structures should have a capacity to negotiate and at the same time have a mandate to organize common actions beyond national borders. For this purpose, an important step would be to organize strong trade-union structures within transnational corporations. These corporations have a complex network of production and are often very sensitive to any rupture in the chains of production and distribution, that is, they are vulnerable. Some successes in the struggles against the transnational corporations could have a real impact on the world balance of power between capital and labor.
3. Technological development and structural change are necessary to improve living conditions and eradicate poverty, but the relocations of production are not carried out today in the interest of the workers; instead, they are exclusively profit-driven. It is necessary to promote a gradual improvement of the wages and working conditions, to expand local production along with local demand and a system of negotiation to carry out relocation in other ways than simply following the logic of profit and free trade. These relocations could fit under transnational negotiation in order to prevent workers of the various countries from being forced to enter in competition with each other in a relentless battle.
4. To consider the rights of migrant worker as a basic concern for the trade unions by ensuring that solidarity among workers is not dependent on their national origin. Indeed, segregation and discrimination on ethnic or other bases are threats to working-class solidarity.
5. To take care so that the future transnational organization of the laboring class is not conceived as a unique, hierarchical and pyramidal structure, but as a variety of various types of organizations, with a network-like structure with many horizontal bonds.
6. To promote a labor front in reorganized structures that also include workers outside the formal sector throughout the world, capable of taking effective coordinated actions to confront globalized capitalism.

Only such a renewed movement of workers, worldwide, inclusive and acting together with other social movements will be able to transform the present world and to create a world order founded on solidarity rather than on competition.

<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/bamako.html>

¹ This is a considerably rewritten version of a paper with a similar title (Waterman 2005b).

² At the conference to which this paper was presented an earlier presentation was made by Ulrich Brand (2006), so far available only in abstract or PowerPoint form. This is a paper definitely

complementary to my own but rather more theoretical and, therefore, rather more far-reaching. I look forward to its appearance in print and will resist the temptation to respond to its provisional forms here.

³ A recent example of such subordinate partnership would be the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs). The ICFTU encouraged national union participation in this process, publishing a handbook on just how they should do this (ICFTU 2001). The ICFTU thanked the AFL-CIO and its Solidarity Centre and the German Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for their assistance in developing the booklet. The PRSs could have been seen *from the beginning* as a participatory figleaf for World Bank imposition of structural adjustment policies on Third World countries. Detailed empirical evaluation has now demonstrated that this is the case (Gould 2005). I am not aware of any ICFTU re-evaluation in the light of such criticism.

⁴ The document clearly deserves an analysis for which there is here no space. However, its highly ideological intentions are quite clear from its feel-good self-characterisation – with sceptical square brackets added:

Our experience working in the Commission makes us confident of the future. The Commission is a microcosm of the very wide diversity of opinion [just one well-known critic of the WTO], concerns and perspectives of the real world [no prominent figure from the global justice movement]. We come from some of the wealthiest [15 or 16] and poorest countries [10 or 11]. We comprise trade unionists [2] and corporate leaders [3-4], parliamentarians and presidents [11 or 12], leaders of indigenous peoples [1] and women's activists [1 or 2], scholars and government advisors [5 or 6]. We have seen, in the course of our work, how divergent positions can be spanned and how common interests can lead to common action through dialogue. (ILO 2004)

⁵ Much, if not all, of the Global Unions network of the ICFTU has endorsed it, as have the national left union centres of Spain, the Comisiones Obreras, and the South African Cosatu! Yet even a liberal-democratic thinker on democratisation of the global condemned the Global Compact from its initiation (Judge 2001).

⁶ Stuart Hodkinson's painstaking work on the ICFTU, focussing on the 'Social Clause' campaign argues

that the social clause strategy was adopted primarily as an instrument for managing institutional change and renewal within the ICFTU whilst maintaining general Northern trade union control. (2005b:10)

That this strategy had more to do with preserving an institution and its dominant socio-geographic oligarchy, rather than serving the interests of unions or workers internationally, is a devastating assertion. Hodkinson's overall conclusions are fourfold:

First, there is not a 'new trade union internationalism' at the official international level. While the ICFTU has undergone a process of modernisation, its core ideology, methodology and structures are strongly embedded in the OLI [Old Labour Internationalism]...of the past. Second, the ICFTU, like other official international trade union bodies, is heavily constrained in its activities by political, structural and financial factors, all of which are underpinned by workers' and unions' continued attachment to the national level. Third, the ICFTU itself is at a critical turning point in its history. Increasingly challenged from outside by other international union bodies and NGOs, and steadily losing vital financial support... from its own affiliates, the ICFTU appears to be enveloped in a process of long-term decline. Fourth, the findings of this thesis are qualified by a number of reliability problems, most of which relate to the serious difficulties faced by researchers investigating the international trade union movement. The thesis concludes that a major research project into the 'new labour internationalism' at every level of international trade unionism is urgently needed. (2005b:11)

Whilst Hodkinson's assumption of ICFTU decline would seem to be contradicted by the present process of merger internationally, and of international union dialogue on globalisation in the Americas, critical observers would likely agree that the old social-partnership model of internationalism is in profound or terminal crisis – and that research on a new one is indeed urgent.

⁷ I recall the concept from a Dutch international union officer, in the 1980s, admitting this to be commonly the nature of the African trade union leaderships the Dutch were funding.

⁸ Significantly, Civicus, a previously hyper-moderate NGO that claims to represent global civil society, fails to share the enthusiasm of the ICFTU for the Global Compact. It would seem that the NGO status allows it to be less devoted - to at least partnership with transnationals - than the ICFTU (García-Delgado 2005).

⁹ This guide reproduces the widespread error of reducing globalisation to an economic process. This might make it more manageable, both conceptually and politically, for union organisations that have historically reduced themselves to partners of 'industry'. Yet any critical understanding of globalisation must surely conceive it as a political, social (gender, ethnic), military, cultural (media, cyberspace) and ideological phenomenon. And the global civil society of which the ICFTU is increasingly claiming membership also increasingly addresses itself to all of these. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine how the economic or industrial impact of globalisation might be tempered, reversed or surpassed without a holistic understanding of globalisation. Another problem with the guide is the presentation of globalisation largely in terms of a threat. Concepts such as 'alter-globalisation', again growing within civil society, suggest that globalisation (and informatisation) contains possibilities to be realised as well as threats to be resisted.

¹⁰ On the problem of naming this movement, see the extensive survey and argument of Catherine Eschle (2005). Whilst considering the relevant academic literature, Eschle gives significant weight to the various names suggested by activists, in so far as a 'movement' can be considered to be constructed by those so involved.

¹¹ By 'Inter/national' I mean national and/or international. The figure also reminds us that 'international' does not surpass nationally-founded entities but rather combines such. This contrasts with 'global'.

¹² As Wikipedia reminds us, in a commonsensical way, 'Hegemony...is the dominance of one group over other groups, with or without the threat of force, to the extent that, for instance, the dominant party can dictate the terms of trade to its advantage; more broadly, cultural perspectives become skewed to favour the dominant group. Hegemony controls the ways that ideas become "naturalised" in a process that informs notions of common sense. Throughout history...hegemony results in the empowerment of certain cultural beliefs, values, and practices to the submersion and partial exclusion of others'. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemon>.

¹³ This evaluation needs to be compared with the international trade union relationship with Nestlé, as expressed in a report on the trade union networking strategy of the Global Union Federation for the food and allied industries, known as the IUF (Rüb 2004). Whatever might have been achieved by this interesting adaptation of the networking principle, it is clearly taking place without any consideration of the nature of the product, nor, for that matter, of the sincerity of Nestlé's attachment to the Global Compact. This confinement or compartmentalisation of social movement concerns might have been customary in the past but seems archaic today.

¹⁴ For another work in this tradition, see Patomäki, Teivainen and Rönkkö (2002), this one being limited, I feel, by an implicit political-science or international-relations frame which fails to consider the extent to which power under globalisation is concentrated in corporations, or empowerment in the cultural/communicational sphere. Since we are members of the same network, we will no doubt continue to argue about this.

¹⁵ Considering the matter more theoretically, Tony McGrew (200?) distinguishes between four approaches to global democracy: Liberal Internationalism, Radical-Democratic Pluralism, Cosmopolitan Democracy and Deliberative Democracy. The current approach to global governance of

the traditional international unions would seem consistent with Liberal Internationalism (that of the UN itself). Those of the GJ&SM would seem to fall within his Radical-Democratic Pluralist type:

Radical democratic pluralism is essentially a 'bottom up' theory of the democratisation of world order. The new democratic life politics, as opposed to the old politics of emancipation, is articulated primarily through the multiplicity of critical social movements, such as environmental, women and peace movements, which challenge the authority of states and international structures as well as the hegemony of particular (liberal) conceptions of the 'political'. In 'politicising' existing global institutions and practices, not to mention challenging the conventional boundaries of the political (the foreign/domestic, public/private, society/nature binary divides) critical social movements are conceived as agents of a 'new progressive politics'...There is no reason therefore to presume that democracy and democratic legitimacy have to be grounded in territorially delimited units such as nation-states. Rather 'real' democracy is to be found in the juxtaposition of a multiplicity of self-governing and self-organizing collectivities constituted on diverse spatial scales - from the local to the global...The spatial reach of these self-governing communities is defined by the geographical scope of the collective problems or activities they seek to manage, although there is a strong presumption in favour of the subsidiarity principle. Transnational democracy, in this account, is defined by the existence of a plurality of diverse, overlapping and spatially differentiated self-governing 'communities of fate' and multiple sites of power without the need for 'sovereign' or centralized structures of authority. It identifies, in the political practices of critical social movements, immanent tendencies towards the transcendence of the sovereign territorial state as the fundamental unit of democracy.

I do not wish to necessarily endorse this conceptualisation and its implications. But I do wish to forestall the dismissal of this and earlier statements as 'academic' (the nicest of three adjectives addressed angrily to me by international union officers on two separate occasions). The fact is that the TIUs prefer, or absorb via the media, the language and orientation of *other* academics. A recognition of the extent to which *movement-oriented intellectuals* are moving in another direction might give the TIU organisations pause for reflection.

¹⁶ Such ambiguities are likely to increase within the ICFTU. For example, one can find Peter Bakvis, the ICFTU's Man in Washington being simultaneously or alternately compromised with the neo-liberal World Bank and International Monetary Fund (UNI 2005) and with the anti-neo-liberal Hemispheric Social Alliance of the Americas (at least according to Marchand 2005:115).

¹⁷ Within the GJ&SM we can certainly find different orientations. Some who talk of global democratisation see this, like the unions, primarily in terms of 'reforming multi-lateral institutions' (<http://www.reformcampaign.net/index.php?pg=9&lg=eng>), others in terms of empowering local actors, seen as increasingly involved in and addressing global politics where they live and work (Saskia Sassen 2005). The point is, however, that whilst the first orientation leaves the initiating NGO (in this case Ubuntu <http://www.ubuntu.org/>) in the role of mediator, the second requires the (self-) mobilisation of men and women in their localities, horizontally linked through the internet..

¹⁸ Developing an idea of Mark Poster (1995), I have elsewhere suggested that cyberspace needs to be considered not only as a tool (like a hammer) or a community (like Germany) but also as a utopia (a non-existent but desirable future). Poster points out that whereas 'Germany' produces Germans, a 'hammer' does not produce hammers but drives nails into wood. 'Utopia', in my understanding, is something that could inspire Germans to produce a community broader, deeper and more humane than Germany, and to create new multi-purpose tools for new Post-German purposes.

¹⁹ The only explanation I can suggest here is that this incrementalist document was nonetheless too assertive or autonomous for the conservative, Eurocentred and top-down ICFTU/GU! More information and other explanations would be welcome here.

²⁰ There is here an implicit connection with the argument of Hardt and Negri (2004) that, although industrial labour is not dead, it is today 'immaterial labour' (not only intellectual, creative and

computerised but much service and care work) that is 'hegemonic'. This is in the sense that it provides the dominant logic of work, as did industrial labour in an earlier epoch. The implications of this are far-reaching for an appropriate organisational (better, 'relational') model for inter/national labour defence and assertion in the 21st century.

²¹ Or possibly suffering from schizophrenia? In his brilliant continuing work on 'cosmopolitan democracy', David Held (2004) claims to be thinking in social-democratic terms. This claim is questioned by Patrick Bond (2004). Perhaps we are witnessing here the difference between a *politically*- and a *socially*-oriented social democracy?

²² 'Augeas, the king of Elis had been given a huge amount of cattle as a gift from his father, many herds in fact. His problem was, the stables where he kept them had never been cleaned. His neglect was so great that not only the stables, which were in a very bad state, but the land surrounding them had been unfertilized for many years, due to the unused manure which lay within the compound.

'Heracles task was to clean them. This seemed to Augeas to be a long and arduous labor for Heracles to undertake. Thinking it would be totally impossible Augeas wagered Heracles a tenth of his cattle, if the huge task was finished in a single day. Without hesitation Heracles accepted Augeas' challenge, then set about working out a plan in which to do the job in a swift but thorough way. The next day Heracles started his formidable labor, not only using his great strength, but using his brain to plan this challenge.

'The first part of the mammoth task was to dismantle the wall which protected the rear of the stables, and with Heracles' great strength this was an effortless job. Next he made a diversion in the two rivers which flowed close by, the Alpheus and the Peneus. After digging a canal in the direction of the stables, Heracles released their banks, and when the two rivers merged they created a surge, which, by the time they flowed through the stables, turned into a torrent. The power and also the amount of water, washed all the filth away. After the rush of water passed through the stables it not only cleansed them but cascaded on to the fields below, giving the soil life after being deprived of manure for many years.

'With the task complete, Heracles sought his prize, which Augeas had promised; one tenth of all his herds. The king was infuriated by his defeat, thinking the great hero would never clean such a mountain of filth in such a short time, and refused to pay the wager. This time it was Heracles who was infuriated. However, Phyleus the son of king Augeas, thinking of the consequences of Heracles anger, affirmed the agreement and brought about an amicable settlement, which Heracles accepted.' (Leadbetter 2006).