

Introduction

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CAPITALISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN about the destruction of community. The removal of communities of aboriginals and peasants from their land and craftsmen from their tools and their skills were crucial conditions for the development of early industrial capitalism. The triumph of capitalism required a cultural revolution, for, as E.P. Thompson has written, "there is no such thing as economic growth which is not at the same time, growth and change of a culture."¹ New ideologies of possessive individualism, secularism and scientism were part of this far-reaching cultural revolution, which accompanied and legitimated an economy that for the first time in history was conceived and justified as operating according to its own rational laws, independent of community.

There have been more modest cultural revolutions since. One was that surrounding the emergence of the Keynesian social welfare state during and after World War II. We seem to be undergoing another cultural revolution of similar proportions. The current one often goes by the name "globalization."

For a time after World War II, it seemed that capitalism had thrown off its destructive character and was busily creating the conditions for stable communities in the few advanced countries. (Capitalism was always more destructive in the Third World.) Taking the place of the destroyed pre-industrial communities were new communities of citizens in democratic polities, wage-earners in socialized work settings and individuals freed from domination and traditions to create myriad bonds of association in vibrant civil societies. It was these new forms of association that, at least partially in the Keynesian era, re-embedded capitalism in community and forced economic elites once again to acknowledge responsibilities to place.

In the current era of "globalization," capitalism has reverted to its bad old ways of destroying communities, according to the authors of this special issue. Will "globalization" also lead to the creation of new communities at the local, national, continental or global levels the way early capitalism threw up communities of organized workers to oppose its central ethos? On the other hand, will globalization lead more to the privatization of public life and the narrowing of the sphere of the political? When the only measure of the worth of human activity is deemed to be success in the marketplace, what options

1. Cited in Claude Denis' article, this issue.

does this leave people in Mexico, in rural Ontario, in Alberta or elsewhere? These questions are addressed in the articles in this special issue.

What is “globalization”? Is it the result of inevitable technological and economic changes, or is it mainly about the global “talk,” “ideology” or “discourse” of neoliberals? Are the proponents of globalization right in saying that the past 15 years or so represent massive breaks in our history, or is there much more continuity than is generally recognized? In other words, how much of it is new?

Taking an anthropological-cultural approach, Luis Roniger sees globalization as a threat to the citizens’ right to participate in the shaping of civil society and public life. He discusses the issue in terms of the basic tension of rights versus commitments, variously conceived as individualism versus communalism (sociology), deconstructionism versus essentialism (anthropology), popular culture versus hegemonic discourse (Gramscian), and contractarianism versus communitarianism (political science). Global talk may imply the rejection of public thought and governance in the name of a seemingly self-sufficient market logic. The premises of the Western discourse of globality, Roniger continues, emphasize the self-referentiality and restriction of collective concerns, hedonism and privatization of horizons. As the sense of community dwindles in tandem with the rise of ideologies of privatization that gain worldwide hegemony, the willingness to sustain public welfare has been put under stress.

While the ascendance of the new right’s global vision downgrades citizens’ ability to democratically direct their polities and there has been a decline in the credibility of the left’s global alternative, there remains, according to Roniger, a persistent search for community and bonds of identity. This search has recently taken new forms, which go beyond that of the nation-state. Some of these are nostalgic attempts to cling to the past, while others constitute a source of social renovation. Transnational movements around issues such as human rights and ecology have emerged to play an important role by engaging in the constitution of a concerned public sphere. Nevertheless, they have been quite ineffective overall. Roniger is fairly pessimistic that the search for community will be strong enough to counteract and overcome the global forces of individuation and self-interest as the dominant global vision.

My own article formulates the questions differently. Taking a political-economy approach, it focusses more on the new right and the transnational corporations as actors in constructing “global talk” out of some, but not all, of the elements of the Western Enlightenment—the liberal or capitalist ones. It is sceptical of some of the claims of the advocates of globalization, in particular those regarding the inflated language about a radical rupture in human history, including the universal loss of national sovereignty and claims about the newness of global economic integration. It is also sceptical of some of the technologically determinist explanations as well as of the bland assumptions that democracy is strengthened by “market reforms.”

The second half of my article assesses the potential for older and newer forms of community to develop effective alternatives to globalization by the transnationals. I argue that critics of globalization should not be prepared to discard national sovereignty, because this is the basis for bottom-up democracy that works best at the national and local levels. It is capital, not labour, that is mobile. To allow the polity to re-establish control over the economy and re-embed it in community, I explore forms of social and democratic capital that have "location commitment." My article is a general overview that nevertheless sees alternatives coming specifically from the national level.

Gerardo Otero takes a different tack by confining his study to a single nation, Mexico, but pinning his hopes for progressive changes there on the strengthening of transnational civil society. His is the first of three articles to examine the effects of globalization in specific settings.

Otero looks at how external forces, especially neo-liberal ones, help to structure and narrow the options in Mexico's political futures. By using the "global commodities chain" approach, he gives much more weight to national-level variables than does world systems theory. The paper focusses on the dual and contradictory continental and global pressures on Mexico: the neoliberal restructuring of the Mexican economy after the 1982 debt crisis and under the NAFTA on the one hand, and the internal pressures for democratization with their attendant demands for redistributive social policies on the other. The dilemma for Mexico's elites is that it is almost impossible for them to give in to the latter while implementing the rigid pro-market rules of the former.

Otero traces Mexico's shift from import substitution to neoliberalism, a transition forced by the debt crisis of the early 1980s and by pressure from the world's financial system and supranational agencies. But the neoliberal shift away from much of the ideology and the national symbols of revolutionary nationalism has not been accompanied by a transition to democracy. This contrasts with trends in the rest of Latin America in the past decade. By looking at six possible future scenarios, Otero assesses whether economic restructuring in a neoliberal direction can be compatible with a democratic political transition and social reform in Mexico. The scenarios examined are 1) savage capitalism, 2) social reformism, 3) social liberalism, 4) social economy, 5) liberal democracy and 6) social democracy. The first three scenarios depict possible political futures without an opening to democracy and are the least compatible with raising living standards in Mexico. Otero favours a social-democratic future but does not think it is likely to come in the near future, believing that its prospects are partly dependent on developments within American capitalism and on the emergence of effective cross-border coalitions in North America.

Belinda Leach and Anthony Winson examine the effects of global restructuring on the quality of life on and off the job in a rural area of Southern Ontario. They set the context by examining the deindustrialization debates initiated by Harrison and Bluestone in the United States and by the Canadian dependency school. Faced with a profitability crisis starting in the late 1960s,

U.S. firms elaborated strategies for "labour flexibility" to reduce the wage bill through concessions, part-time work, union avoidance and outsourcing production. In the service economy there has been considerable "occupational skidding" downward, and the creation of an hourglass economy with greater income disparities. Particularly hard hit have been rural communities in Southern Ontario, where manufacturing has traditionally provided important job opportunities.

The Leach-Winson study complements macroeconomic work by providing a close look at the texture of people's lives under restructuring in a rural setting. Using ethnographic techniques, they studied the effects of the recent closing of the Canada Packers and Westinghouse plants in North Wellington County. While most laid-off workers experienced negative effects, the impact on women was much worse than on men. Most laid-off workers experienced huge drops in annual income and loss of job benefit packages. Many men now commute long distances to work, eating into wages and time spent with family, but women were not as able to commute long distances because of responsibilities toward children. Negative impacts on local communities and families were considerable. There was no evidence that "good" jobs in the information economy were replacing the vanished "bad" jobs in manufacturing, perhaps because in rural areas, the diversity of job opportunities is more limited than in urban areas. The authors conclude that the public acquiesced to restructuring because New Democrats and others have failed to present credible alternatives.

Claude Denis examines the new right's cultural offensive in Ralph Klein's Alberta and sees it as a response to the discourse of globalization. Canada's right-wingers were so late in adopting an explicitly new-right programme, Denis argues, that they are now in the forefront of the second wave of the new right. The Reform Party was the first in Canada to explicitly adopt the new right appeal, but Ralph Klein gave the new right its first big victory.

Despite the downsizing of government, the new right agenda is not about lessening the role of the state. Nor is it only about neoliberal economics, writes Denis. Rather, the new right is transforming the role of the state away from the culture-economics of the welfare state and toward disciplining populations. It is a vast cultural offensive to transform society, to create a moral ethos congruent with that of the neoliberal market. The state relies heavily on the mass media to generate this new moral regulation.

By studying the legislative activity of Klein's Alberta and examining government-generated stories in *The Edmonton Journal* and *Alberta Report*, Denis scrutinizes the extraordinarily convincing government discourse that has reached Albertans. The Klein agenda is understood in the way it interprets economic issues: budget deficits, cuts in government programmes that the province (supposedly) can no longer afford and the "Alberta advantage" of low taxes and lean government. This rhetoric is closely attuned to the discourse of globalization in which, it is claimed, governments are forced to do

things by international markets. This rhetoric belies the real situation in which “globalization” is authored by states, Denis argues. But Klein’s “authoritarian populist” cultural revolution is equally about moral regulation. Its content focusses on self-help and self-discipline; admonishing individuals and communities to become responsible and independent; castigating as un-Albertan whoever does not join them. In the authoritarian state, the economy is deregulated, but the social is reregulated. Economic policy is cultural policy. Albertans must accept as normal sacrifices that could be thought unreasonable; Albertans must be weaned from the culture of the welfare state. Through the use of business language, every social concern in Alberta is reformulated in terms of the profit motive.

According to Leo Panitch, rather than dismantling the state, the new right restructures it so that the agencies that facilitate accumulation gain status, while those that foster social welfare and class harmony lose status. Denis’ study confirms this. All bills regarding health and social services in Klein’s Alberta were introduced by the Treasurer. Contradicting the advocates of globalization regarding the loss of national sovereignty, Denis argues that the state is uniquely qualified to alter society’s moral codes by subjectifying citizens through discourses of competitiveness and law and order.

This special issue is a stimulating and diverse collection of articles that are critical of the naive and optimistic assumptions of neoliberal advocates of globalization. The authors argue that current trends that go under the rubric of “globalization” are leading away from deepening democracy and better conditions for the majority. Underlying all these articles is the analytical and ethical dedication to continue the search for meaningful community and social justice for all humankind.