

Review: Globalise This! The WTO and Corporate Rule

Globalise This! – The Battle Against The WTO and Corporate Rule by Kevin Danaher and Roger Burback (Common Courage Press US\$16.00/stg£10.22)

Kevin Doyle

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Globalise This! is one of the more important and informative books to come out of the Battle of Seattle. Published by Common Courage Press (“Our Goal is to turn pens into swords”) the thrust of the book from the very beginning is towards the activist and ‘the citizen’ interested in doing something about what is wrong on this planet. As the blurb says “The WTO, World Bank and IMF must – and can – be stopped. This book tells us how.”

In terms of style and structure the book is well set out. There are four sections: the first on What Happened At Seattle, the second on Dealing With Diversity, the third on The Case Against the WTO, and the fourth, Ways To Restructure The World Economy. Overall this format gives something to everyone – eyewitness accounts, background and facts, arguments to be put to the unconvinced. Moreover the style, while somewhat uneven due to the number of contributions, is engaging and personal.

The politics of course are the main thing, so what about these? It should be borne in mind that this book is something of a celebration, and in this sense it probably does shy away from being too self-critical. Nonetheless, some issues are tackled. For example, in *Where Was The Colour in Seattle?* (by Elizabeth Martinez), the issue is raised about why the overwhelming majority of the participants at the protest were, as the author puts it, “Anglo”.

Similarly in terms of the acknowledging the ‘anti-authoritarian’ practices and organisational methods of protesters at Seattle, the book is good and informative. Clearly this ‘anti-authoritarianism’ has given the authorities a lot of problems; but the point also needs to be brought out that this structure principally suits the participants – allowing for great momentum of action in what is a diverse movement of groups, organisations and individuals.

It’s when the book gets on to its proposals for the future (Part 4 – Ways To Restructure The World Economy) that it is at its weakest. Take for example the article *It’s Time To Gone On The Offensive ? Here’s How*. Here Willian Grieder advances the idea of putting manners on the ‘multinational corporations’; this will be done through the enactment of legislation in the US Congress.

Of course this is a lovely idea, but what planet is the author living on? Grieder cites the precedent of 1977 legislation in the States — the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act — that made it a domestic crime for US multinational to bribe officials in their international operations. Indeed, interesting! But FCPA is a far cry from an action that would really effect multinational operations and right to ‘profit’.

Standard political analysis (and a reading of recent history) would suggest that if an attempt was made at even a principled level to wrest power and the right to profit from capitalists (via an act of Congress), their reaction would be far different and more extreme; it is reasonable to suggest that such measures would not even be “allowed” get to Congress’s door!

Unfortunately there are plenty more naïve prescriptions of this nature lying about in this section. The view seems to be that we can ‘humanise’ capitalism. If only it was so!

But another aspect to the contributions in this section that is worrying (and grating!) is that many of the actions/ solutions proposed are predicated around ‘reforms’ in the US Congress and so on. Some of the contributors obviously feel that the USA is the place where it is all happening — that the solutions, as much as the desire for real change, begin and end there! There is so much wrong with this sort of outlook (that posits change at the USA Congressional level as a real and tangible strategy for the new movement) that one wouldn’t know where to begin.

This isn’t the place to go into what anarchists propose instead, but isn’t there a real need in this sort of book for an article(s) that hits at some home truths about the system we are trying to overthrow? Let’s face a few basics:

- a. change must begin and come from below;
- b. the type of change we need must tackle authoritarianism in society and root it out;
- c. last but not least, the emancipation of people must be in the hands of the people themselves! The Congress (and especially the US Congress) is far removed from these simple but important rules of engagement!

There is much to commend in this book, but not so much in the solutions it offers. But perhaps having these ‘solutions’ set out here in the manner they have been, is useful for the debate that they can (and undoubtedly will) provoke. Common Courage have done us a very good service in that respect.

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