# Socialist Studies

# Études socialistes

The Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies

Revue de la Société d'études socialistes

Venezuela under Chávez

The Limitations of Global Social Movement Unionism

Taking the Monster Down: an interview with William K. Carroll

*Vol. 6*

*No. 1*

*Spring*

*2010*

### Special Section
**Twenty Years after Kanehsatà:ke: Reflections, Responses, Analyses**

*Featuring Taiaike Alfred, Kahente Doxtater (Horn-Miller), David Bedford & Thomas Cheney, Steven W. Koptie*

Book Reviews

*Socialist Studies: the Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies*, is published by the Society for Socialist Studies.

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*EDITORIAL*

# Post-Colonialism, Post Socialism, and Multiple Remembrances

CHAD D. THOMPSON
University College of the North. Thompson, Manitoba, Canada.

On the morning of 12 July 1990, I flipped on my TV to CNN's Headline News.  I received about two hours of English-language television each morning, and had grown dependent on CNN to let me know in the vaguest sense what was going on in the world.  I was living in Prague, in what would remain Czechoslovakia for another couple of years, part of  the swarm of do-gooders, curiosity-seekers, and carpetbaggers descending on the entire former East Bloc at the end of 1989.   By the time I left Prague, it was clear to anyone who looked carefully that the new regime's willingness to suspend visa and currency regulations made 'English teacher' a surprisingly lucrative moniker for anyone looking to cash in quickly before the heavyweights took over, and in the process thoroughly elided  any boundary between do-gooders and carpetbaggers[1]).

Given the time difference between Prague and eastern Canada,  that morning's top story on Headline News was the first I heard of events at Kanehsatà:ke, or as it was soon referred to, the 'Oka Crisis'.  The previous

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[1] The comparison with the original 'carpetbaggers' – northerners who headed to the defeated Confederate South at the end of the American Civil War, looking to make quick profits during Reconstruction – resonates strongly.  The Soviet bloc was seen as having been defeated in the Cold War, and an influx of transient opportunists saw this as a chance to get quickly rich. In Mandevillean fashion,  private vices would become public virtues, as the populace of the former East bloc received a crash course in capitalism from its least reputable proponents. The joke was still circulating in the former USSR well into the twenty-first century: 'Everything we knew about socialism was false, and everything we knew about capitalism was true'.

morning, on 11 July 1990, the Québéc provincial police, the Sûreté du Québéc (SQ), had moved in to remove a roadblock established by residents of the Mohawk reserve of Kanehsatà:ke near Montréal.  The roadblock had been established in order to prevent the neighbouring francophone community of Oka from expanding a golf course.  The proposed expansion was to take place on disputed land (as is most of Canada). In this case, the land in question was the remnant of an area known as 'the Pines', the site of a Mohawk burial ground which had been partially razed for the initial construction of the golf course in 1961.  The community of Kanehsatà:ke sought at that time to prevent the clearing through legal channels; by the time the case was heard, much of the Pines had already been levelled.  The issue was re-ignited in 1989 when the mayor of Oka, Jean Ouellette, announced that the remainder of the Pines would be cleared to expand the course.  Residents of Kanehsatà:ke protested this decision, held demonstrations, and in the spring of 1990 erected a barricade to prevent the work.

The Sûreté du Québéc moved in on the morning of 11 July with tear gas and stun grenades.  There remains no agreement on who fired first, but the ensuing gun battle resulted in the death an SQ officer, Corporal Marcel Lemay, and the retreat of the SQ.  The SQ abandoned their police cruisers and a bulldozer, which the Mohawks used to add to the barricade.  The situation unfolded through the summer: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were called in to replace the SQ, and later the Canadian armed forces were deployed.  The nearby Mohawk community of Kahnawá:ke blockaded the Mercier Bridge, a major commuter route into Montréal, in solidarity with the people of Kanehsatà:ke.  A peace camp in the town of Oka drew Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal supporters from throughout Canada and the world.

Meanwhile, tensions escalated around the barricade in Kanehsatà:ke, resulting in the vicious beating of one Mohawk warrior by the military.  Canadian troops moved into the community of Kahnawá:ke, raiding the Longhouse (an act the Mohawks compared to desecrating a church or synagogue); while the police watched, a mob of locals, urged on by a talk-radio host, attacked a convoy of children, the elderly and the sick leaving Kahnawá:ke, hurling rocks and concrete blocks, resulting in the death of an elderly Mohawk man.  An end to the blockade of the Mercier Bridge was negotiated on the following day, and the government of Quebéc then broke off further negotiations over Kanehsatà:ke.  The Mohawks of

Kanehsatà:ke destroyed their remaining weapons and left the Pines on 26 September, with most immediately arrested by the military.[2]

I watched all this unfold through the fragments and sound bites of CNN, supplemented by news provided by my Czechoslovak students and friends. The 'Oka Crisis' was as riveting, and as shocking, for them as it was for me. Canadian Aboriginal peoples occupied a special place in the mythology of Czechoslovak childhood, thanks to the work of the novelist Karl May. May was a prolific writer of stories for children and adults at the end of the nineteenth century, selling over 100 million copies of his books in the original German and various translations, including Czech (King 2003). Czechoslovak school children grew up reading May's accounts of noble Canadian 'Indians', and cherished a belief in a benevolent Canadian state's relationship with its Aboriginal peoples, in sharp contrast to our neighbour to the south. My friends were as shocked and disturbed as was I to see images of armed Canadian soldiers confronting Mohawk warriorsjust a few minutes' drive from Montréal.

Such scenes did not fit with Czechoslovak's image of Canada at that time, nor that of most of the rest of the world – Canada like to be seen as the ultimate global do-gooder. In the subsequent twenty years, our Canadian complacency concerning relationships with First Nations have crumbled: Ipperwash; Esgenoopetitj; Caledonia; the admission of the catastrophe of the residential schools – all underscore the reality of the relationship. Non-aboriginal Canada was finally coming to recognise what its colonised original population had long known: that the history of the engagement of the Canadian state and society and First Nations was not one of harmonious tranquillity. The events of the summer of 1990 were a vivid notification that, as Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred writes in his

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[2] I have condensed a complex and hotly contested summary of the events of the summer of 1990 in the preceding two paragraphs. Numerous scholarly and popular considerations of these events are available (including one by one of our contributors to this issue), and the references can be found in the essays in the special section *Twenty Years after Kanehsatà:ke: Reflections, Responses, Analyses* in this issue.

The four-film series by the Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin is the most powerful recounting of the event. *Kanehsatake: 270 years of resistance* chronicles the siege at Kanehsatà:ke from behind the barricade. *My Name is Kahentiiosta* recounts the tale of one woman arrested at the end of the siege, and the insistence by the legal system that she had to have a 'proper' French or English name. *Spudwrench – Kahnawake* Man is devoted to the Mohawk warrior beaten nearly to death by the military, and the role of Mohawk iron workers The final film, *Rocks at Whiskey Trench*, situates the attack on the convoy from Kahnawá:ke within the larger tale of lost land. See Obawsawin 2008.

contribution to this issue's special section, *Twenty Years after Kanehsatà:ke: Reflections, Responses, Analyses,* '11 July 1990 was the day that shit ended'.


**1989, 1990, 1991**

My presence in Czechoslovakia had been made possible by the variety of revolutions, velvet and otherwise, which had swept Central Europe in the fall of 1989, ushering in a new era and a new term, 'post-socialism', though we did not yet know the term. Two years after these revolutions, and a year after the events at Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke, a non-revolution would bring about the speedy decay of the USSR. That convoluted late summer and autumn began with a bungled coup in August and petered out by December with fifteen separate sovereign and surprised new states. Such was the beginning of a new era of 'post-socialism', an era which would see my return to the post-socialist, post-communist, and post-Soviet world from 1998 to 2005, working for educational reform agencies, primarily in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. I was still trying to be a do-gooder, and still watching as the carpetbaggers won. Carpet-bagging had become a much more sophisticated operation than it had been in the naïve summer of 1990 in Central Europe. No longer was one trying to gain control of a fashionable pub where dissidents used to hang around, or corner the market on disposable paper products.[3] The stakes had changed. This time round, we were talking about the control of oilfields, electrical grids, and transnational banking sectors.

   Last year's twentieth anniversary of the revolutions of 1989 was marked with a flurry of conferences, publications, and special issues of scholarly journals; it is safe to assume that next year's anniversary of 1991 will be commemorated in a similar manner. 'Post-socialism' has become a major pastime, tied to research dollars and policy-making, with a bevy of centres mushrooming forth to dissect and analyze the post-socialist reality. Bracketed between 1989 and 1991, which launched us into 'post-socialism', do Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke in the summer of 1990 have any relationship with the collapse of the state-socialist Soviet bloc, beyond historical contingency? The twentieth anniversary of the 'Oka Crisis' appears to have faded from the memory of my now Czech and Slovak

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[3] I really did work with people who attempted both in Czechoslovakia (and did succeed in the former instance). The distance between '*biznezmen*' and myself in Central Asia was infinitely greater.

colleagues, and the international community in general. Within Canada, Leanne Simpson's and Kiera L. Ladner's just-released edited collection, *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years since the Blockades* (Ladner and Simpson 2010), reminds us of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke within the world of academic publishing. Are these events of no more than parochial interest, twenty tears on? Not surprisingly, I would not accept this interpretation. The last decade of the twentieth century did change the world, and the events at Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke in the summer of 1990 were part of this transformation, a transformation in the self-confidence of the capitalist world.

### What's Socialism got to do with it?

When the call went out for this themed issue, it was greeted with puzzlement by many colleagues. The standard refrain was 'What has Oka got to do with socialism?' I could, of course, make the standard rejoinders, quoting the mission of this journal, and citing its commitment to anti-colonial, anti-racist, and liberatory movements. But such gestures ring hollow, sounding much like an attempt to capitalize (and I use the word intentionally) on the struggles of the Mohawks of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke. As David Bedford and Thomas Cheney note in their contribution within this issue, the response of the labour left to the 'Oka Crisis' resonated far more with fascism than with socialism. Making the case for the appearance of this issue of *Socialist Studies* demands further reflection on the relationships between the colonial and post-colonial with the socialist and post-socialist.

What once had been actually-existing socialism did not have a persuasive track record in terms of dealings with indigenous peoples. Marx's own work presumed the inevitability progressive character of the proletarianization of colonial peoples, a necessary push in to modern class relations (Marx 1979). The final decades of the USSR saw the massive influx of settlers into the Indigenous north (and especially into oil-producing regions), once again in the name of modernization (Thompson 2008). Closer to home for those of us in Canada, the CCF government in Saskatchewan, from its election until its demise as government and party in 1967, adhered to a policy of modernization in the north of the province – in part to assimilate the Cree and Dene populations, and in part to implement a more 'socialist' agenda than was possible in the more heavily populated south (Quiring 2004). The conflict between the Miskito people of Nicaragua and the Sandinista regime in the 1980s provoked

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uncomfortable stammering amongst anti-imperialists worldwide. The legacy of the left in power, in Canada and internationally, has not been one to inspire confidence amongst Indigenous peoples. Only the anarchist left, calling on tradition dating back to Bakunin, could make any kind of serious claim to a non-teleological view of modernity, and the concomitant possibility of diversity (Bakunin 1990). This claim was forced out of sight, however, beginning with the fracturing of the First International in 1872 and culminating in the crushing of the Kronstadt Uprising in 1921. Moments such as that of Evo Morales and the *Movimiento al Socialismo* 2005 and 2009 electoral victories in Bolivia, wherein Indigenous peoples are a majority, remain rare.

But despite its failures in practice, the ideal of a socialist alternative placed limits upon capitalism. Intellectuals as diverse as CB Macpherson on the left and George Grant on the right were able to recognise that throughout its duration, the very existence of the USSR suggested that there were alternatives to global capitalism, and served as some form of check[4] on the extreme excesses of a capitalist economy backed up by the force of the state (Macpherson 1973; Grant 2005). Stripped of this modest ethical limitation, capitalism in the post-socialist world knew no limits. A triumphalist neoliberal cast could declare the end of history (Fukuyama 1992), and the inevitability of liberal democracy (with an emphasis on the 'liberal' side of the term). Capitalism, not Marxism, had been vindicated by the forces of history, and free-market economics in its classical form could now be accepted as a universally-acknowledged and incontrovertible scientific truth (Klein 2008).

The conjunction of the events at Kanehsatà:ke and the coming end of Soviet communism was on the mind of one Plains Cree visual artist, Gerald McMaster, who did a series of works in 1990 which were part of a 1992 exhibition *Indigena*, marking 500 years of grappling with the legacy of Columbus. Some of these works explicitly reference Kanehsatà:ke, such as *Oka-boy / Oh! Kowboy* and *No Life Like It*. But his work *Glasnost* is of particular interest to me here. The painting features caricatures of a 'cowboy' and an 'Indian', overwritten with the following text:

<div style="text-align:center">

ranch ≠ reserve

D.I.N.A. ≠ Indian gov't

Land claim ≠ sovereignty

GLA$NOST                    (McMaster 1990, 184)

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[4] Such checks may have seemed negligible to the residents of proxy states during the Cold War.

I would also refer readers to Wanda Nanibush's 'Love and Other Resistances' and reproductions of the pieces in *This is an Honour Song* (Nanibush 2010),[5] but it seems safe to suggest that we can see a collision amongst a colonial imagination, events in the socialist and post-socialist world, capitalism, and First Nations' sovereignty.

Within the light of post-socialist capitalism, the confrontation of the summer of 1990 between the Canadian and Québec states and the peoples of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawá:ke could be read as an early flexing of state power in a post-socialist era, wherein the sacrosanct character of colonial property relations - a golf course and a commuter bridge -trumped any other forms of rights to land, spirituality, or human dignity. The images of stare-downs between Canadian soldiers and Mohawk warriors encapsulates how things were to unfold in the wake of socialist alternatives.

**States and Non-States, Land and History**

Part of socialism's difficulty in coming to terms with issues of aboriginality are tied to its difficulty in coming to terms with its kindred spirit, capitalism - the two are twin children of the Enlightenment project, invoking the rational ordering of the world. The constitution of 'rational' may be the subject of considerable disagreement, but these two vectors of Enlightenment thought shared a faith in an historical progress which would necessarily and intentionally sweep aside all 'pre-modern' forms of social organisation (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972; Arendt 1968; Beilharz 2009; Lefort 1986). As progeny of the Enlightenment, capitalism and this form of socialism shared the epistemological certainty of having a monopoly on understanding the reality of the world.

Common to this shared certainty was the belief in the static nature of peoples engulfed by European colonialism. The colonized world was understood as enmeshed in social relationships which had frozen, remaining unchanged since the dim recesses of the past. Only the force of colonialism and the active intervention of the colonial state could break this stasis and re-insert the colonized within historical time (Scott 2009; Sahlins 2000; Cohn 1996). Within Europe, it was neither liberals nor socialists who challenged this view, but conservatives, suggesting that such an effort would undermine the colonial power itself (Burke 1857).

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[5] For discussions of some of the other artists included in the work, see also Paul Chaat Smith's *Everything You Know about Indians is Wrong* (Smith 2009), reviewed in this issue.

Canada's own contribution to such thought was made by the hapless Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Francis Bond Head, who in addition to sparking the 1837 Rebellion, successfully advocated for the establishment of what would evolve into the Canadian reserve system, isolating First Nations from settler Canada (Ray 2005).  But the presumption of stasis remained unchallenged. Within the Americas, this took the form of 'Indians' as being static (outside of history) and a single, homogenous group.  All Aboriginal peoples were ultimately the same.(Lutz 2008).

An alternative reading of colonized cultures emerges from what has come to be known, for good or for ill, as 'post-colonial'. Such perspectives need not suggest that the era of colonialism has come to an end; it obviously has not, as the events of 1990 and today should remind us.  But the colonized are not, and have never been, passive and inert objects in the colonial dialectic.  The colonized may have operated outside the epistemology of Enlightenment progress, culminating in the Hegelian fusion of state and capitalism, but this does not imply existing outside of history.  As Pierre Clastres and James C. Scott have both argued, the prevention of state and capital formation have in themselves been historical actions (Clastres 1987; Scott 2010).

The re-opening of history also creates challenges for the certainty of the written word, a fact well-understood within the legacy of First Nations' oral traditions in Canada.  This confounds the conventions of that academic sanctification of the written word, the scholarly journal.  Within this issue, one will encounter varied terms and spellings, some mandated by colonial logic (the Canadian state recognises the 'Mohawks of Kanesatake', as a nation, not those of 'Kanehsatà:ke' or 'Kanehsatake').  While my own editorial obsessions have usually led me to standardize 'Kanehsatà:ke' and 'Kahnawá:ke' (although even with these, reasons of indexing at time resist such efforts), by and large we have left terminology in the forms which the authors had used.  Thus, at some points terms may be given in English translations; at others, they may be given in the language of the Haudenosaunee (or the 'Iroquois', or the 'Mohawks', or the 'Kanien'hekaka').  Perhaps the lack of consensus does not need a resolution, but should instead remain as part of these perpetually emergent histories.

What remains, of socialism and post-socialism, colonialism and post-colonialism, is history – a history which has set itself on a different path than that of Enlightenment teleology in its capitalist or socialist forms. The Dene scholar Glen Coulthard follows Franz Fanon in rejecting the

'assimilative lure' of a politics of recognition, demanding instead an autonomous and autochthonous search for concepts of First Nations' sovereignty (Coulthard 2008, 201), notions pursued by Kahente Doxtater (Horn-Miller) and Stephen W. Koptie in their contributions to this issue. The end of Soviet-style state socialism was proclaimed as the end of history and the triumph of liberalism; McMaster, Coulhardt, Doxtater, and Koptie all seek to re-open history beyond the stasis of the colonial imagination.

Post-socialism, for the co-founder of *Thesis Eleven,* Peter Beilharz, is not the end of history but the return to history, one which moves beyond the convictions of certainty in how the world must unfold (Beilharz 2009). Such a claim echoes a remark made by author Thomas King at an address at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario in 2009. King spoke of the continuing incomprehension by settler states and societies when challenged by Aboriginal claims to sovereignty. Settler Canada, according to King, inserted issues of land and history alongside considerations of politics, economics, and myriad other processes, insisting on an appreciation of the complexity of the entire question. What we continually failed to understand, according to King, was that this was not *primarily* about land and history; it was *all* about land and history. The challenge for the contemporary left, socialist or post-socialist, is to understand what this means for us today.

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*ARTICLE*

# Venezuela under Chávez
The Prospects and Limitations of Twenty-First Century
Socialism, 1999-2009

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**Abstract**
This article takes stock of major developments in the political economy of contemporary Venezuela after ten years under Hugo Chávez. It is argued that the Bolivarian process has done a great deal to rejuvenate the international critique of neoliberalism and to bring discussion of socialism back on the agenda of the Left. At the same time, there has been no socialist revolution in Venezuela, and Chavismo is ridden with profound and abiding contradictions. This article considers the historical backdrop of the Bolivarian process, beginning with the end of authoritarianism and the Pact of Punto Fijo and the rise and fall of orthodox neoliberalism at the end of the twentieth-century. The article then describes Chavez' gradual and partial radicalization between 1999 and 2009 and finally concludes that the global economic crisis poses a unique set of challenges and opportunities for the Bolivarian process in the midst of significantly reduced oil revenues.

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Jeffrey R. Webber est professeur assistant en science politique à l'Université de Regina, Canada. Il est membre du comité de rédaction de *Historical Materialism* et participe à celui de *Latin American Perspectives*. Ses travaux récents ont paru dans *Historical Materialism, Third World Quarterly, Latin American Perspectives,* et *Monthly Review*, ainsi que d'autres revues et ouvrages collectifs. Parmi ses livres à paraître sont: *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Brill, 2010); *Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation, and the Politics of Evo Morales* (Haymarket Books, 2011), et, co-dirigé avec Barry Carr, *The Resurgence of Latin American Radicalism: Between Cracks in the Empire and an Izquierda Permitida* (forthcoming 2011, Rowman and Littlefield). Il travaille actuellement sur un livre avec Todd Gordon qui documente le rôle joué par l'imperialisme canadien en Amérique latine et le Caribes dans l'ère néolibérale.

**Résumé**

Cet article analyse les développements majeurs dans l'économie politique du Venezuela contemporain après dix ans sous Hugo Chávez. Il défend l'idée que le processus Bolivarien a considérablement revivifié la critique internationale du néolibéralisme et a remis le débat sur le socialisme sur l'agenda de la Gauche. En même temps, il n'y a pas eu de révolution socialiste au Venezuela et le Chavisme est marqué par des profondes contradictions structurelles. Cet article retrace les évènements historiques qui ont précédé le processus Bolivarien, en commençant avec la fin de l'autoritarisme et le pacte de Punto Fijo et la montée puis la chute du néoliberalisme orthodoxe à la fin du vingtième siècle. Ensuite, cet article décrit la radicalisation graduelle et partielle de Chavez entre 1999 et 2009 et conclut que la crise économique mondiale représente des défis et opportunités pour le processus Bolivarien en particulier compte tenu des revenus pétroliers significativement réduits.

**Keywords**
• Venezuela • Chávez• socialism• democracy • Bolivarian

**Mots clés**
• Venezuela • Chávez • socialisme • démocratie • Bolivarien

Elected in late December 1998, Hugo Chávez assumed the presidency of Venezuela in February 1999.[1]  A decade into the Bolivarian process of social and political change, it is incumbent upon the international left to step back and reflect on the images and realities of *Chavismo*. An historical sociological approach is employed in this article to analyze the big trends and contradictions characterizing politics, economics, and class struggle in Venezuela over the last ten years. Recent processes are considered against the backdrop of the country's earlier social formation, taking the long view of historical and material developments in Venezuelan political economy over the last half century from which the Bolivarian process emerged. The article emphasizes a theoretical approach that understands the transition

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to socialism as: the overturning of still-existing capitalist class rule and the capitalist state in Venezuela through the self-activity and struggle of the popular classes themselves; movement toward democratic social coordination of the economy; communal ownership of economic and natural resources; worker and community control of workplaces and neighbourhoods; the deep expansion of radical democratic rule through all political, social, economic, and private spheres of life; and an internationalist socialist orientation which privileges solidarity with emancipatory movements of the oppressed and exploited around the globe. This is quite distinct from versions of socialist theory that privilege merely state ownership of the means of production and state allocation of resources.

Six overarching, interrelated theses are advanced. First, popular struggles in Venezuela over the last decade have rejuvenated the international critique of neoliberalism and brought socialism back on the left's agenda, although no socialist revolution has been achieved in Venezuela. *Chavismo* is riddled by profound and abiding contradictions, thus far preventing a revolutionary overturning of capitalist class rule and the capitalist state.

Second, Hugo Chávez was elected president in 1998 because his anti-neoliberal, left-populist platform filled the void created by the collapse of the traditional political system and the absence of a revolutionary socialist alternative. Modestly reformist at the onset of its first term, the Chávez government was slowly and partially radicalized when faced with a series of imperialist and domestic, legal and (mainly) extra-legal, right-wing destabilization campaigns.

Third, the government's radicalizing tendency is a result, more specifically, of counter-revolutionary pressure that spurred a dramatic effervescence of grassroots struggles amongst the working class and urban poor, a small but important minority of whom are committed socialists, beginning in April 2002 and accelerating during and after the oil lockout of 2002-2003.

Fourth, against this grass roots, left-populist, and sometimes socialist struggle from below, conservative, bureaucratic layers within *Chavismo* have taken on an important role within the state apparatus and have hampered a transition to socialism.

Fifth, the empirical record regarding poverty reduction and social programs in Venezuela suggests both real social progress and serious contradictions. Poverty has been reduced at rates similar to other centre-left governments in the region during the commodities boom (2003-2007).

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Venezuela's highly unequal income distribution, moreover, makes clear there has been no fundamental shift toward socialism.

Sixth, the global economic crisis creates novel opportunities and challenges for the Bolivarian process, not least as a consequence of the fluctuating international price of oil.

In the conclusion, I consider the impact of the global economic crisis for the left in Venezuela and Latin America more widely, argue for the necessity of sustained advance toward socialist transformation from below, and consider the various implications for solidarity activists outside of Venezuela.

## International Images of Venezuela under Chávez

Mainstream punditry in North America and Europe associates Venezuela with the *bad* Left in contemporary Latin America. This Left is 'nationalist, strident, and close-minded,'  'depends on giving away money,' and has 'no real domestic agenda.' For the bad Left, 'the fact of power is more important than its responsible exercise,' and for its leaders, 'economic performance, democratic values, programmatic achievements, and good relations with the United States are not imperatives but bothersome constraints that miss the real point' (Castañeda 2006). George W. Bush's national security strategy documents claimed that Hugo Chávez was a 'demagogue awash in oil money', seeking to 'undermine democracy' and 'destabilize the region', Donald Rumsfeld compared Chávez to Adolf Hitler, reminding us that Hitler, too, had been elected (Grandin 2006).[2] Not much has changed since Barack Obama took over the world's most powerful presidency. The White House message continues to be that Chávez runs a dangerously authoritarian regime in desperate need of 'democratization.'[3]

Chávez has been a leading opponent of free trade deals between Latin American countries and the United States, instead invoking the memory of independence hero Simón Bolívar with his vision of a united South America to promote a series of trade deals based on principles of solidarity (Chávez 2003; Katz 2008; Kellogg 2007). Chávez is openly inspired by the Cuban revolution and has a warm friendship with Fidel Castro, while stressing Venezuela's independent path towards a less state-

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[2] On US imperialism in Venezuela over the course of the Bush presidency, see Golinger 2006; 2007.

[3] For exemplary commentary from Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, see Henao 2009 and Suggett 2009.

centered and more pluralistic twenty-first century socialism. Chávez emphasizes the need to forge stronger South-South connections against the imperialism of the core capitalist states of the world system. This explicitly anti-imperialist stance helps to explain the United States support for reactionary forces in Venezuela, even in the relative absence of direct threats to American corporate interests.[4]

The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), first imagined by the Venezuelan government in 2001 as a counter to the North American-led Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), is the most important expression of Venezuelan-led regional integration. Formally established in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba, it expanded to include Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Ecuador, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda, with Paraguay scheduled to join later in 2009 (Hart-Landsberg 2009). Moreover, soon after Evo Morales election in Bolivia in December 2005, Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia signed what they called a Peoples' Trade Agreement.

Chávez is revered by many on the Left, since few leaders of the Global South today openly and regularly denounce the crimes of American imperialism from a left-wing perspective.[5] Along with its record of poverty reduction and anti-neoliberalism, pursued with popular support in the face of domestic right-wing and imperialist assaults, Venezuela helps to revive the idea of socialism as a viable political choice. This is an important development following the Soviet bloc's collapse and the discrediting of socialism in the wake of Stalinist policies, and explains why Venezuela has inspired so much attention and debate.

From the right, Chávez has sometimes been crudely lumped in with recent 'neopopulist' Presidents elsewhere in the region, such as Alberto Fujimori in Peru, and Carlos Menem in Argentina (Weyland 2001). Chávez's neopopulism, on this view, includes a feverishly authoritarian bent, where 'political competition' means '[o]pponents must be crushed', and where Chávez employs 'hate speech' that sounds 'more dictatorial than democratic' (Corrales 2009, 81). More serious discussion is occurring on the left. There are those who think Chávez is a moderate social democrat

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[4] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to this point.
[5] Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is an example of a reactionary government opposed to US power. Chávez's unconditional support for Ahmadinejad's regime as it ferociously repressed mass demonstrations in the streets of Tehran and elsewhere in June and July 2009 was a travesty that revealed the deeply flawed understandings of socialist internationalism within his government.

and celebrate this stance as a reasonable and realistic response to the current hostile context of neoliberalism and imperialism (Ali 2006). Some social democrats, however, celebrate the perceived social gains of the Bolivarian process, but fear a 'regressive evolution' in the 'sphere of politics' in which they perceive a 'closing of the space for participation and democratic decision-making' (López Maya 2007, 175).  Other leftists, while remaining critical of different components of the government's approach, contend that Chávez represents something more radical than social democracy, something even potentially revolutionary and transformative. They tend to stress the social and economic achievements of the regime thus far in the face of daunting odds (Wilpert 2007; Lebowitz 2006; Ellner 2008; Robinson 2007). There are those, finally, who orient themselves toward struggling within and for the socialist advance of the Bolivarian process, but who emphasize the contradictions, obstacles, delays, setbacks, and bureaucratization that have thus far stood in the way of genuine socialist transition from below; these obstacles, for the latter set of thinkers, represent the clear and present danger to the possibilities for emancipation of the popular classes from the exploitation of capital and the oppression of imperialism.[6] This paper situates itself most closely within the last of these sets of leftist commentaries on the Venezuelan scenario.

## Historical Backdrop – From *puntofijismo* to *neoliberalismo*, 1958-1998

Between 1945 and 1948 (the *trienio*) a populist-reformist government was led by the *Acción Democratica* (Democratic Action, AD) – Venezuela's social democratic party. The period's economic elite, threatened by the potential deepening of the AD government's modest social reforms, formed the conservative, Christian democratic, *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente*, (Committee of Independent Electoral Political Organization, COPEI), and backed a military overthrow of the democratically-elected AD administration. The signing of the Pact of Punto Fijo a decade later was the culmination of a compromised democratic transition out of the authoritarianism following the 1948 coup. The AD moderated its social reformist inclinations and COPEI its overtly authoritarian predilections, agreeing to a range of social, economic, and political pacts that shaped the new democratic order.

The series of compromises encompassed in Punto Fijo included power-sharing between the signatory parties – the AD, COPEI, and a

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[6] See, especially, the Venezuelan magazine *Marea Socialista*.

smallish left-wing party, *Unión Republicana Democrática* (Democratic Republican Union, URD) – and the exclusion of the *Partido Comunista de Venezuela* (Communist Party of Venezuela, PCV) from the legal political system. As the AD and COPEI converged ideologically, and the URD faded, oil money 'made it possible to induce business, labor, church, and military cooperation with the democratic regime' (Roberts 2003, 57). Venezuelan democracy 'rested upon a material basis: the distribution of international oil rents through a system of clientelism'. The oil boom of the 1970s, 'and nationalization of the foreign oil companies in 1976 were the culmination of this project associating democracy, oil nationalism, and development' (Hellinger 2003, 27). This nationalization had important consequences, creating a form of national rentier capitalism and attendant fractions of the domestic bourgeoisie whose benefits and interests were tied to its continuation. Protection of these interests helps to explain the origins and intensity of the oil lockout in late 2002 and early 2003.

Between 1970 and 1980 oil prices increased 948 percent (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007, 5), creating tremendous wealth, most of it captured by the state through oil rents. Capital's continued allegiance to the regime was secured through extremely low domestic tax rates and abundant access to cheap public credit. Meanwhile, a meagre but important part of the rent trickled down to the popular classes, particularly during the first administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez (1974-1979). Workers were paid higher wages than in the rest of Latin America and there were price controls and subsidies on basic food goods, transportation, and social services like education and health care (Roberts 2003, 57). Nostalgia for the golden years of the 1970s permeated Venezuelan political and social life for the subsequent two decades as the economy endured a dramatic reversal.

Contrary to many claims, Venezuela's political economy between the 1960s and early 1980s was not exceptional but typical of Latin America. The region's economy grew by 82 percent between 1960 and 1980, the same time that Venezuela experienced its boom. Likewise, when oil prices crashed and Latin America entered the debt crisis of the 1980s – growing only 15 percent in the 26 years between 1980 and 2006 – Venezuela also plunged into the abyss – although Venezuela's fall proved longer and deeper than most. Real GDP plummeted by 26 percent between 1978 and 1986, hitting the floor in 2003 at 38 percent below its 1978 high (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007, 4). The neoliberal economic restructuring initiated in 1989, during Pérez's second administration and consolidated in

the mid-to late 1990s under Rafael Caldera, made the crisis particularly intense.

In some other South American nations neoliberals were re-elected in the 1990s – Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina, for example. Yet, Venezuelans consistently voted for anti-neoliberal candidates. Pérez, elected in 1989, was identified with the state interventionist policies of his first government. Caldera (1994-1999) ran on an explicitly anti-neoliberal platform, unlike his rivals. Likewise, Hugo Chávez was the only anti-neoliberal presidential candidate (Ellner 2008, 89). Pérez and Caldera later revealed themselves devotees of International Monetary Fund (IMF) orthodoxy but both were elected on anti-neoliberal platforms.

In the 1990s there was a rash of privatizations – including the state telephone company, CANTV, the state steel industry, SIDOR, and the social security system. Trade, prices, and the financial sector were liberalized. The labour market was made 'flexible,' and other polices conforming to the so-called 'Washington Consensus' were introduced (Gott 2005, 54). Richard Gott writes: 'In earlier and happier times, when claiming leadership of the Third World in the 1970s, Pérez had denounced the economists of the IMF as "genocide workers in the pay of economic totalitarianism." Now he was having to go on all fours to beg for money from an institution he had once described as "an economic neutron bomb" that "killed people but left buildings standing"' (Gott 2005, 54).

The social repercussions were severe. Per capita income by 1998 had declined 34.8 percent from its 1970 level, the worst collapse in the region. Likewise, by 1997, workers' share of the national income was half what it had been in 1970, and the country's gini coefficient measure of income inequality was worse than in the notoriously unequal Brazil and South Africa (Lander and Navarrete 2007, 9). Cuts to wages and social spending in 1989 precipitated an increase in poverty from 46 to 62 percent (Roberts 2003, 59).

Parallel to trends in inequality and poverty, the rural and urban class underwent profound transformations in the 1980s and 1990s. Employment moved away from agricultural and industrial towards the service sector, and from the formal to informal sector. Precariously constructed shantytowns in major urban centres – particularly Caracas – expanded massively.[7] 'Throughout the 1980s', notes historian Greg

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[7] This process was not unique to Venezuela. Mike Davis (2006) charts trends of accelerated proletarianization of the peasantry throughout the Third World in the neoliberal age, as well

Grandin, 'Caracas grew at a galloping pace, creating combustible concentrations of poor people cut off from municipal services – such as sanitation and safe drinking water – and hence party control' (Grandin 2006). The under-and unemployed workers who populated these Venezuelan slums made 30 percent lower wages in the informal sector compared to the formal sector (Roberts 2003, 60). By the end of the 1990s, the informal economy employed 53 percent of the workforce (Ellner 2003, 19).

### The *Caracazo* and Popular Resistance

Venezuela's neoliberalization was contested. Pérez's restructuring plan of 1989, including the end of domestic gasoline subsidies, led to a hike in fuel costs. Drivers of the most common form of working-class transit in urban centres, known as *por puestos*, attempted to transfer costs to passengers by illegally doubling fares, a measure that ignited mass protests and riots, known as the *caracazo,* between February 27 and March 5, 1989. Tens of thousands of the urban poor participated. The army and police violently repressed the protests, leaving an official count of 287 dead, and unofficial counts of between 1,000 and 1,500 killed, according to national medial personnel. The highest, widely-circulated figure is 3,000 dead (Wilpert 2007, 16; Hellinger 2003, 31). Today, the *caracazo* is deeply ingrained in the popular memory of the Venezuelan Left, marking the start of the Bolivarian 'revolutionary process'.[8] The rebellion and repression had an impact on some officers in the Venezuelan armed forces who 'had not assimilated to North American geopolitical doctrines nor been fully integrated into the structures of *puntofijismo*.' Among these was Hugo Chávez, part of the 'first cohort of officers to have attended civilian universities and not to have undergone training at US counterinsurgency schools' (Hellinger 2003, 41).

### Chávez Fills a Void

In the early 1980s, when Chávez was a sports instructor at the military academy in Caracas, he and other likeminded military critics of the

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as the rise of an "informal proletariat" and the proliferation of shantytowns in his book, *Planet of Slums*.

[8] Personal interview, Oscar González, coordinator of the Organization of Social Movements for Popular Power, in the Mérida branch of the new *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (United Socialist Party of Venezuela, PSUV), 5 September 2008, Mérida, Venezuela.

Venezuelan social and political system formed the *Ejército Bolivariano Revolucionario-200* (Bolivarian Revolutionary Army, EBR-200), the '200' representing the anniversary of independence hero Simón Bolívar's birth in 1783 (Wilpert 2007, 16). Following the *caracazo*, the EBR-200 increased contacts with civilian political groups, and changed its name to the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200*, (Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement, MBR-200) (Raby 2006,149). Civilians included Douglas Bravo, a guerrilla leader in Falcón in the 1960s, who collaborated with Chavez in the 1980s 'but withdrew after 1992, convinced that civilians were being by-passed and that Chávez's programme was insufficiently radical' (Gott 2005, 17-18).

Between 1989 and 1992, Chávez and his co-conspirators planned a military uprising against the Pérez government, launching the rebellion on 4 February 1992. It achieved some early military objectives, but most military insurgents were quickly captured and surrendered.[9] No civilian uprising accompanied the coup attempt. Chávez's conspiratorial effort to challenge neoliberalism through the militant actions of a small group, rather than through the mass mobilization and self-emancipation of the exploited and oppressed themselves, was an inevitable failure.[10] But in the wake of the state murders during the *caracazo*, the attempted coup's bold challenge to the regime was well-received by the popular classes. Chávez was sent to prison for two years and was amnestied in 1994. In November, 1992 a second failed coup occurred, but without the progressive veneer of the February attempt. 'It was clear that a further uprising would have neither military feasibility nor popular support,' notes historian D.L. Raby, 'the strategy now had to be political' (Raby 2006, 156).

**The Chávez Alternative in Lieu of a Revolutionary Left**

The popular narrative of the Venezuelan Left today describes a steadily building wave of popular rebellions from the *caracazo* of 1989 to the two coup attempts of 1992. Yet, the spontaneous and relatively disorganized

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[9] For one account, see Gott 2005, 63-70.

[10] As Rosa Luxemburg argued in the course of the revolutionary events in Germany in 1918 and 1919, 'The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves." And elsewhere: "Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be created by any government, however socialist. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created' (quoted in McNally 2006, 348).

character of the *caracazo*, and the elitist military strategy of the 1992 events, actually signalled the weakness of the Venezuelan revolutionary Left during this period, and the relatively thin basis for organized, wide-scale, radical popular movements from below, compared to those that swept Bolivia between 2000 and 2005, for example.[11]  On an aggregate scale there were, by some accounts, roughly 5,000 protests in the first three years of neoliberal reforms (1989-1991), but these were mainly restricted to community-based, localized, and defensive strategies of the urban poor (Roberts 2003, 61). Likewise, the visible spread of neighbourhood council movements, some feminist organizing, social justice groups, environmental activism, and human rights organizations later in the 1990s did not represent an offensive and organized challenge to capital but rather isolated defensive, local struggles.

  The labour movement was also relatively quiescent, suffering structurally from the flexibilization and informalization of work and the dramatic changes to class structure wrought by neoliberal reforms. Politically, the labour movement was still overwhelmingly controlled by the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), whose leadership quickly capitulated to the neoliberal regime.

  *La Causa Radical* (The Radical Cause, LCR), with origins in the fledgling independent union movement of the late 1980s, appeared to represent an electoral alternative for the Left in the early 1990s. For example, the party's presidential candidate, Andrés Velásquez, won a surprising 22 percent in the 1993 elections (Ellner 1999). The party initially defended, 'grass-roots democracy and bottom-up organising based on the autonomy of working-class and popular communities.' However, beginning in 1994 the party 'allowed itself to be drawn into parliamentary horse-trading' with traditional, mainstream political parties, abandoning grass roots organizing and losing its main constituency (Raby 2006, 140, 144). By 1997, the party had split, with the larger contingent forming the *Patria Para Todos* (Fatherland for Everyone, PPT) (Gott 2005, 132). The splintering of the LCR, and the absence of any other serious Left alternative, provided political space for Chávez's *Movimiento Quinta República* (Fifth Republic Movement, MVR), the party that those in and around the MBR-200 had created to participate in the 1998 presidential elections.

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[11] On Bolivia, see, in particular, Hylton and Thomson 2007; Webber,2010; Gutiérrez Aguilar 2008.

Thus, we have a complex conjuncture at the close of the 1990s that is ultimately conducive to Chávez's electoral victory:

> Twenty years of economic stagnation without an apparent solution in sight, structural adjustment policies which aggravated an already grossly unequal income distribution; the undermining of the 'modern' social structure built on the basis of the previous development model; the growth of the informal economy and the lack, for the majority of the population, of any prospect of social advancement or even social inclusion; all these factors contributed to a popular rebellion in February 1989, known as the *Caracazo*, which indicated a radical repudiation of the old socio-political order and marked the beginning of a search for alternatives (López Maya 2007, 161-162).

In this context, Chávez won 56 percent of the popular vote in the December 1998 elections, taking office as President in 1999. The urban poor had responded to Chávez's 'vitriolic attacks on the political establishment', just as 'the middle and upper classes recoiled before the uncertain scope and depth of impending changes' (Roberts 2003, 55).

Class polarization was highly racialized, challenging the long-standing nationalist myth of Venezuelan racial democracy. According to national census figures, 67 percent of Venezuelans are *mestizos*, or mixed race, ten percent are black, 21 percent are white, and two percent are indigenous. 'The esteem in which Chávez is held by the dark-skinned poor,' Grandin suggests, 'is amplified by the rage the Venezuelan president provokes among the white and the rich' (Grandin 2006). Chávez's self-identification as 'Indian', 'black', or 'mixed-breed', infuses these terms with a novel sense of pride. When Chávez is critiqued by the Right as, 'Indian, monkey, and thick-lipped', this racial contempt serves to ally Chávez with the majority of the population that similarly identifies as 'mixed breed,' 'Black,' or 'Indian' (Herrera Salas, 2005). Class and racial identification thus combine in a form or populist support for Chávez.

## Anti-Neoliberalism to Twenty-First Century Socialism? Trajectory of Chávez

*The New Constitution and Neoliberalism with a Human Face, 1999-2000*
Chávez's 1998 electoral campaign and first two years in office were characterized by moderate socio-economic proposals that failed to break with the basic neoliberal model.[12] Chávez did take a bold initiative in restoring power to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

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[12] The periodization, if not always the characterization, of the different stages of the Chávez government in this section corresponds closely to Ellner 2008 and Lander and Navarrete 2007.

(OPEC), with lasting effects on state revenues. During the administration's first months, Alí Rodríguez Araque, the Minister of Oil and Mines, was sent on a series of diplomatic trips to member countries of the cartel, as well as to non-OPEC oil-producing states such as Mexico. An agreement to cut production was reached, and by the end of 1999 the price of oil had increased to $US 25 per barrel from the historic low of $US 9 per barrel in February of that year (Raby 2006, 161). The revived OPEC quotas for production, in conjunction with the Iraq war, led to the steady rise of oil prices from that period until the recent global financial crisis.

Politically, the new government was more ambitious, convening a Constituent Assembly and a relatively participatory process of drawing up a new Constitution. The 1999 constitution, approved by a popular referendum, emphasizes that Venezuelan democracy is participatory and protagonistic, not merely representative, and states that human relations should be rooted in 'equality of rights and duties, solidarity, common effort, mutual understanding, and reciprocal respect.' It views as necessary 'the participation of the people in forming, carrying out and controlling the management of public affairs.' This participation will 'ensure their complete development, both individual and collective' (quoted in Lebowitz 2006, 89).

The Constitution bans the privatization of the state-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA) and includes language favourable to various economic, personal, cultural, and environmental rights and protections. The state pledges that workers will have sufficient salaries to live dignified lives and explicitly recognizes unpaid work within the home – principally conducted by women – as an economic activity, which, in theory if not yet fully in practice, makes it eligible for social security (Grandin 2006). Additionally, the Bolivarian Constitution recognizes various indigenous rights and forbids foreign troops on Venezuelan soil. At the same time, the constitution does not protect women's right to abortion, nor does it include anti-discrimination on the basis of sexual diversity, although Chávez himself has pledged support for such rights (Webber 2004).

Yet the limitations are most starkly revealed in the economics sphere. The nation's twenty-seventh Constitution remains distant from anti-capitalism, guaranteeing the right of property (Article 115), supporting the role of private initiative in fostering economic growth and employment (Article 299), and promising state support for private initiatives (Article 112). The Constitution entrenches balanced budgets (over several years), and provides for the Venezuelan Central Bank's

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autonomy in monetary policy (Articles 311 and 318) (Lebowitz 2006, 90), an approach that assumes that bankers, not elected governments, should make critical economic decisions (Lebowitz 2008).

The early Chávez government's limited vision in the socio-economic sphere was evident in its first long-term development plan, published in 2001 as a guide for state policy through to 2007 (MPD 2001). The document presupposed that the best way to transform the Venezuelan economy was to attract 'private capital, both domestic and foreign' through state interventions promoting financial stability, the creation of free trade zones, stable exchange rates, and a stock market to 'create a growing democratisation of management capitalism,' among other measures designed to reassure foreign investors (Lander and Naverrete 2007, 15).

The development plan reflected the neo-structural influence of the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, or CEPAL in its Spanish acronym.) Neo-structuralism is the Latin American equivalent of neo-Keynesianism in the advanced capitalist countries, a 'third way' road adapting social democracy to the fundamental macroeconomic constraints of neoliberalism (Leiva, 2008). At this stage of the Chávez presidency, Venezuela adhered to wider politico-economic developments across Latin America in the wake of the deep regional downturn (1999-2000) and the overwhelming de-legitimization of orthodox neoliberalism. But no real break with neoliberalism had occurred: 'Without relinquishing its essential emphasis on the rationality of the market as the foremost organizing principal of social life, contemporary neoliberalism has dramatically broadened the scope of its social engineering in order to address its internal contradictions and attempt to mediate the ensuing social conflicts that have sharpened over the last 3 decades' (Taylor 2009, 23). Thus, targeted anti-poverty programs aimed at the most destitute have been introduced, without challenging neoliberalism's fundamental ideological premises.

A number of commentaries from the international Left, published in journals like *Green Left Weekly, Venezuela Analysis, Monthly Review,* and *Links,* have made bold retroactive assertions about the radicalizing nature of the Chávez regime as early as 1999 and 2000. But such analyses have been rooted in hopes and aspirations of the past few years rather than being based on actual developments of the period in question. Indeed, 'Shortly after taking office in 1999, the Venezuelan president traveled to Wall Street to assure the moneymen of the "credibility" of his government and its aims of a "diversified" and "self-sufficient economy," as well as

throwing the first pitch at a New York Yankees baseball game and ringing the bell at the New York Stock Exchange' (Sustar 2007, 19).

*Counter-Revolution and the Awakening of Popular Power from Below, 2001-2004*

Nonetheless, the government's economic policy slowly changed beginning in 2001, with a new package of 49 laws, among them, the Organic Hydrocarbons Law, the Lands Law, and the Fisheries Law. The hydrocarbons law re-established majority government ownership in the public-private companies in the principal oil operations of the country. The Lands Law opened idle land up to potential expropriation by the state. The Fisheries Law expanded the area off the shoreline from which major commercial trawlers were forbidden, and explicitly favoured small-scale fishers (Ellner 2008, 113).

All three were seen by Venezuela's right-wing opposition – composed of various political parties, the CTV, the business federation (FEDECAMARAS), the overwhelming majority of private print and TV media, right-wing student groups, and the Catholic Church hierarchy, among other minority social forces – as potentially threatening fundamental private property rights. Led by FEDECAMARAS and CTV, the opposition initiated a concerted destabilization campaign with a two-month general strike that began in December 2001, followed shortly thereafter by the April 2002 coup, in which Chávez was temporarily ousted and FEDECAMARAS president Pedro Carmona declared the country's new leader.

All of this transpired with imperial backing (Golinger 2008, 13). Indeed, the United States government supported the coup, seeing Chávez as a threat for his outspoken comments on American imperial interventions in Afghanistan and the broader 'war on terror,' Chávez's support for a multi-polar world order, and his efforts to foment anti-imperialist consciousness and Latin American independence and solidarity across the region as against the unilateral project of US imperial might. As mentioned above, Chávez did not directly threaten US material interests, but the ideological and political threat of anti-imperialism was sufficient to warrant American support for reactionary forces, including destabilizing, right-wing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating within Venezuela.

Yet, as Leon Trotsky's observes, 'a revolution needs from time to time the whip of the counter-revolution' which can provide 'a powerful impetus to the radicalization of the masses' (Trotsky 2005 [1932], 774). When word broke of the coup, 'hundreds of thousands of poor Venezuelans

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poured down from the "ranchos" [shantytowns]', and 'surrounded the Presidential Palace, leading to division in the armed forces.' A minority of right-wing military officers favoured 'a massive bloodbath,' whereas a majority rejected such measures, either out of loyalty to Chavez's left-populist programme or out of fear of a class-based civil war (Petras 2007).

The April 2002 mobilizations were of a scale and importance not witnessed since the *Caracazo*. They marked a turning point in which class struggle from below – albeit with a stronger populist than socialist flavour – erupted with new force as a response to right-wing counter-revolution (Robinson 2007). Rather than pushing ahead from this newly mobilized basis of support, however, Chávez moderated his rhetorical flourishes and offered concessions to the opposition in the wake of the coup: the Presidential Commission for a National Dialogue was established, bringing together coupist oppositional forces and the government; more radical officials in the Chávez government were replaced with known moderates; decentralization provisions of the 1999 Constitution that favoured right-wing possibilities in state governorships were brought forward on the agenda, and oil company executives at PDVSA fired prior to the coup were rehired by the President (Ellner 2008, 118).

The opposition proved uninterested in the government's goodwill gestures. The Right clung to the hope of throwing Chávez out altogether. 'Following a brief period of uncertain calm,' Gregory Wilpert points out, 'the opposition interpreted Chávez's retreat as an opportunity for another offensive against him, this time by organizing an indefinite shutdown of the country's all important oil industry in early December 2002' (Wilpert 2007, 25). Rather than a 'general strike,' as the opposition labelled the actions, 'it was actually a combination of management lockout, administrative and professional employee strike, and general sabotage of the oil industry.' The business lockout was in part supported by the bourgeois fractions that had been created and sustained by national rentier capitalism following the 1970s nationalization of the oil industry. In solidarity with the rentier element, '[i]t was mostly the US fast food franchises and the upscale shopping malls that were closed for about two months. The rest of the country operated more or less normally during this time, except for food and gasoline shortages throughout Venezuela, mostly because many distribution centers were closed down' (Wilpert 2007, 25).

In the short term, the oil lockout cost the Venezuelan economy $US 6 billion (Grandin 2006). In the longer term it generated new revenue for the Venezuelan government, because once the lockout had been defeated, real state control of the oil industry was finally wrested from the hands of

the old PDVSA elite: 'Due to their subversive and saboteur attitude, around 18,000 upper and middle-level managers who opposed the government – and who actually exercised control of the company – created the conditions in which they could be legally dismissed' (Harnecker, 2007, 181).

The defeat of the 2002-2003 oil lockout had a major impact on the labour movement. Within the oil industry, skilled and unskilled workers restarted production with the assistance of technical personnel and from surrounding communities, 'at a time when most high-ranking PDVSA employees had walked off the job'. During the strike the 'workers collectively chose their supervisors and took charge of the basic operational facet of the industry,' setting 'an important precedent' (Ellner 2008, 162, 187). The period of workers' control and self-management did not last long, but its significance is difficult to exaggerate (Sustar 2007, 20). Immediately following this example of workers' power, capacities, and commitment, a section of the labour movement pressured PDVSA for greater workers' control in the industry. However, 'PDVSA heads adhered to a view… that the oil industry should avoid the types of worker participation being established in other state-controlled sectors due to its overwhelming importance to the nation's economy' (Ellner 2008, 162). In this they were ultimately backed by the government – one example of unevenness and contradiction in Chavez's commitments to socialism.

Also in this 2002-2003 period of heightened class struggle, workers' occupied a number of large- and medium sized enterprises claiming that the owners had locked them out without pay or severance benefits. Encapsulating the contradictions of *Chavismo*, 'The government refused to dislodge the workers but also refrained from turning the companies over to worker management and instead deferred to the courts' (Ellner 2008, 124). Finally, at the end of these heated months, militant workers formed the National Union of Venezuelan Workers (UNT) as an alternative labour confederation to the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV). The CTV had collaborated with the state under the Punto Fijo system, capitulated to neoliberalism in the late 1980s and 1990s, and participated directly in the April 2002 coup attempt, and 2002-2003 oil lockout. The UNT's formation in May 2003 became a pivotal space for debate around 'issues of worker control, their workplaces and the role of unions' (Gindin 2005).

Having failed to depose Chávez through extra-parliamentary channels in 2002 and 2003, the Right exploited a new democratic opening established in the 1999 Bolivarian constitution: the right to force a recall referendum to determine whether or not the President finishes his or her term in office if 20 percent of the population, or 2.4 million people, express

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their desire to do so through a petition. By November 2003, the opposition had collected 3 million signatures, but the National Electoral Council (CNE) determined that only 1.9 million were valid, leaving the opposition less than a week to meet the deadline for required signatures. The government established a group of loyal militants under the title 'Comando Ayacucho' to mobilize their base and raise consciousness, in order to prevent the opposition from gathering the necessary remaining signatures. Despite constant reassurances to the contrary, however, the Comando Ayacucho failed and a recall referendum was set for August 2004.

The struggle within Venezuelan society in the months leading up to the referendum revealed new strengths in autonomous working-class organization and initiative, this time in the popular *barrios*, or poor neighbourhoods, of the capital city. There is undoubtedly a level of mutually-reinforcing synergy between the popular movements in the barrios and the figure of Chávez. Nonetheless, the former have 'realized the need to chart an independent trajectory from the Chávez government, of "oficialismo"… to defend the interests of their community and sustain their projects'. Indeed, community activists felt 'shocked and betrayed by the Comando Ayacucho,' when they heard the news that a recall referendum would be held. They strategically cooperated with vertically-oriented structures but insisted on the role of autonomous community organizations in mobilizing to defeat the referendum, as this passage describes:

> In a series of local assemblies in La Vega, 23 de Enero, and other barrios, community leaders emphasized the need for self-organization, saying that barrio residents could not rely on the government and officially appointed committees to organize 'on their behalf.'…. In the lead up to the referendum, local networks and activists were key in organizing popular sectors in support of the 'No' campaign to keep Chávez in office. Chávez replaced the Comando Ayacucho with the Comando Maisanta, and a vertically-organized structure of local units known as Unidades de Batallas Electorales (UBEs). Community groups cooperated with the UBEs and at times even incorporated into them, but for the most part these were tactical and temporary groupings to win the referendum. The driving force behind the 'No' campaign came from organized community activists, who launched an aggressive campaign to register and mobilize voters to vote in the referendum. Community organizers set up Voter Registration Centers in all the parishes, and these were staffed around the clock by teams of local activists. Barrio-based radio and television stations and newspapers devoted space to explaining the importance of the referendum and encouraging people to vote for Chávez…. Rather than Chávez's charisma,

his subsidized social programs, or the ineptitude of the opposition, the decisive factor in Chávez's ultimate victory was the mobilizing role played by local barrio organizations (Fernandes 2007a, 18).

In the event, Chávez defeated the opposition by 58 percent to 42 percent. This result, later combined with the opposition's disastrous boycott of the December 2005 congressional elections, strengthened the government's hand and ushered in a new phase of the administration, characterized by increasingly radical rhetoric, and a series of anti-neoliberal, if not socialist measures.[13]

## Where's the Revolutionary Democracy? The Grassroots and the PSUV

In early 2005 Chávez first declared his commitment to twenty-first century socialism at the World Social Forum in Brazil. What is meant by that phrase has taken on somewhat more developed programmatic content since, but in 2005 it was especially vague: a new socialism, as distinct from the failed projects of the same name in the twentieth century. It would be more decentralized, more democratic, less state-centered and committed to 'establishing liberty, equality, social justice, and solidarity.' While a bold move to reclaim the term socialism, its opacity made it 'indistinguishable from most other social projects of the twentieth and twenty-first century,' that promised the same things (Wilpert 2007, 7).

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What is clear is that over the course of 2005 and 2006 the special mission programs in health and education established in 2003 – erected parallel to the existing structures of the old state apparatus in these fields – were widened and deepened. Co-management, allowing for workers' representation on state company boards was extended beyond certain aspects of the corporatist structures seen in European social democracies in a limited number of companies. In the state aluminum company, ALCASA, for example, there was labour and community participation in the drawing up of the 2006 budget. Likewise, in early 2005 the state expropriated the paper company VENEPAL, changing its name to the Venezuelan Endogenous Paper Industry, or INVEPAL. Valve and tube companies were also expropriated. By the end of 2005, INVEPAL was a

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[13] Here I concur with Susan Spronk: "While Chávez—arguably the one of the most radical leaders of the 'Pink Tide'—speaks passionately about alternatives to capitalism, his actions in the first ten years of the Bolivarian Revolution have indicated that the primary goal of his 'twenty-first century socialism' has been the construction of a capitalist welfare state with pockets of cooperativism on the margins of the economy." See Spronk (forthcoming).

worker-run cooperative.[14] Land reform also advanced in 2005, with the government dividing up some large estates owned by domestic and foreign agro-capitalists. These were distributed to landless peasants.

The existing tax system, long ignored by many businesses, was enforced, generating new revenue for the state outside of oil rents. In urban land reform, the state devolved some power to urban land committees (CTUs) first been established in 2002. By mid-2005, over six thousand CTUs, made up of residents in poor urban neighbourhoods, were in operation. They were authorized to survey their shantytowns, distribute land titles, and collectively generate ideas and designs for public and recreational spaces in their communities.[15]

In 2005 and 2006, the government extended the 'social economy,' including, 'redistribution of wealth (via land reform programs and social policies), promotion of cooperatives, creation of nuclei of endogenous development, industrial co-management, and social production enterprises' (Wilpert 2007, 77). By some accounts, the number of cooperatives expanded from 762 in 1998 to more than 100,000 by 2005 (Wilpert 2007, 77). Many of these registered cooperatives however, never actually got up and running, and were a major area of corruption and government revenue loss.[16]

In the December 2006 elections, Chávez was re-elected to another six-year term with 63 percent of the popular vote. With a new mandate and the opposition at its weakest level in years, the President signalled a radicalization of the Bolivarian Process with the announcement of the 'five motors' of twenty-first century socialism in January 2007. These included: an 'enabling law' giving the executive new legislative power for a set period of time so as to speed up the transition to socialism; a reform of the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution to amend sections to help establish twenty-

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[14] Kiraz Janicke explains how 'Venezuela's recovered factories, despite having the support of the Chavez government, are in essence faced with the same problem of the recovered factories in Argentina: how to survive in a sea of capitalist economic relations, how to ensure supply of raw materials, how to ensure a buyer for the finished product. Inveval is suffering from both of these problems' (Janicke 2007).

[15] This section draws heavily from Ellner 2008, 121-126.

[16] This is clear, for example, in the following assessment: 'The failure of mass numbers of state-financed cooperatives – due to improvisation or, worse yet, misuse of government funds – has translated into the loss of tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. While many cooperatives never got off the ground, in other cases cooperative members ended up pocketing the money received from loans or the down payments for contracts prior to the initiation of work' (Ellner 2008, 130).

first century socialism; a campaign of political and social education and consciousness-raising called 'Morality and Enlightenment,' to be carried out by community councils in communities and workplaces; revisions of the country's political and territorial units to redistribute power more equitably on geographic terms throughout the country's cities, states, and countryside; and, fifth, what was deemed 'the revolutionary explosion of communal power', devolving economic, social, political, and democratic power to the communal councils (Harnecker 2007, 187-188).

Chávez called for the creation of a United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) as an umbrella for all parties supporting his government – his own MVR, the PPT, Podemos, the PCV, and roughly 20 other micro-parties. Further, he promised that key sectors of the Venezuelan economy would be nationalized, beginning with the telecommunications, energy, and oil production sectors. The formerly state-owned telephone company CANTV was re-nationalized, as were the regional-based electricity companies throughout the country. Most crucially, the government announced the nationalization of the only oil fields in the country that continued under private control, those of the Orinoco Oil Belt. These nationalizations entailed the movement of state control from minority to majority shareholding status and billions of dollars in compensation to multinational corporations. The nationalizations failed to incorporate the essential socialist ingredient of workers' control, democracy, and self-management. Nevertheless, this move signalled a radicalization of government policy (Wilpert 2007, 219-223).

Most important were the proposed amendments to the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution. On 2 December 2007 Venezuelans participated in another referendum, in which they had the opportunity to ratify or reject 69 constitutional changes, 33 proposed by Chávez, and 36 drafted by the National Assembly. Among the progressive characteristics of the proposed reforms were: the reduction of the work week to 36 hours; the elimination of the autonomy of the Central Bank; requirement of gender parity in positions of public office; recognition of Afro-Venezuelan groups; the reduction of the voting age from 18 to 16; recognition and increased funding for Councils of Popular Power, including student, peasant, and workers' councils, as well as cooperatives and community enterprises; state promotion of new economic model, based in humanism and cooperation, and introducing legal recognition of various forms of social, communal and state property, as well as state promotion of social forms of production and distribution and mixed public-private enterprises (Fernandes, 2007b). This conglomeration of amendments still recognized

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the legality of privately-owned capitalist enterprises but undoubtedly represented an advance on the 1999 scenario.

When the referendum amendments were defeated by a margin of roughly 200,000 votes, with an abstention rate of 45 percent, it represented a major political blow to the Chávez government. The process of change has been insufficiently democratic and top-down, based increasingly on the personification of twenty-first century socialism in Chávez, rather than in the revolutionary practice, initiative, and the popular power of the exploited and oppressed. These fundamental shortcomings in strategy, ideology, and orientation – a consequence of both a lack of commitment to revolutionary democracy within the dominant currents of the Chávez government and the simultaneous absence of a sufficiently powerful socialist rather than populist working-class base of support – bled into some ill-considered content in the proposed amendments.

The proposal to extend the presidential term from six to seven years, and the elimination of the two-term limit is an example of the misguided nature of many reforms. This has confused sections of the radical Left. On the one hand, the imperialist and domestic Venezuelan Right are hypocritical when they argue that this amendment signaled the death of democracy in the country and the advance of totalitarian communism. None of these pundits question the democratic character of consecutive terms in office for the executive power in multiple European and North American states (Petras 2007). And, clearly, Chávez is no dictator, immediately accepting the referendum defeat in December 2007 and congratulating his opponents.

On the other hand, the 'low-level personality cult that exists around Chávez is an obstacle to the full implementation of the Bolivarian project' (Wilpert 2007, 200). As a number of revolutionary socialists inside Venezuela have suggested in relation to the presidential term extension: 'The important thing should not be such a possibility, but changes making it possible to advance towards a more democratic regime, which instead of continuing to invent new tasks and responsibilities within the executive power, legitimates the power of the workers' and peoples' organizations, envisages that they should have majority representation in a new Parliament, extends the possibilities of recall by the voters, in an immediate way and for all functions, and defends at all levels of political and economic decision the right of the people to express themselves and to decide' (Peres Borges, García, and Vivas, 2008).

'At a moment when the context made it possible to go much further, to undertake a reform by establishing spaces of dialogue and power all over the country', Fernando Esteban observes, 'Chávez threw down a challenge to the entire Bolivarian and revolutionary movement, forcing it to be with him or against him'. The line was: 'To vote No is to vote for Bush, to vote Yes is to vote for Chávez' (Esteban 2008). While the content of the reforms was broadly progressive, and threatening to capital and the various right-wing opposition forces, it was developed without participation by the popular classes. Indeed, Chávez drafted the proposals with the participation of a small, select group of advisers personally chosen by him (Fernandes 2007b).

Since Chávez's re-election in December 2006, the founding of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the role of expanding communal councils have been the most important political and organizational questions for the Venezuelan Left. The PSUV is full of internal contradictions, and has developed into the battle ground between the Right and Left *within* the Bolivarian process. On the one hand, there are the radical aspirations and impressive organizational capacities of the grassroots militants of the party, and the fact that the party quickly grew to over 4 million members soon after its founding July 2007 – although clearly with different levels of participation among the membership. A number of revolutionary socialists became delegates to the party's congress in March 2008, while others have played essential roles in the local battalions of the party on an ongoing basis. Activists formerly involved in different revolutionary parties have committed themselves to constructing the PSUV, building left currents within the party against more bureaucratic, opportunistic and right-wing components. The Assembly of Socialists (AS), for example, managed to congeal more than 20 revolutionary organizations in November 2006.  Another revolutionary current within the PSUV is *Marea Socialista*, or Socialist Wave, formed by leftists of a Trotskyist background who were formerly involved in the Party of Revolution and Socialism, and heavily influential within the UNT (Fuentes 2008).

The party's congress in March 2008 illustrated the depth of seriousness with which conservative and bureaucratic layers within the *Chavismo* sought to domesticate and control the party's formation, program, and trajectory. Fernando Esteban describes some of the early setbacks with regard to electing the party leadership:

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> The first stage consisted of designating the members who had the right to vote. Out of 5 million members, only 80,000 could vote, without anyone knowing on what criteria this choice was based. In a second stage, once the 35 members of the national leadership had been elected, Chávez designated on live TV the members of the political bureau. There you can only find members of the government, and there are not representatives of the social or trade-union movement (Esteban 2008).

Yet there continues to be space in the party for the revolutionary Left and its attempts to roll back corruption, bureaucracy, and alliances with the so-called national bourgeoisie.

Militants of the Socialist Wave defend their participation within PSUV, refusing relegatie themselves at the extreme margins of the principal popular struggle occurring in the country, a struggle likely to determine the country's trajectory. By actively participating in assemblies, presenting radical proposals, responding to the interests of the rank and file, and uniting with other left currents they hope to contribute to the radicalization of PSUV, turning it in an explicitly anti-capitalist direction and protecting the party against top-down, bureaucratic, and even militaristic, lines of hierarchy and control (Peres Borges, García and Vivas 2008). The ultimate fate of the Venezuelan experiment will be the balance of forces within *chavismo*, between those in favour of democratic revolutionary socialism from below, and those bureaucratizing the process and cementing their privileges from above.

## Social Indicators and the Economy

The social advances of the Bolivarian process are important. According to the latest figures from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Venezuela reduced its poverty and extreme poverty rates from 48.6 and 22.2 percent of the population respectively in 2002, to 28.5 and 8.5 percent by 2007 (CEPAL 2008, 16). The proportion of people living in poverty fell from 48.6 percent in 2002, to 30.2 percent in 2006, down to 28.5 percent in 2007. In 2006 alone, as a consequence of sharp surges in social spending, the poverty rate fell from 37.1 percent to 30.2 percent (CEPAL 2007, 18).

Yet, these trends are typical advances of centre-left regimes elsewhere in the region over the same period, a consequence of the conjunctural primary commodity boom in Latin America between 2003 and 2007. For example, the urban areas of Argentina under the Nestor Kirchner's government registered a decline in poverty and extreme

poverty from 45.4 and 20.9 percent respectively in 2002, to 21 and 7.2 percent in 2006. In 2000, Chile had a poverty rate of 20.2 percent, while the extreme poverty level was 5.6 percent. By 2006, those figures had fallen to 13.7 and 3.2 percent respectively. What is more, Venezuela's poverty rate of 28.5 percent in 2007 continues to compare poorly to Chile's 13.7 (2006), Costa Rica's 18.6 (2007), and Uruguay's 18.1 (2007) (CEPAL 2008, 16).

Nonetheless, the Venezuelan figures, because they only measure income poverty, substantially underestimate the Chávez administration's advances in poverty reduction more broadly through large-scale improvements in the social wage of the working class, i.e., social services. Various mission programs, that bypass bureaucratic and uncooperative state structures, are the principal means of delivering these social services. *Barrio Adentro* provides free health care to the poor through the assistance of tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and the establishment of new community clinics; *Mercal* is a state distributor of food at subsidized prices; *Robinson 1 and 2* are missions focusing on literacy and primary education for adults; *Ribas* and *Sucre* target secondary and university education for individuals who never had the opportunity to attend or those who dropped out; and *Vuelvan Caras* provides state-funded training for employment and the creation of workers' cooperatives (López Maya 2007, 165).

Some results are impressive. In 2005, for example, UNESCO declared that Venezuela was 'a territory freed from illiteracy' (Esteban 2008). The figures on health care are also remarkable:

> In 1998 there were 1, 628 primary care physicians for a population of 23.4 million. Today, there are 19,571 for a population of 27 million. In 1998 there were 417 emergency rooms, 74 rehab centers and 1,628 primary care centers compared to 721 emergency rooms, 445 rehab centers, and 8,621 primary care centers (including the 6,500 'check-up points', usually in poor neighbourhoods, and that are in the process of being expanded to more comprehensive care centers) today. Since 2004, 399,662 people have had antiretroviral treatment from the government, compared to 18,538 in 2006 (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007, 9).

This spending is contingent on massive oil rents unique to Venezuela in the Latin American and Caribbean context. From the first quarter of 2003, following the end of the oil lockout, to the second quarter of 2008, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 94.7 percent, an incredible annual rate of 13.5 percent (Weisbrot, Ray and Sandoval, 2009, 6).

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Social democratic commentators emphasize that 'in spite of the expansion of government during the Chávez years, the private sector has grown faster than the public sector,' with finance and insurance at the leading edge (Weisbrot, Ray and Sandoval 2009, 7). Absolute figures for social spending have been very high, but public social spending as a percentage of gross national product has not been impressive relative to the rest of Latin America. In the year 2004-2005, for example, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Cuba, all showed higher rates of public social spending as a percentage of gross national product than Venezuela (CEPAL 2007, 132).

From the time the *Chavistas* came to power until 2002, the share of national income going to the richest 10 percent of the population fell minimally, while the share going to the bottom 40 percent decreased marginally. In 1999 the richest 10 percent of the population received 31.4 percent of national income and in 2002, 31.3 percent. Meanwhile, the poorest 40 percent received only 14.5 percent of the national income in 1999 and by 2002, just 14.3 percent.

This situation has since improved, but there has hardly been a revolutionary wealth transfer. Income inequality as measured by the Gini index fell from 46.96 to 40.99 between 1999 and 2008. As a comparison, between 1980 and 2005 the United States experienced an accelerated concentration of wealth upwards, from 40.3 to 46.9 as measured by the Gini index (Weisbrot, Ray and Sandoval 2009, 10). Between 2002 and 2007 the share of income going to the bottom 40 percent of households rose to 18.4 from 14.3 percent, and the share going to the top 10 percent of households fell from 31.3 to 25.7 (CEPAL 2008, 231). In 2007, across Latin American countries, the poorest 40 percent of households on average received 15 percent of total income, and only in Uruguay did they receive more than 20 percent (CEPAL 2008, 75). Venezuela is now better than average in Latin America, but this is a region with the worst income inequality in the world.

Huge concentrations of personal wealth and privilege remain untouched by the Bolivarian process. Almost 30 percent of the population live in poverty by ECLAC's measurements, which underestimate poverty. As one analyst suggests, 'Any serious attempt to make Venezuelan society more egalitarian – let alone socialist – would begin with a radically progressive tax system aimed at redistributing wealth' (Sustar 2007, 24). How this might be done has become radically more complex in a ravaged global economy.

**The Global Crisis and Venezuela**

By April 2008, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suggested that we were witnessing the largest financial crisis in the United States since the Great Depression. However, as David McNally has observed, this underestimated the scale of the crisis. First, while originating in the United States, the crisis is global. Second, the crisis is no longer narrowly financial, but deeply impacting the 'real economy'. 'Having started in the construction-, auto- and electronics-sectors,' he observes, 'the slump is now sweeping through all manufacturing industries and spilling across the service-sector' (McNally 2009, 36). Bankruptcies, factory closures and layoffs are a response to overaccumulation – over 250,000 jobs have been lost in the North American automobile industry alone. Waves of downsizing in non-financial corporations feed the underconsumption dynamic of this crisis. 'As world demand and world-sales dive,' McNally points out, 'the effects of overcapacity (factories, machines, buildings that cannot be profitably utilized), which have been masked by credit-creation over the past decade, will kick in with a vengeance' (McNally 2009, 37). Typically for the world capitalist system, we are increasingly witnessing the 'geographical displacement of crisis: attempting to offload the worst impacts onto those outside the core' (Hanieh 2009, 61).

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From the vantage point of mid-2009, the suggestion of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, that the crisis would not seriously affect Latin America appears deeply naïve (Cárdenas 2008). The slowdown of the 2003-2007 commodity-driven boom deepened in Latin America over the first two quarters of 2008, sharpening severely since. Most economists now predict that 'Latin America will be the region hardest hit in the developing world, with the exception of Central and Eastern Europe, both in terms of reductions in per capita GDP and slower growth vis-à-vis the boom years' (Ocampo 2009, 705). The significant accumulation of foreign exchange reserves and reduction of dollar-denominated public debt during the boom years provided a temporary cushioning of the global crisis in Latin America, but this situation is unlikely to matter if the world recession turns into a prolonged slump. 'The budget surpluses are temporary stopgaps to finance some stimulus packages', James Petras notes, 'but they are totally insufficient to reverse the fall in all export sectors, the drying up of private credit and the drying up of new local/foreign investment. In fact the first sign and substance of growing recessionary tendencies is the large outflows of capital by investors anticipating the crisis' (Petras 2009).

The drop in world trade had already made itself felt by mid-2008; and then commodity prices simply collapsed after September of the same year. Export revenues for the region contracted at an annualized rate of 30 percent in the final quarter of 2008, having a severe impact on GDP growth (Ocampo 2009, 708). The effects of collapsing remittance flows have been uneven across different Latin American countries based on fragmentary evidence, but are likely to inflict increasing pain on the popular classes over time as right-wing fueled xenophobia, 'draconian restrictions on the movement of migrant-labour,' and 'tighter control and regulation of the movement of labour' in the countries of the Global North deepen and expand (McNally 2009, 78; Hanieh 2009: 73).

In Venezuela, the plunge in energy prices has been the most important element of the crisis. Oil accounts for 90 percent of the country's exports and more than half of government revenues (*The Economist*, 2008; Mander 2008). In July 2008, crude had reached the remarkable world market price of $US 147 per barrel. By December that year it collapsed to just $US 32.40. In 2009 it slowly rose back to $US 73 in early June 2009 amidst mainstream-economist optimism regarding so-called 'green shoots' in the world economy, and Chinese strategic stockpiling. As stunningly bad US job figures came out later that month, however, the green shoots wilted, and oil prices fell to $US 66 (McCarthy 2009). The immediate fall in revenues for the Venezuelan government potentially threatens many social programs domestically and abroad;

Yet, this is an opportune moment for the Venezuelan process to reconcile its most profound internal contradictions, pushed by organized socialists in the labour movement, radical social movements of the urban poor, and radical currents within the PSUV itself. Until now, oil rents have lubricated a system of moderate redistribution to the popular classes without serious attack on the concentrated assets of a tiny elite and the ongoing expansion of the private sector. To defend and expand social programs, and to move forward with a multifaceted transition to socialism, a radical new wave of class struggle from below will be required. This struggle will face opposition from the right, which will use the crisis to seek to destabilize the Chávez regime, with the assistance of imperialist powers. Within *Chavismo*, bureaucratic conservative layers will defend a state-capitalist response to exiting the crisis, rather than deepening shifts toward a transition to socialism.

The Venezuelan internal struggles will have repercussions for the Latin American Left. The bold revitalization of ALBA, as a means of deepening South-South links throughout Latin America will require

Venezuela's lead. Whether projects like Banco del Sur (Bank of the South) take on *socialist* forms, such as providing funds to finance land reform and improvements in the lives of the popular classes region-wide, or whether reforms will subsidize the survival of local ruling classes to improve their chances of competing with international rivals, will ultimately depend on the trajectory of class struggle, not least in Venezuela (Katz 2009).

Neoliberal ideology suffered massive setbacks in Latin America during the last major regional recession (1998-2002), and during the uptick in radical popular movements between 2000 and 2005.[17] With the rise of different centre-left governments in much of the region, social movements have subsequently subsided, with some having been co-opted into state machinery. At the same time, the extreme right holds onto power in countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

The Left internationally has a responsibility to expose the failings of the global capitalist system, but the Latin American Left in particular has the most potential to seize the moment, given the expansion and consolidation of anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist consciousness among much of the population over the last decade. A subjective shift from anti-neoliberalism and anti-imperialism toward revolutionary socialism from below is the urgent necessity of the day (Katz 2007). 'The current gap between favourable objective economic condition,' Petras suggests, 'and the under-development of (subjective) revolutionary socialist consciousness is probably a temporary phenomena: The 'lag' can be overcome by the direct intervention of conscious socialist political formations deeply inserted in everyday struggles capable of linking economic conditions to political action' (Petras 2009).

The Bolivarian Revolutionary process must be defended against imperialism, particularly through solidarity with independent labour and popular community movements of the urban and rural poor that insist that authentic socialism comes from below, from the exploited and oppressed themselves. Support must be given to those who defend Chávez against each and every imperialist and counter-revolutionary measure, but who never hesitate to organize beyond the horizons of the conservative and bureaucratic layers within *Chavismo*; who denounce government capitulations to the interests of domestic and foreign capital; who insist on the independence of the working class from state control; and who call for a thoroughgoing transition to a profoundly democratic socialism, rooted in the social ownership of the means of production, worker and community

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[17] See, among many others, Robinson, 2008.

control and self-management in all the spheres of social, political, and economic life, and the democratic social coordination of the economy.

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*ARTICLE*

# The Limitations of Global Social Movement Unionism as an Emancipatory Labour Strategy in Majority World Countries

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**Abstract**
This study assesses the applicability of Peter Waterman's model of global social movement unionism as an emancipatory labour strategy in Bangladesh, an important site for the manufacture of ready-made garments in the neo-liberal era. Our main conclusions are that Waterman's North Atlanticist model fails to comprehend the present-day necessities and struggles of the Bangladesh working class; ignores the impacts of colonialism, militarism and imperialism on Bangladesh's socio-economic development and labour movement; and privileges democratic dialogue as a means of action when militant collective mobilization has been shown to be the only effective way to get action on workers' issues in countries like Bangladesh. Our recommendation is for Waterman and others to abandon the quest for a universal model of progressive labour unionism and instead come up with a variety of models that apply to different typical patterns of socio-economic and labour movement development in the globalized world.

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**Résumé**

Cette étude évalue l'applicabilité du modèle global de syndicalisme de mouvement social de Peter Waterman en tant que stratégie libératrice au Bangladesh, un site important pour la fabrication de textiles dans l'ère néolibérale. Nos conclusions principales sont que le modèle nord-atlantiste de Waterman échoue à comprendre les besoins et souffrances de la classe ouvrière au Bangladesh aujourd'hui; qu'il ignore l'impact du colonialisme, du militarisme et de l'impérialisme sur le développement socio-économique et sur le mouvement ouvrier ; et qu'il privilégie le dialogue démocratique comme seul moyen d'agir alors que la mobilisation collective militante s'est montrée comme la seule manière efficace d'attirer l'attention sur les questions ouvrières dans les pays comme le Bangladesh. Notre recommandation, pour Waterman et d'autres, est d'abandonner la quête d'un modèle universel du syndicalisme progressiste et au lieu de cela de créer une variété de modèles qui s'appliquent aux différentes réalités du développement socio-économique et du mouvement ouvrier dans un monde globalisé.

**Keywords**
• Bangladesh ; globalization ; labour ; social movement unionism• Waterman

**Mots clés**
• Bangladesh • mondialisation • travail • syndicalisme de mouvement social
• Waterman

The era of neo-liberal globalization has been characterized by privatization and deregulation as well as the internationalization of many commodity chains that were formerly local, regional or national in scale. These changes in the character of global capitalism have had significant effects on the processes of working class formation and the organization of work. One striking feature of the neo-liberal era has been the uneven geographical growth of the global proletariat: while between 1970 and 2000 the workforce in OECD countries increased by a modest 31 percent (from 307 to 401 million workers), the workforce in developing regions increased by an astounding 91 percent (from 1,120 to 2,138 million workers) (Munck 2002, 7). The general character of the changes in the organization of work is captured by the term 'flexibilization of labour.' Ronaldo Munck argues that 'flexibility, in its multiple but interrelated guises, is probably the defining characteristic of labour in the era of international competitiveness' (2002, 73). Flexibilization has created a plethora of workers -- including part-timers and temporary contract employees -- that pose severe organizational challenges to labour unions. This is one of the important reasons that trade union density has fallen in most advanced industrial countries in recent decades (Visser 2006, 45),

and most analysts would agree with Munck's conclusion that there has been a 'fundamental social weakening of labour during this period' (2002, 128).

In the face of this reality, however, not all students of labour movements are pessimistic. For instance, Beverly Silver contends, 'The late twentieth-century-crisis of labour movements is temporary and will likely be overcome with the consolidation of new working classes "in formation"' (2003, 171). Her projection, based upon a path breaking study of the patterns of global labour unrest between the 1870s and 1990s, is that significant labour movements will emerge in the future when production of established products is shifted to new global locations and particularly when new products that command monopoly profits are first brought into mass production (77-79). Other researchers have had their optimism sustained by the successes of particular labour movements, unions or campaigns in the midst of the general reversals of the neo-liberal era. Labour organizations in the majority world that have been promoted as success stories at different times include the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Hirschsohn 1998); the Kilusang Mayo Uno Labour Centre in the Philippines (Lambert 1990); and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (Webster et al. 2008, 169-174).  In the United States, researchers have hailed successful efforts to organize the unorganized by unions such as the Service Employees International Union (Lopez 2004, 219; Milkman 2006). Furthermore, researchers with radical democratic sympathies have been able to find a few praiseworthy, contemporary examples; these include particular locals of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (Camfield 2007, 287) and the fledgling Starbucks Workers' Union (Ince 2007, 28). Finally, collaborations between unions in the North and South have been well documented and highlighted (e.g., Lambert and Webster 2001; Frundt 2000).

The study of such successes has spawned attempts to identify a general model of labour unionism that is particularly effective in the era of neo-liberal globalization. The concept of 'social movement unionism' was first applied in the late 1980s and early 1990s to unions in South Africa and the Philippines that allied with and mobilized community groups as a source of power in authoritarian states (Waterman 2004, 217). In the intervening years 'social movement unionism' has become a cornerstone in the burgeoning literature on how unions might best respond to the changed circumstances of neo-liberal globalization (e.g., Moody 1997; Lopez 2004; and Fairbrother and Webster 2008 as one of the articles in a symposium on social movement unionism).

In most of the contributions to this literature, social movement unionism (SMU) is presented as a shorthand way to reference the conjunction of a praiseworthy set of union characteristics. For example, Kim Moody defines social movement unionism in terms of particular characteristics on five separate variables: (1) union governance: 'deeply democratic'; (2) approach to collective bargaining: 'militant'; (3) relationship to established political parties: 'independent'; (4) strategy for political action: 'reaching out to other sectors of the class, be they other unions, neighbourhood organizations, or other social movements'; and (5) core ethical commitment: 'fights for all the oppressed' (1997, 4-5). Conceptually similar approaches to defining SMU have been taken by Robinson (2000, 110), Scipes (2003, 6) and Camfield (2007, 287), among others, although each approach varies in terms of the particular set of characteristics that are grouped together under the SMU banner.

In contradistinction to virtually everyone else who has published on SMU over the years, Peter Waterman has deliberately embedded his understanding of the concept in a model that draws upon theories of networked capitalism, new social movements and radical communications. This gives his understanding of SMU a systematic theoretical grounding that is missing from that of other contributors. Waterman has identified the distinctiveness of his approach in these terms: 'Most of those who have used the SMU concept have understood it not in terms of an articulation between the two or more bodies of theory, or two complexes of practice [this is Waterman's approach], but in that of an alliance within the class (waged/non-waged), and/or between the class and the popular/community' (2004, 220-21).

Although Peter Waterman apparently coined the name 'social movement unionism' (Waterman 2004, 217) and first presented his ideas under this heading (e.g., 1993), he later started to use slightly different terms in order to emphasize the distinctiveness of his own contribution. Nevertheless, given that Waterman at no time disconnected himself from the broader literature on global social movement unionism (2001, 316) and has recently re-identified with the fraternity of SMU scholars (2008), we think his model of unionism is best termed 'global social movement unionism' (or global SMU). Indeed for reasons explained below, we see Waterman's work as the most interesting and challenging model of global SMU and, as a consequence, it is the sole focus of our analysis. Furthermore, by concentrating on Peter Waterman's scholarship we hope to help correct the unfortunate tendencies in the literature to either ignore his work entirely (e.g., Schiavone 2007) or, more commonly, to identify a

generic model of SMU that elides Waterman's work with that of other scholars (e.g., von Holdt 2002, 297; Park 2007, 312-315).

This study aims to contribute to the debate on the value of global SMU as an emancipatory labour strategy in majority world countries, with the proviso that only Waterman's version of the concept will be scrutinized. In the next section we discuss the theoretical origins and logic of Peter Waterman's model, list the main elements of his conceptualization and explain why we think his approach is deserving of concentrated attention. This sets the stage for the heart of the paper, a consideration of the applicability of global SMU to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is chosen for consideration both because the country has been an important site for the manufacture of ready made garments in the neo-liberal era and because the Bangladesh labour movement has largely been ignored in the literature on global SMU. The main conclusions from our case study are that Waterman's model fails to comprehend the present-day necessities and struggles of the Bangladesh working class; and ignores the impacts of colonialism, militarism and imperialism on Bangladesh's socio-economic development and labour movement. We conclude by considering whether global SMU should therefore be rejected entirely as an emancipatory labour strategy in majority world countries or whether it should be retained for application on a limited and selective basis.

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## Waterman's Model of Global SMU

Peter Waterman's original, systematic presentation of SMU in 1993 'was a synthesis of socialist trade-union theory with that of "new social movement" (NSM) theory' (2004, 220). In 1999, his notion of SMU was extended to incorporate radical communications theory from which he 'took ideas on the potential of the information and communications technology for emancipatory movements' (2004, 221). In 2004, the concept was further extended to define 'a new kind of labour internationalism' (2004, 249-252), later called 'the new global labour solidarity' (2008, 306-308).

It is easy to trace the lineage between socialist trade-union theory and Waterman's model of global SMU with its emphases on class struggles in the workplace, worker control over the labour process and a reduction in working time. Nevertheless Waterman's largest theoretical debt is to theorizing on new social movements. 'From NSM theory,' stated Waterman in 2004, 'I took the significance of radical-democratic identity movements, the equivalence of different radical-democratic struggles, of networking as

a movement form, of the socio-cultural as an increasingly central arena of emancipatory struggles' (220-21). It is noteworthy that, in his first systematic presentation of SMU (1993, 252), Waterman traced his concern with struggles in civil society to Antonio Gramsci through a quote taken from Laclau and Mouffe (1981). More recent expositions, however, do not engage with Gramsci's own thought or with scholars working in the Gramscian tradition. This is further evidence that socialist trade-union theory is a decidedly secondary source for the development of Waterman's conception of global SMU.

Peter Waterman's notion of global SMU has always been laden with a very broad theoretical and political intent. In 1988 he wrote, 'We are talking not simply of a different union model but a different *understanding* of the role of the working class and its typical organization in the transformation of society' (quoted in Scipes 1992, 83). Therefore Waterman's model is as much oriented to future political possibilities as it is grounded on what labour movements are doing today. Some of Waterman's scholarly peers have objected to the overtly political or 'normative' thrust of his approach. An early critic was von Holdt (2002, 297). More recently, Fairbrother and Webster dismissed Waterman's work as 'a universal normative program … of what a progressive trade union should look like.' In its stead they advocated for 'an analytical device that allows one to engage in a comparative historically-based analysis' (2008, 310). We believe this criticism is short sighted. Peter Waterman's model is an ideal type that uses different theoretical lenses to project a possible future path of development for progressive labour unionism. While comparative-historical research like that favoured by Fairbrother and Webster is adept at testing causal hypotheses, ideal-typical research also has its place – it promotes the systematic reassessment of the overall character of a particular case in light of that case's similarities to and deviations from the ideal type. This sort of case reconstruction simultaneously reveals the heuristic value of the ideal-typical conception. What follows is our distillation of the six key elements of Waterman's notion.

Global social movement unions that practice global labour solidarity:

1. Advance a radical and utopian set of demands concerning work and other social institutions including worker/union control over everything up to and including product selection and investment; the equitable sharing of domestic work; anti-authoritarian, non-

racist and non-sexist social organization; and 'an increase in free time for cultural self-development and self-realization' (2004, 249).

2. Work with a wide variety of other groups in ways that respect those groups' autonomy and thus 'stimulate organizational democracy, pluralism and innovation' (2004, 250).

3. Support the production of 'worker and popular culture' apart from dominant institutions (2004, 250).

4. Use informational networks to pursue grassroots, international solidarity relationships that are reciprocal rather than hierarchical in character, based on the 'needs, values and capacities of ordinary working people' (2004, 250-251) and which aim 'to create a global civil society and global solidarity culture' (1999, 261).

5. Overcome 'dependency in international solidarity work by financing internationalist activities from worker or publicly-collected funds' (2004, 251).

6. Participate in formal internationalist forums with both labour unions and other progressive organizations (2004, 251).

This is a left libertarian ideal type that accords labour unions an important but not a pre-eminent role in the broad, global justice and solidarity movement.

Peter Waterman developed his model of global SMU with reference to the new kind of capitalist society that emerged beginning in the 1970s. At a general level, Waterman argues that global capitalism is fundamentally different and more complex than industrial capitalism: 'the number, significance and scale of social contradictions' are 'dramatically increase[d]' at the same time that labour/capital conflict 'may' become less important (1999, 249). The new social movements (NSMs) 'arising from such contradictions' are termed 'fundamental issue movements' by Waterman 'since peace, ecological sustainability, and human rights for the majority of the world population (women) would seem to be conditions for the existence of any minimally humane society' (250). The NSMs are important for labour movements in two senses: as potential allies and as models of the democratic, horizontal and networked organizational form that is definitive of his notion of global SMU (250).

According to Waterman there is an important political dimension to labour's current crisis. In global capitalism 'the terrain of struggle' has increasingly spread to civil society, creating problems for traditional unions that 'typically prioritize "economic struggle" (against capital), or "political struggle" (against the state).' Furthermore, 'the centrality of the

nation-state ... has increasingly been challenged, both by international bodies and forces ... and by sub-national communities (regional, ethnic, local)' (1999, 251). Waterman contends that conventional unions have found it difficult to operate in this new political environment; hence the need for a new model of unionism.

In a recent paper, Waterman made it clear that his model of global SMU has also been influenced by the trans-national struggles for social justice of recent years.

> My feeling is that with a globalised networked capitalism, the history of labour/labour history has to start again. But this time labour has to be understood as one crucial but equal part of what is calling itself the 'global justice and solidarity movement' (GJSM). This movement is beginning to put in question both the capitalist system *and* the labour movement -- the major subaltern social movement of national-industrial-colonial (and a major one of anti-colonial) capitalism. (2005a, 196)

In our estimation there is much of interest and value in Peter Waterman's model of global SMU. Firstly, rather than blithely forecast that better days are around the corner or concentrate on small victories in the overall pattern of reversal, Waterman theorizes the contemporary crisis for labour movements and in so doing provides insights into how the crisis might be surmounted. Regardless of whether one agrees with the particulars of Waterman's thinking, his theory-driven approach is commendable. Secondly, although at one level Waterman's model is eclectic in that it combines ideas from three distinct theoretical sources, at a more fundamental level it is consistent. This is because it emphasizes the importance of systemic economic processes in understanding the place of labour in the era of globalized networked capitalism (1999, 248-251). Thirdly, Waterman highlights what is distinctive about the contemporary era (particularly the importance of the new social movements and new information technologies) while simultaneously recognizing the continuities between global capitalism and the forms of capitalism that preceded it. As a consequence he is neither 'workerist' in orientation nor willing to join with Gorz (1982) and Castells (1996) in bidding farewell to the working class.

We also find Peter Waterman's model of considerable interest because of the way in which it has been developed. While it engages different theoretical sources, it is also the product of the author's practical engagement with labour unions and the global justice and solidarity movement. Furthermore, Waterman has now been popularizing and

refining his model for almost two decades; this has forced him to clarify the logic of his thinking over time and to create progressively stronger versions of the model. At the same time Waterman has been refreshingly self critical (2004, 239), humorous and self deprecating (2008, 303-04) in exchanges with critics, thus encouraging constructive dialogue. In choosing Peter Waterman's version of global SMU as the focus of our study, therefore, we are choosing what we think is, for the reasons just enumerated, a unique and engaging model that deserves to be systematically evaluated against additional empirical evidence.

**On the Applicability of Global SMU to Bangladesh**

The main strength of Waterman's global SMU model is that it seriously engages the plurality of the contemporary social formation, which is a reality of contemporary worlds in both the South and the North. Furthermore, it has a penchant for a more democratic, open and humanistic approach to Left politics and social transformation. Nonetheless, there are some serious questions about the applicability of the model in the majority world.

The first problem concerns the ambiguous scope of global SMU. Peter Waterman states that his concept 'was not intended to be either populist or thirdworldist'; rather it 'is intended to relate to and be appropriate for our contemporary world' (1999, 247). Waterman's problem is that he fails to clarify whether his notion of 'our contemporary world' includes all of the countries of the majority world. Over the last few years, new kinds of labour movements have emerged in the South. Some of these movements represent various kinds of alliances against authoritarian, racial, and military dictatorships (Scipes 1992; Webster and Lipsig-Mumme 2002). Others are community kinds of movements induced mainly by the NGOs and various cooperative/local organizations (Ford 2001; Petras 2002). We find it troubling that Waterman selectively refers to a few majority world working class movements (such as India and South Africa) when discussing his concept but never systematically specifies whether it applies writ large to the variety of labour movements in the South. Our first criticism of global SMU, therefore, is in accord with Ronaldo Munck's view (2005, 233) that 'a truly "global" perspective' on labour movements must demonstrate more than a passing acquaintance with the state of different labour movements in the South.

We will develop this criticism by discussing the situation in Bangladesh (one of the many countries absent from Waterman's radar

screen even though it is a critical site of production in 'our contemporary world'). Even though neo-liberal globalization has integrated North and South very efficiently in terms of production, consumption and distribution, there remain large variations between Southern states and societies on the one hand and Northern states and societies on the other, as well as among the states and societies within the South. The differences exist because of different historical developments of the states, classes and other socio-economic and cultural features. It is our opinion that these historical developments must be taken into consideration while developing a theoretical understanding of labour movements in the contemporary world. Karl von Holdt made a similar point in his study of labour activism in South Africa (one of the countries that spurred the development of the concept of SMU): he questioned 'the transferability of strategies between labour movements located in very different sociopolitical realities.' This led von Holdt to conclude 'that globalization is unlikely to produce the conditions for a globalized SMU.... National reality counts' (2002, 299). In their recent critique of Waterman's model, Fairbrother and Webster made a complementary point: 'There is not a universal panacea to the specificity of time and place' (2008, 311).

Over time, colonialism, militarism, and imperialism have had significant impacts on each majority world country's labour movement, not to mention the overall socio-economic development of each country. This is why we see that countries that have experienced an extended period of military dictatorship have often developed similar labour movements and labour relations (weakened labour movements, nepotism and corruption, and a malleable force to the political parties). Examples of this generalization are found in studies on Indonesia (Ford 2001), Pakistan (Candland 1999), Argentina (Petras 2002), Chile (Schurman 2001) and the Philippines (Scipes 1992). Sometimes, however, a shared colonial history is trumped by other historical forces that create variation in labour movements. An example of this pattern is India and Pakistan: while both were ruled by the British Empire for more than two hundred years, two different sorts of labour movements developed in the post-independence period (Candland 1999). This is because of their allegiances during the Cold War with, respectively, the Soviet Union and the USA; their differences in political and other institutional development; and the intervention of the military in politics in Pakistan. It is noteworthy that although both countries were forced to adopt the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) induced by the International Monetary Fund, the labour movements in India successfully resisted and forced the Indian state to

abandon the program by not accepting any venture of privatization. Pakistan labour organizations, on the other hand, accepted the SAP (Candland 1999).

A similar situation exists in Bangladesh as in Pakistan. This helps to explain why, when the Bangladesh government in 2002 shut down a fifty year old jute mill, known as the 'Dundee of the east,' and laid off 30,000 labourers (more than 75,000 people lived within the premise of the jute mill), there was no labour resistance (Mahmud 2002). Rather than being militant or organizing in a global SMU fashion, Bangladesh labour movements have tended to be quiescent with the character of a malleable political force, having parochial allegiances to various political parties. Furthermore, Bangladesh labour leaders form a trade union bureaucracy plunged in corruption and nepotism. Another example of the lethargy of the Bangladesh labour movement concerned a horrific recent accident where a newly built four-storied garment factory in Dhaka collapsed because of faulty building construction. Although the collapse caused the death of seventy-three workers and injured one hundred others, there was no labour protest or mobilization (Malek and Rumi 2005).

This brief discussion has highlighted how the labour movements in majority world countries are sometimes alike but sometimes quite different from one another. In studying this spectrum of labour movements one must consider the varied natures of Southern societies, influenced to varying degrees by agrarian, feudal, semi-industrial, and world-factory based industrial economies. Waterman's model of global SMU is incapable of capturing the realities of these labour movements since it is North Atlanticist (Munck's polite term for Eurocentric; 2005, 233) and industrial/post-industrial in orientation. We concur with Munck that the community-based labour movement set in the foreground of global SMU seems to, at best, portray the situation in a few selected third world countries rather than all or even a large proportion of the countries in the South.

One of the most interesting features of the global SMU model is its radical democratic and libertarian values. Nevertheless, these utopian values are the focus of our second criticism: they are misfit for the hundreds of millions of proletarians throughout majority world countries who face a life and death struggle for immediate needs. Effective labour movements in these countries are concerned with the very existence of working people, as can be seen in the experiences of the Zapatistas of Mexico (De Angelis 2000; Edelman 2001) and the Coalition for Urban Poor in Bangladesh (Rahman 2003). This point equally applies to labour

movements of poor working people in developed countries (e.g., Fuerza Unida of San Antonio in the USA -- Zugman 2003). Such movements concentrate on the struggle for economic redistribution while valorizing a poor working class identity. In theory, Waterman's model is open to this reality since it prioritizes the 'needs, values and capacities of ordinary working people' in the pursuit of global labour solidarity (2004, 250-251). Nonetheless we believe that the faithful pursuit of this priority would lead inevitably to contradictions with the radical democratic and libertarian values at the heart of the model.

Furthermore, even when working class people participate in new social movements or organizations with a global SMU character, their issues and goals are different from that of middle class participants. For instance, working class environmental movements (such as the anti-toxic substance and anti-solid waste disposal movements) are very much related to the questions of survival and immediate needs for poor communities directly affected by neo-liberal globalization.

Our third criticism concerns Peter Waterman's expectation that global social movement unions will be 'autonomous social forces' that collaborate with other autonomous organizations in democratic partnerships (1999, 261). This claim would have greater credibility if Waterman had discussed how labour unions in majority world countries achieve the resources necessary to exercise such autonomy. It is our contention that most labour organizations in the least developed countries (LDCs) have very little scope for organizational survival without support from political parties and their intellectuals or the contemporary NGOs.

The state of trade unions in Bangladesh illustrates why the assumption of autonomy is so inapplicable to certain countries. Even before transnational companies began to produce goods in Bangladesh in the early 1980s, there was no strong trade union tradition among private sector workers (Hossain 2005). The situation with private sector unionization has gotten even worse since then. Labour union activities in the ready made garment factories owned by Bangladesh contractors are not prohibited but nevertheless are almost non-existent because of the owners' abusive anti-unionism.  At the same time, Bangladesh prohibits by law any activities by labour unions in its Export Processing Zones (Bhattacharya 2001; Khan 2001; Quadir 2007). Meanwhile labour organizations in the public sector do not strongly advocate for workers' welfare and are beset by corruption and nepotism which mainly comes about because of the close links between the trade union bureaucracy and leadership of political parties (Akkas 1999). These negative features of

public sector unionization originated during the Cold War period (i.e., immediately after the independence from British colonialism) but flourished during the subsequent military regimes (Ahmed 1969; Akkas 1999).

There is one ray of hope on the labour front in Bangladesh, however; it involves the encouragement of working class organizations by NGOs. At first glance such NGO-promoted organizations appear to have some of the characteristics of global SMU as identified by Waterman. However, in no sense should one regard these labour groups as self-conscious and autonomous. The NGO officials provide the necessary training, logistics and resources for mobilizing the working poor and raising their awareness; furthermore this assistance is not widely spread since it goes only to those segments who are directly associated with the respective NGOs.[1] Two further problems with such sponsored labour organizations should be noted. Firstly, working people engaged in the NGOs are totally dependent on the NGOs' resources and money. Secondly, the activities and various development programs of most of the NGOs depend upon the flow of foreign funding aided by the western core countries, various supranational organizations and other international NGOs (Ford 2001; Quadir 2007). Such financial dependency runs counter to Waterman's own notion of global labour solidarity.

It is also important to note that some Bangladesh NGOs have become large business ventures in their own right. Two of the notable domestic NGOs that have commercial activities (such as cellular telephone service, textile and garment products, printing press, commercial banking and fashion wears) are Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. Both of these NGOs were highly dependent on Western donor agencies for their initial programs. Although they still receive foreign funding, however, they also use the profits from commercial activities to sustain programs. They therefore appear to diffuse modern capitalist values in Bangladesh (Bertelsmann 2010; Feldma 1997; Quadir 2007; Rashiduzzaman 1998).

The question of resources is indeed crucial for the working poor. It is evident that many NGOs in LDCs such as Bangladesh are funded by

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[1] Critical studies focused on NGOs are not found in the literature. This information comes from Zia Rahman's interviews of NGO officials in Dhaka in 2007 as well as primary documentary research. The notable NGOs include Nizera Kari, Nari Uddag Kendra, UBINIG, Bangladesh Legal Aid Services (BLAST) and Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association (BNWLA).

international agencies. In turn these NGOs have organized, mobilized and developed many working class organizations by providing them with money and resources. They do so as part of their efforts to establish a liberal democratic environment. This is an interesting pattern of working class formation but it definitely does not fit the 'autonomous social force' picture of the global SMU model. It is worth noting that a similar pattern of labour organizing by NGOs existed in Indonesia during the autocratic rule of Suharto. However this campaign was derailed when various international agencies funding the NGOs demanded that their money be used in the area of human rights (Ford 2001).

Furthermore, the development of autonomous global SMU in a country like Bangladesh is severely impeded by both the 'over developed state' (Alavi 1983) and the expansive role of political parties. Kasfir (1998) mentions that the African ruling elites always use state resources and patronage in order to create cleavages in civil society, and this has become a very common scenario in Bangladesh and other LDCs as well. Hence, the development of an independent and autonomous civil society is in doubt, let alone independent and autonomous working class organizations.

The idea of self-sufficient, global social movement unions engaged as 'autonomous social forces' with 'political forces' (Waterman 1999, 261) is a fanciful dream in countries like Bangladesh. Certainly most of the people in the LDCs, including the working class, have become frustrated with the widespread influence of political parties because of their very parochial, bureaucratic, hierarchic, corrupted and authoritarian nature. But at the same time, most segments of the people in the LDCs are materially dependent upon one or the other of the major political parties. Thus rather than withering away, political parties are becoming stronger. In this regard Candland (1999) showed that all ten large labour organizations in India are directly connected to the major political parties that provide all the necessary channels, guidelines, and resources. In Bangladesh, each of the two major political parties likewise has its own labour front (Akkas 1999; Khan 2001).

In fact, the way that the two major political parties strive to control major Bangladesh institutions is a serious concern for citizens, academics and international agencies (Bertelsmann 2010; Quadir 2007; Rashiduzzaman 1998) Among the major institutions targeted by the parties are the judiciary and police (Quadir 2007), government bureaucracy (Jahan 2006) and the military (Rahman 1981). They also strive to control professional organizations such as university teachers associations (Panday and Jamil 2009), journalists, and even cultural

organizations that represent NSMs. Hence the working class organizations in Bangladesh and many other LDCs have very little capacity to avoid the major political parties' authority.

The NGOs in countries like Bangladesh have the same class basis (the educated middle class) as the NSMs in developed countries. Waterman's model of global SMU also has a distinctly new-middle-class orientation. This is the starting point for our fourth criticism. Educated professionals are making and will continue to make essential contributions to progressive movements. Nevertheless, we question whether a model of unionism congruent with post-industrial middle class values will be able to effectively preserve the rights of the working class in Bangladesh and emancipate them from the brutal slaps of neo-liberalism.

Most of the global proletariat lives in agrarian countries or countries that are at semi-industrial phases. Colonialism, militarism, and imperialism have severely impacted the socio-economic development of these countries and created stagnant labour movements. More recently, the flexibilisation promoted by transnational companies has further weakened many labour movements in the South. Taking this scenario into account, we argue that the giant transnational corporations, the capitalist core countries and their various supranational allies are the main forces in the arrested progress of the labour movements in third world countries. Consequently, any movement to rejuvenate labour should be aimed mainly against these forces. Our point is consistent with a question raised by Ronaldo Munck in relation to Peter Waterman's work: 'How can anyone look around the world today and not foreground imperialism, war, neocolonialism, and resistance' (2005, 233)?

Our fifth criticism concerns the implications of the 'digital divide' for union organizing in the South. Unlike the post-industrial middle class, which has the leisure time, cultural capital and economic and political securities mentioned by Inglehart (1990), the working class movements in the South are primarily movements for survival and existence. Peter Waterman acknowledges this point with the comment: 'I am, of course, perfectly well award of the distance between the bulk of the world proletariat ... and my Palm [Personal Digital Assistant]' (2005a, 201). However he does not modify his theory accordingly. While union leaders may have access to the internet in LDCs, the vast majority of their members neither have access nor the time available to use it even if they did have access. This profound inequality militates against the development of the horizontal, democratic, participatory labour unions that are suggested by the model of global SMU. Furthermore, the digital divide encourages

leader-to-leader inter-organizational relations rather than the member-to-member contact emphasized in Waterman's notion of global labour solidarity. It would thus seem that at the present time the global SMU model is only fully suited to industrial/post-industrial countries where majorities of workers have a reasonable amount of disposable income and discretionary time.

Our two final criticisms concern means of struggle and ultimate goals. Global SMU involves a great deal of intra-movement and inter-movement dialogue and cooperation. Yet in countries like Bangladesh, trade union relations with the authorities need to be intensely adversarial since neither the government nor the employer care for any minimum level of welfare for workers. The whole society still carries out the old traditions of loyalty, authority and rigid hierarchical relationships where a poor worker has very little scope to talk face-to-face with his employer or with the state agencies. This observation lines up with the finding of two recent studies that employers and the state apparatuses never show any interest in workers' conditions until they feel strong pressure from the working class organizations (Petras 2002; Lee 2003). The question we raise, then, is whether labour unions in majority world countries should be committing limited resources to furthering democratic dialogue when militant collective mobilization is what gets results? In an ideal world these strategies would not be in conflict, but the situation in countries like Bangladesh is far from that ideal.

This leads us to one final comment on the ultimate goal of union struggles in majority world countries. It is noteworthy that Peter Waterman (2005a and 2005b) expresses a strong commitment to the global justice and solidarity movement and promotes a utopian future of humanistic 'cultural self-development' that is incompatible with global capitalism. However Waterman does not explicitly identify global SMU as anti-capitalist. Workers in Bangladesh and many other countries face colonialism, militarism, authoritarianism and imperialism. If we see these as different phases of capitalist development (e.g., Munck 2002) then any emancipatory labour movement should stand primarily against capitalist exploitation. Capitalism perhaps does not seem like such a bad thing from the relative comfort of a post-industrial, new middle class subject position. However from the standpoint of hundreds of millions of workers and their families around the globe, it is a cruel, brutal and heartless socio-economic system. Peter Waterman's model of global SMU captures the revolutionary character of capitalism as a mode of production; however it underplays the

exploitation, misery and restricted human development that are the primary products of globalized capitalist social relations.

## Summary and Conclusion

The previous section discussed the applicability to Bangladesh of Peter Waterman's model of global social movement unionism. We offered seven reasons why Waterman's model is largely inapplicable for understanding the present situation and future possibilities for the labour movement in Bangladesh. Our argument in summary form is:

1. Peter Waterman's global SMU model is North Atlanticist and industrial/post-industrial in orientation and as a consequence fails to comprehend the reality of the labour movement in Bangladesh and kindred countries in the majority world. In developing his model, Waterman failed to take into account the impacts of colonialism, militarism and imperialism on the socio-economic development and labour movement in countries such as Bangladesh.
2. The radical democratic and libertarian values at the heart of the global SMU model are misfit for the proletariat in most of the majority world countries who face a life and death struggle for immediate needs.
3. Labour unions in countries like Bangladesh are not in a position to act as autonomous social forces. Some are dependent upon NGOs and sponsoring international agencies. Others are dependent upon domestic political parties and the state.
4. The global SMU model is based upon the interests and concerns of the educated middle class in the North and the South. An emancipatory labour strategy for the proletariat in the global South, however, must recognize and target the main sources of the institutional stagnation of the countries in the South, namely the giant transnational corporations, the capitalist core countries and their supranational allies.
5. Most of the proletarians in countries such as Bangladesh do not have access to advanced communication technologies. This militates against the development of horizontal, democratic and participatory unions and social movements, as envisioned by the global SMU model.

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6. Global SMU privileges democratic dialogue as a means of action when militant collective mobilization has been shown to be the only effective way to get action on workers' issues in countries like Bangladesh.
7. Global SMU fails to highlight the misery created by capitalist social relations throughout the majority world and is not explicitly anti-capitalist even though its utopian goals are incompatible with global capitalism.

We began this article with a sympathetic presentation of Peter Waterman's ideal-typical model of global SMU. However the model comes up decidedly short when assessed as a potential emancipatory labour strategy in contemporary Bangladesh. Should we, as a consequence, reject as fundamentally flawed Waterman's work on global SMU?

Instead of outright rejection, our recommendation is for Waterman and others to abandon the quest for a single, universal model and instead come up with a variety of ideal types that apply to different typical patterns of socio-economic and labour movement development in the globalized world. The current version of global SMU best fits tendencies in the experiences of labour movements in the North. Nevertheless there are large enough economic, political and social differences among Northern countries and labour movements that even here the 'one model fits all' approach is questionable. Furthermore, when it comes to the majority world the generic model needs both careful revisions and specifications that capture the typical patterns of colonial, post-colonial and imperialistic relations in those countries.

Adding historical specifications and taking seriously the current levels of literacy and economic well being of proletarians in different parts of the globe will inevitably downplay the left libertarian core values of Waterman's current vision of global SMU. Nevertheless these values can survive in specified models both in transitional attenuated forms and as ideals which can only be realized when workers have much higher levels of well being and where democratic civil society organizations are very well established. We remain open to Peter Waterman's argument that the modus operandi of the new social movements is the way forward for labour movements in globalized networked capitalism. For many contemporary labour movements, however, this is a long-term path of emancipation rather than something that is a current possibility. New variants of global SMU will need to distinguish between the practical and

the utopian dimensions of SMU and suggest how the realization of practical objectives will promote utopian goals.

Finally we continue to believe that, given the opportunities and resources, working people can identify their own problems and necessities and are capable of organizing their own movements of resistance and progressive social change. However support is needed in countries such as Bangladesh because of the deep poverty of the working class, the corrupted and malleable character of existing unions and the neo-imperialism of NGOs. In keeping with Peter Waterman's model of global labour solidarity, our hope is that working class and independent citizen organizations in the North will rise to this challenge and provide appropriate resources and logistics in coming years. The more that such solidarity work involves grassroots initiatives and participation, the greater is the likelihood that workers from different countries will learn from each other and global SMU values and organizational forms will gain a foothold even in relatively barren ground.

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*INTERVIEW*

# 'Pulling the Monster Down'
## Interview with William K. Carroll

ELAINE COBURN
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     Paris, France.

William K. Carroll is one of Canada's foremost sociologists. His research and teaching focus on the contemporary capitalist political economy and transformative social movements, as well as Marxist and post-Marxist theories, particularly those informed by Gramsci. His empirical work investigates central actors within the Canadian and world political economy, including social democratic governments, right wing think-tanks and the for-profit and alternative media. He is the author of more than a hundred books, articles, chapters and reports, making important contributions on many subjects, including globalization, neoliberalism and critical research methods.

Carroll plays an important role in many Canadian research and policy organizations. He is research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and has been a central actor, in various capacities, in the Canadian Sociological Association. He is a long-time editorial board member and supporter of the *Society for Socialist Studies*, for which he gave the 2006 keynote address 'Hegemony, Counter-Hegemony, Anti-Hegemony' (Carroll 2006). In addition, he contributes to various innovative teaching programmes, including an interdisciplinary graduate programme in Cultural, Social and Political Thought at the University of Victoria. Recently, he was instrumental in establishing a new, interdisciplinary minor/diploma programme in Social Justice Studies, which he now directs.

Although best known in Canada, Carroll is appreciated internationally. He has been a visiting scholar to the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, Griffith University of Brisbane, Australia, Kanazawa State University in Japan, and at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study.

From the beginning of his scholarly career, Carroll's has been recognized for outstanding contributions to research and service.

Photo credit: David Coburn 2010

As a graduate student, he was awarded multiple-year support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. He was offered, but declined, a SSHRC post-doctoral fellowship. Carroll has twice received the John Porter Tradition of Excellence Book Award from the Canadian Sociology Association, for *Corporate Power in a Globalizing World* (2004) and *Corporate Power and Canadian Capitalism* (1986). In 2003, he was awarded the Outstanding Service Award by the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association. In 2008, he was honoured for Research Excellence by the University of Victoria for decades of high-quality scholarly contributions.

I interviewed William Carroll on 20 February 2010, via the internet. He answered questions with characteristic thoughtfulness and in full, sometimes complex sentences that required only very light editing for purposes of clarity. In one instance, additional material was inserted into the interview via email. My questions were edited for purposes of space.

*Elaine Coburn:* Much of your empirical work centers on how a world capitalist political economy has played out in Canada, for example, how the

Canadian capitalist class has transformed, becoming more deeply embedded in transnational capitalist networks while still retaining a distinct national character. Yet, you weren't born in Canada but immigrated from the United States when you were a teenager, during the Vietnam war. Can you tell us about this 'key passage', as your website (http://web.uvic.ca/~wcarroll/) characterizes it, in your life?

*William Carroll:* My family moved to Canada when I was sixteen. That was, indeed, at the really intense point in the Vietnam war. There was a lot of ant-war activism and people were leaving the United States for those reasons. But in my case, my family moved to Canada as part of the influx of American academics to Canada, with the rapid expansion of the university system. So my father got a job teaching computer science at the University of Western Ontario. And that was the reason; there was no real political subtext to it. In fact, my parents were Nixon Republicans (laughs) in the late 1960s, although they did move toward the centre left over the years… Actually, I don't know if they moved to the centre left or if the political spectrum shifted so much further to the right that it appeared that they were in the centre-left thirty years later.

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As for me, I had my first sixteen years in the United States and these were certainly very formative years for me. I came of age during the 1960s, which in the United States as well as Canada was a pretty remarkable moment of cultural and political ferment. It was a time when a lot of conservative traditions were being challenged and the new left was in its full flower: for a brief moment, the future seemed to open up before us, for people of my generation. And so I think that probably left a trace.

Did you feel unsettled when you moved across the border? Was there continuity, because both countries were in this moment of generalized youth ferment and hopefulness? Or was it a shift, leaving a country that takes for granted that it is the centre of the universe, to live in this hick country called Canada?

Definitely, the latter. I arrived in Canada as somewhat of an ugly American, steeped in the kind of unreflexive nationalism that Americans, certainly at that time, were socialized into very strongly. This was the height of American hegemony in the world, in the 1960s, so that most Americans thought this way. I don't think that is a gross overgeneralization, actually -- it was hegemonic, it was definitely commonsense to assume that the United States

was the greatest society in history. And so to leave the United States and to go elsewhere, to go to a place that even superficially appeared to be almost a carbon copy of the United States… I remember making various invidious comparisons in everyday life in Canada and they always inferiorized Canada.

I did this for some of my teenage years. It was an interesting process shedding that American nationalism, eventually challenging it and renouncing it, if you like. When you cross the border, when you immigrate, it's a process of cultural mobility that you undertake and there is a lot of thinking of who you are and where you are in the world. There's quite a good essay by Dorothy Smith in a book that I co-edited, called *Fragile Truths,* about the development of Canadian sociology and anthropology. She has an essay called 'Remaking a Life, Remaking Sociology' (Smith 1992) and she reflects on her move from the United States to Canada around the same time as I was immigrating. She writes how it inspired a very productive re-thinking of what she was all about and what she was doing as a sociologist.

Of course, I was a teenager, so I didn't go through that process. But I did, as I say, consciously shed nationalism as an aspect of my identity. In this sense, my becoming a Canadian meant not exchanging one status reification for another, if I can put it that way, but rather really rejecting nationalism in the shadow of this rejection of American nationalism. I've been a pretty reluctant Canadian, I would say. I didn't become a Canadian citizen until well into the 1980s and that's because basically I became an internationalist in the tradition of Marx. I really don't identify with the Canadian state. So, for me, it was pedagogically quite instructive to 'begin' as an ugly American and go through a whole process of remaking self.

Once you moved to Canada, you finished high school and then went to university. Your dad was in computer science, but you didn't go that route…At what point did you become interested in sociology?

My dad was in computer science with an engineering, natural science background and he didn't think much of sociology, although that changed over time. When I went to university he was trying to salvage my career prospects by suggesting various things. I had no idea what I would become when I began university. In my first year I bounced from biology to business administration, where I lasted for a couple of lectures, and then to sociology. And that was really by happenstance because I didn't know what sociology was. But I was immediately attracted by the big picture analysis, the emphasis on

interconnections, by sociology's character as an interdiscipline more than a discipline, by sociology's unruliness and promiscuity.

As an undergraduate, I developed a strong sense of the importance of holistic analysis. I didn't read a lot of Marx, just a few of the classical works, like *The German Ideology*, part one, and *The Communist Manifesto*. But, I developed this really strong commitment to holistic analysis. At that point, it was more of a microsociological take that I had, a social psychological mode but that, in some ways, was helpful too because a lot of the issues that we face when we come to political concerns around counterhegemony and social movement formation are partly social psychological issues. It's important to have a good social psychological understanding of how hegemony works on us. So, I picked some of that up in my undergraduate programme, along with this commitment to holistic analysis.

Did graduate school become an obvious option in your later undergraduate years, particularly since your father was an academic?

I had very supportive mentors at Brock University, professors that I got to know very well and they took me under their wings. I was writing things that were being published as an undergraduate and I really enjoyed the whole context of academia. So I could see my career as an academic as I progressed through the programme.

It was quite a small programme, so that was an advantage because I had a lot of time with my professors one on one. Since there was no graduate programme, the undergraduate honours students were treated as graduate students. So, I was quite clear that I wanted to go to graduate school and I applied to a number of different graduate programmes. Some of them were in the States, since after all, I was an American citizen and I had only moved to Canada a few years earlier. The only Canadian school I applied to was York University.

I was accepted to all of the schools -- and that was a moment of decision. I could have gone to the University of Illinois, or Pittsburgh or Michigan. But, at that point, I realized that I wanted to live in Canada. It wasn't really an academic decision, it was a decision about where I wanted to be in the world.

Were you attracted to York University because it was a solid sociology department or because you wanted to work with specific people or

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because there was a certain density of critical thinkers or...? I guess, specifically, I'm wondering if this is where your commitments to Marxism and feminism began.

I originally went to York to work with Jim Moore, who was a small groups social psychologist, since I was very much microsociological coming out of my undergraduate programme. And this was one of the relatively few places in Canada that really featured the sociology of small groups. But Jim was on sabbatical the year that I arrived and the fellow who was running the small groups lab was a recently hired assistant professor, John Fox, who became my MA thesis supervisor and my dissertation co-supervisor. And, it just happened that John was a red diaper baby and a very committed Marxist, in addition to being an accomplished social psychologist. So, my interest in Marxism really developed through the mentorship of my two co-supervisors at York – Mike Orstein was my other supervisor -- who were both Marxists.

Through them, I became involved in the Toronto Marxist institute, which they were both quite active in. This is a very interesting formation coming out of the new left. It was an educational collective that existed outside of universities but that connected graduate students and faculty with various activists and concerned citizens that wanted to learn more about left analysis and perhaps read the classics of historical materialism and so on. Initially I became involved as a participant in study groups and then eventually I became a Marxist Institute activist, you might say, and facilitator of study groups. I think the Marxist Institute is still in business, actually. At the time that I was in it, it was very much a socialist-feminist collective. I began reading and absorbing and discussing socialist-feminist literature. Basically, I became a Marxist and a feminist simultaneously, explaining, perhaps, the interest I've had in how to integrate distinct yet related political projects. And of course Gramsci is particularly helpful on this issue. I think it does come back to this way in which I took up Marxism as I was taking up feminism. If there is some coherency or trajectory in my work (laughs) than this is one of the threads, I think!

But, there were a number of interacting factors. Arriving at York -- this is 1975 -- it was still very much a centre of new left activism and there was a very strong presence of the new left on campus. It also had a very strong, very large social science faculty, and still does, with a definite tilt to the left. So it was a big shift in context moving from Brock to York. And the York sociology department was this sprawling, chronically factionalized department. In a

sense, one had to fit in by choosing sides. One side was the radical phenomenology side and the other side was everything else. So, I went to the 'everything else' side, which included Marxist political economic analysis and all sorts of things. Some of the early socialist feminist scholarship was underway by then.

Looking back on it, there were a number of overdetermining elements. Another element is that this was in the mid-1970s, at the high tide of Canadianization as a movement, a movement which, narrowly construed, sought to begin to undo the effects of the migration of academics like my father, particularly into the social sciences. Of course, it's not such a problem in a field like computer science. But, as an example, the department of sociology at Brock, where I did my BA, was really a kind of American branch-plant set-up, in the sense that virtually everybody there was American, trained in the United States and not particularly knowledgeable about Canada. So, when I got to York, I found somewhat different of a sociological world. Paul Grayson, in particular, introduced me to the sociology of Canada. I had learned very little about it at Brock. I took Paul's course on Canadian society, a graduate seminar, and as I read Innis, Creighton, Levitt and Watkins and the lot, that was part of what shifted my perspective from a more micro perspective to a more macrosociological, political economy take.

Another thing I took away from York, partly because I didn't identify with the radical phenomenology wing of the department, was this emphasis on combining rigorous empirical work with careful theorization. I already had this at Brock to some extent, but it really became that much more consolidated at York. At the time, there was a certain dualism that was quite typical for radical scholars, which was to dismiss empirical work as tainted by positivism. Of course, this was to their own disadvantage…So that kind of combination of empirical work and careful theorization set me on an intellectual trajectory towards critical realism, which I embraced in the late 1980s and that I still very much identify with.

You say you were introduced to Canadian political economy at York, but you have been quite critical of Canadian political economists in a more nationalist tradition. I think of the contributions of Mel Watkins, say, or Wallace Clement. Can you explain your response to nationalist political economy, but also your distance from some other left-intellectual traditions, including both post-modern identity politics and a narrow

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Marxist approach that identifies progressive struggle with the struggles white, unionized, working class men…

As I mentioned, I read Marx extensively and closely within those Marxist Institute study groups, beginning in the mid-1970s.  This was also the heyday of dependency theory and left nationalism in Canadian political economy. Having developed a scepticism toward nationalism as a progressive strand, particularly in the Global North, I was struck by the almost total disconnect between the substance of Marxist political economy and the claims of Canadian political economy, and I featured this in my doctoral research on the structure of the Canadian capitalist class.  This was not so much a rethinking of Marxist political economy -- my thesis was mainstream Marxist -- but it appeared quite radical in comparison with the then-dominant perspective in Canadian political economy.

What I have found fascinating is how dependency theory and left nationalism persists, despite its having been discredited on an intellectual level.  I think this is because, from the Waffle foreword, the dependency framework has been the theory that informs the practice of left social democrats -- intent on incremental reforms that can humanize capitalism in Canada. Gary Teeple's 1972 dismissal of the NDP as 'liberals in a hurry' (Teeple 1972) is perhaps harsh, yet more than smidgen accurate.  We still see this in recent work by Mel Watkins and Jim Stanford, as in the critique of the 'hollowing out' of corporate Canada -- the recent foreign takeovers of companies like Inco.  This amounts to an unreconstructed replay of Levitt's *Silent Surrender* (Levitt 1970).  I debated the issue of hollowing out with Mel at the Canadian Political Science Association meetings recently. I recall that at one point he remarked that the problem with the Canadian bourgeoisie is that they are not very bright -- that is a close paraphrase.  The resemblance to Daniel Drache's exceptionalist thesis on 'the Canadian bourgeoisie and its national consciousness', (Drache 1970) from the late 1960s, is stunning.

I would take the exact opposite view.  The Canadian capitalist class is entirely unexceptional. Within the logic of capitalist rationality, it responds to, and of course shapes, the specific accumulation situation in which it is dynamically embedded.  Capital based in Canada is internationalizing at least as quickly as Canadian firms are being incorporated into transnational empires based abroad. So-called staples are produced in Canada under conditions that feature highly advanced, capital-intensive technology and relatively high wages. The composition of capital is skewed in the direction of resource

extraction because these are the most profitable sectors for industrial capital, not due to some logic of dependency.

I made these arguments in my 1986 book, *Corporate Power and Canadian Capitalism*. In my view, there is little point in putting great effort into the critique of foreign control, which in Canada is not particularly higher than in several other advanced capitalist countries. The emphasis should be on democratizing control of economic life, from the shop floor to overall investment decision-making and budgeting. Jerome Klassen and I have an article in the next issue of the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (Carroll and Klassen, 2010) that presents a detailed analysis of hollowing out and the continuity of corporate power in Canada.

On the other issue, I have criticized both the economistic view that class struggle is the only game, partly because this conception simply leaves out the social justice claims of most of humanity, and partly because it misconstrues what class struggle might be about in our era. The typical equation of working class with organized labour is a contributing factor to the confusion. The noble image of workers fighting for higher pay is a very poor template for these times, which is not to say that labour's resistance to its immiseration is unimportant in the class struggle. But really, in a world in which private appropriation of wealth – capital – holds back human development in so many ways and keeps us on this unsustainable treadmill of production, the class struggle is not about higher pay. It is about ending the dominance of capital in human affairs. Given that the commanding heights of industry and finance are controlled by a miniscule fraction of humanity, class struggle from below is, effectively, the struggle to bring wealth under public, democratic control. The idea is to replace alienated social relations with those of mutual support, to break the class power of capital – power over -- while fostering new forms of community and power-with. This is the class struggle, and it necessarily intersects with a raft of social justice and ecological issues and movements.

The bigger issue, I think, is not that of orthodox Marxist die-hards of the Second International; they are no longer with us in any numbers! Rather, it revolves around a dismissal of the relevance of class, based in part on the antiquated stereotype I just invoked, and the elevation of identity and discourse to an exalted status, in concert with an unhealthy scepticism toward the construction of a collective will capable of effecting change beyond local, micro-political contexts. Rather than a postmodern retreat from class, I think we need a broader view of class struggle, along the lines I have sketched. As

capitalism's dual economic/ecological crisis has deepened, we see a reappearance of history's old mole, and perhaps a disenchantment with 1970s-style Parisian theory, which seems more than a little quaint. This is registered in the popularity of autonomist analyses such as Hardt and Negri's (eg., Hardt and Negri 2001). Foucault, as it turns out, is most helpful when taken with large helpings of Marx. Foucault had a cautionary tale to tell in his turn away from all big, transformative projects, but in this respect his politics seems to belong to a different era – the climax of post-war Fordism, the failure of state socialism and of the French Communist Party to break from the Stalinist template and so on. The challenges humanity faces today are simply too vast to be addressed within the confines of micro-politics and the ethics of self-care.

I have criticized the postmodern turn away from the concern with building a counter-hegemonic unity in diversity, a broadly inclusive movement/party that could create the cultural and political conditions for transitioning from capitalism to a democratic socialist formation.  This scenario seems entirely far-fetched in contemporary Canada, though not in France or Germany, to say nothing of Venezuela or Bolivia.  We need to keep in mind the second thesis on Feuerbach -- that humanity must prove the this-sidedness of its thinking in practice.  As long as the left remains marginal, disorganized into postmodern fragments and social democratic remnants, the vision of a post capitalist world will remain far-fetched, *here*.  And this brings us to the kernel of truth in Canadian left nationalism: Canada shares with the fading hegemon of world capitalism most of a continental landmass, as well as the deep cultural legacy of white settler colonialism.  The geopolitics of North America, in my view, preclude any Canadian rendition of what happened, remarkably and to the everlasting credit of the Cuban people, in Cuba half a century ago, or what is happening today in Bolivia and Venezuela.  The prospects for socialism in Canada are not easily separated from the fate of the left in the United States.  That is a harrowing thought; indeed, it is the repressed underside to left-nationalist complaints about the congenital weaknesses of the Canadian bourgeoisie.  Strategically, this asymmetrical dependence suggests that the left in Canada, while vigorously pressing social justice claims locally, provincially and nationally, should also cultivate continental -- and broader-- solidarities. The Common Frontiers project of the Canada/US/Mexico labour movement in opposition to NAFTA and the inspirational role that Canadian activists played in the Battle in Seattle of 1999

are exemplary. Deep integration, a bourgeois project now on hold but still alive, needs a creative response from the left.

Although you have been critical of Canadian political economy, I wonder if working in Canada, a step away from empire, has nonetheless mattered to the development of your radical political economy. You've written that many American intellectuals, consciously or unconsciously, identify with empire. This collapses the ironic distance that they are able to have within political economy: since they are in the eye of the storm, they don't see it. Being in Canada might enable an ironic, critical distance.

There is something in it. There is an American left. It's pretty marginal, but there are some very good left scholars in the United States. Nancy Fraser would be one example and there are many others. I think of the notoriety of Noam Chomsky. I've found American left academics quite inspirational. But I think it might well be the case that if you were to do a citation analysis of my work, that a lot of the references do not come from the hegemonic ground zero of global capitalism, but from the middle power places, like the Netherlands. I have spent a couple of sabbatical leaves in the Netherlands and that has been really helpful, getting a Dutch perspective.

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And how did that happen, your Dutch connection? And what did you learn from this 'Dutch perspective'?

It all comes back to family, of course. My wife is the daughter of Catholic Dutch immigrants, meaning that we have a lot of cousins and uncles and aunts, a whole family network there. When it came to planning my first sabbatical in 1987, we decided to live in the Netherlands. I got an appointment as a visiting scholar in political science at the University of Amsterdam, which was absolutely perfect. That was the beginning.

At that time, in 1987-88, the Dutch left was beginning to break apart in some respects: the Dutch Communist party, for example, did not last much longer. Some of the scholars that I got to know were in the Dutch Communist Party, very Gramscian and very astute in their analysis not just of Dutch politics but global politics. I'm thinking of people like Kees van der Pijl and Henk Overbeek. They were professors of international relations there. There was a network of left academics, political scientists, sociologists and so on, that put on a series called *After the Crisis.* So we had these colloquiums running that were about the prospects for the left and for global capitalism

coming out of the crisis of Fordist Keynesianism of the 1970s. Of course, by then, neoliberalism was already in full swing but there was still the question of what kinds of contestations were possible, of what could take place. I found their perspectives, their insights, really attractive, especially the insights that Kees and Henk brought around how to think about the issues of hegemony within a political economic perspective on capitalism that was open to theorizing collective agency and transformative practice. So it was really helpful for me to spend a year with these folks. My actual sponsor at the University of Amsterdam was Meindert Fennema and a few years earlier, Meindert had written a pathbreaking work on transnational corporate elite networks as his dissertation. I have continued to work with Meindert over the years and we have recently published an article on the transnational capitalist class (Carroll and Fennema 2002).

Afterwards, in 2000-2001 you were visiting fellow at a centre there…

That's the centre for advanced studies (the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences), NIAS they call it. It's one of several centres in the world that you have to apply to, to take your sabbatical there. If you are able to get in, it's like dying and going to heaven as an academic. The resources are just perfect and you get to hang out with a lot of interesting people from around the world. You are in this bubble for a year with really good support for your research and really interesting people you are having lunch with each day (laughs) and offices that are six or seven times the average floor space of an office in the Cornett building at the University of Victoria! (laughs). So that was a very comfortable year and a very stimulating year. We had a research group and we were all at NIAS able to work together, looking at structures of corporate power in different countries in the world and globally…

You've also spent a little bit of time in Japan. I wonder if you could say something about what these international relationships mean for you, as a left-academic.

I've visited Japan, twice and spent about three weeks there each time. I don't have the same depth of relationships in Japan as I do in the Netherlands, but I have some very good colleagues there that I have kept in touch with, although I have not directly collaborated with them. For example, my good friend, Unno

Yahilo of Kanazawa State University will be staying at UVic this spring and summer. He will be writing a book for Japanese readers that resembles Jim Stanford's (2008) *Economics for Everybody*, which is quite a good book for Canadian readers. But Unno's one critique of Jim's book is that it is not sufficiently attuned to issues of globalization, so Unno will feature a stronger analysis of globalization in his book. So, I look forward to the various conversations I will have with him this spring and this summer.

These kind of collegial relations are really important to the development of left scholarship, for people to travel, to get to know each other, whether you are able to spend a whole year as colleagues or simply internet networking. It's important: the left is necessarily a cosmopolitan formation. I've certainly learned a lot from my involvement with Japanese scholars. Most of them are economists, by the way, since left political economy is still a very strong current in Japan: it was never completely displaced by American neoclassical economics. So, that is an interesting aspect of Japanese academia.

Can you talk about being at the University of Victoria, which could look quite peripheral within Canadian academia?

When I moved to Victoria in 1981 it was more on the periphery of cultural life, if you like, than it is now. Partly because of the advances in communications technology, partly because of the development of the city, it's become more culturally diverse and interesting. The University itself has grown tremendously and has attracted a lot of excellent scholars, many of them radical. In the initial years, of course, my benchmark was York University and it was a big shift from York to UVic. But, I think over time it's become a more and more interesting place. The student body has changed as well; it's become more multicultural. There are still not that many international students compared to universities like York, but it is a lot more diverse than it was three decades ago.

And, the sociology department has changed quite a bit. When I first moved to Victoria, the department was pretty steeped in US-style positivism and the norm was a kind of sociology focussed around quantitative methods and hypothetical-deductive theory: that was sociology. The kind of work that Rennie Warburton was doing that was more critical and historical was really not considered sociology by a fair number of colleagues in the department. So it was not a very interesting place in that regard, initially. Of course, I

gravitated towards Rennie Warburton -- he was the only Marxist-oriented member of the department and one of very few critical sociologists. But, over the three decades I've been there, there have been a lot of changes, not just within sociology...

The place already became exciting, I would say, in 1983 when we got a taste of the kind of class struggle politics that BC was quite famous for, less so today, but certainly at that time, when the BC Social Credit government brought down this full-scale neoliberal political programme. It was the first of its kind in Canada, actually, so it was very much the vanguard of neoliberalism, the so-called 'restraint programme' of 1983. And a group of us, led by Warren Magnusson in political science, formed a little organization called the Committee on Alternatives for British Columbia. We put out, fairly quickly, an edited book called *The New Reality* (Magnusson *et al* 1984). It was the first critique of neoliberalism as a kind of coherent political programme in Canada. It was bestseller in BC and had some impact in terms of popular education and consciousness-raising. And that was very much my entry point into writing about social movements because I was active in the Solidarity Coalition, as it was resisting the new restraint programme, and I ended up writing the chapter in that book that is about the Solidarity Coalition. Also, it was my entry point into writing and thinking about neoliberalism.

In a sense, moving to BC was....a gift (laughs). I got in on the ground floor on neoliberalism as a phenomenon, I could be a participant-observer on the kind of transitions, the kind of political contention and the content involved in neoliberal politics. All of that came into focus for me in 1983-1984, which means, although you could say Victoria was on the periphery, in a sense it was in the vanguard of what was to come. The 'Common Sense Revolution' in Ontario doesn't take place until the mid-90s but already in BC we are seeing this project and we can sort of look at it and we can participate in resisting it but we can also come to understand it and so forth...

So there was the hands-on empirical experience of neoliberalism and social movements, and then there was the Gramscian conceptual part, from your colleagues in Amsterdam, a few years later... That was the process?

Definitely. Very much so.  Basically, the article that Bob Ratner and I put together as our first collaborative work came out in 1989 in *Critical Sociology* (Carroll and Ratner 1989)and it was on British Columbia and the development of neoliberalism in British Columbia, as a hegemonic project,the attempts to

resist it and how they failed -- how basically they were very conjunctural, mechanical assemblages of movements that lacked a real coherent social vision and didn't have the organizational capacity to sustain themselves over the long haul. What was happening there was not a war of position but a momentary war of manoeuvre to try to block or resist a particular state initiative, and it was not likely to succeed for that reason. We wrote that up very much as a Gramscian analysis. I wrote most of that paper at the University of Amsterdam.

It's interesting that you say that because in your more recent work on media activists with Hackett (Hackett and Carroll 2006), you suggest that media activists in Vancouver share what might be called an 'architectonic' underlying political economic vision, even when they have what looks like quite different immediate aims...So, you seem a bit more optimistic about the capacity for political analysis among activists. Is there some kind of maturation of social movements against neoliberalism, at least in BC, over the decades?

It's hard for me to really judge the situation, today. When Bob Ratner and I did our work, this was really in the 1990s when we did a lot of in-depth interviewing with activists. Bob Hackett and I did our work on media activism in the year 2001 to 2002 primarily, so that's more recent. But, still, to really make a comment on how things are going at the moment is a little bit difficult. I would hope there has been some learning. In the interviews that we did in the 1990s, we found that the movement activists who were more networked across movements tended to have a more political economic analysis of power. They could actually talk *strategically* about what they were up against. That is absolutely critical for any kind of effective movement action. I think if we did the study again, we'd find similar results. Again, there's lots of savvy political activists. But probably what is lacking is the organizational form.

     So, it's sort of the 64 000 dollar question, but again, what's missing is perhaps not so much individual learning or the consciousness of individual activists, but finding the organizational forms that can actually carry a counterhegemonic movement of movements. Of course, classically we are taking about a political party. But the space for a political party in a quite dysfunctional political system like Canada's, where the first past the post system basically robs the electorate of its democratic power, is constricted. And don't think the Green Party is a place for much counterhegemonic

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movement. In some other contexts, green political parties have played pretty important roles but I don't see that in Canada.

The NDP, as we've written about, is like many social democratic parties, perhaps the worst offender being the British Labour Party under the spell of 'New Labour'. The NDP has undergone a certain process of neoliberalization, so it's a social democratic party that leans more to the right than to the left. It does not engage in *any* popular education or consciousness-raising. It is thoroughly opportunistic. Of course -- give the usual disclaimer! --I say this even though I have plenty of friends in the NDP (laughs). The NDP has a left wing, there are committed socialists in the NDP: I know that to be the case. I also say it as someone who donates money to the NDP and who has donated time on election day and so on. I don't consider myself to be hostile to the NDP. But I am profoundly disappointed....Perhaps disappointed is not the right word because I think what is happening is not surprising. I think what is needed is a political formation that is different from the NDP and that hasn't been happening.

Following on this, another feature of your work is that it emphasizes the role of the state. In your lecture for *Socialist Studies* (Carroll 2006) you talk about social movements 'walking on both legs', meaning simultaneous commitment to internationalism and to the national state. You have never given up on the state as a vehicle for progressive social change, despite NDP failures.

Any war of position has to be conducted partly vis-à-vis the state and partly vis-à-vis civil society. It's not an either/or. Focussing simply on one front is a formula for disaster. The state is a reality. Of course, not all power is somehow condensed into the state. Power is indeed capillary and diffused. If you go back to Gramsci's own work it's quite clear that that's how he views power. But, the notion that the state can be safely ignored is a really seriously flawed starting point for politics in today's world. I tend to see the state, very much with Gramsci, as extending beyond the immediate apparatuses of the state, into civil society. So we can speak of the integral state ,which is an entire complex field of cultural and political activity and a terrain of struggle. This is where the struggle is taking place. It is a pretty complex terrain and it is not easy to win these struggles because the terrain is sloped in ways that favour the ruling groups, but...one can still win, while playing uphill, it's just a lot more difficult! (laughs)

Of course, the classic social democratic strategy is to win an election to win control over the levers of the state and then to use those levers to bring in a series of social reforms. But, it's hard to actually point to many effective examples of that. The one that you would point to immediately would be Sweden, I suppose. But the point there is that for that long period of social democratic governance in Sweden, as Jonas Pontusson has pointed out, the Swedish Labour Party and labour movement became hegemonic: it was the hegemonic class. So, it was an odd kind of situation of a capitalist formation in which the labour movement was hegemonic. This is what made social democracy work in Sweden and it enabled the Swedish labour party to win a long series of elections and really implement a programme of progressive reform that did, to some extent, shift the balance of class power. I give a lot of credit to Swedish-style social democracy but I don't think that is easily replicated under today's conditions within the provinces, to say nothing of the federal level in Canada.

I wanted to pick up on this Gramscian idea that the state reaches into civil society, including into education. This means there are possibilities for building progressive spaces for critical thinkers within academia. Teaching undergraduates is one of the few times left-academics have a captive audience! Of course, you have been quite involved in the creation of such spaces, across academia. This seems to go beyond an idea of professional service, to self-consciously creating room for left-progressive activism…

Yes, absolutely. I mentioned the Committee on Alternatives for British Columbia that we formed in 1983, publishing a book in 1984. That network became the infrastructure for our developing the Contemporary Social and Political Thought programme, an interdisciplinary programme in critical theory at UVic. That programme, which launched in 1988, was really quite transformative. For example, in our graduate programme in sociology, we began to attract very interesting, critical, theoretically-oriented graduate students. That changed the nature of the graduate programme, much to the chagrin of some of my colleagues I might say (laughs). This is a small-scale example of how these networks that go across disciplines, in this case within a particular institution, can bring about a shift in the context of teaching and the kinds of students who come into a programme and so on. So we have a much more vibrant programme that I think we would have if CSPT had not been invented in the late 1980s.

If I think of the Social Justice Studies programme, back in 2006, I put out a memo to a dozen progressive colleagues in different departments at UVic suggesting the idea that we have a critical mass of teachers and a lot of interested students that would sustain a programme of this kind. And I got back some very encouraging responses, so we started working on it. It was approved in 2008 and we accepted our first cohort of students this past fall. There is a lot of student interest. It's the kind of programme that exists between a whole number of disciplines, so it's creating space that enables students to pick up a credential: you can major in whatever but then you also minor in Social Justice Studies. That enables them to connect into interdisciplinary analyses of injustice and of social movements and other practices, critical pedagogy and so on.

The faculty of education is involved. There are courses on anti-oppressive social work; UVic has a very strong social work department in that regard and they're involved in the programme. There is critical history and histories of decolonization; the UVic history department is really strong. Indigenous Studies is heavily involved in Social Justice Studies. So, it's a really interesting nexus between a number of disciplines, involving 42 participating faculty members who are all very much on board in terms of Social Justice Studies and bringing in students who are very often activist-minded, even if they are not activist in their practices today. And then connecting all of that into the community through various means. This term we have a 'Conversation with Activists' series where we have leading activists from Victoria come up to campus to dialogue with a group of students in the Social Justice programme, as well as anybody else who wants to show up. It's an interesting gathering point for civic engagement in which we're combining the education function of educating students in the programme, with reaching out to various communities and trying to establish these kinds of networks and dialogues in a local sense. That is going really well, so it presents a nice model.

It's important to say that there are a number of Social Justice programmes in Canada. Ours is not the first. There is one at Brock, at Windsor. King's College at the University of Western Ontario has one and the University of Regina has one. And I have been trying to get together a meeting – speaking of networks and cross-institutions -- of the directors of these different programmes at the Congress. That might blossom into a session at Socialist Studies where we can talk about the pedagogy of Social Justice Studies.

I assume that the book *Critical Strategies for Social Research* (Carroll 2004) grew out of your teaching experiences. This seems to me characteristic of a certain kind of rigour across all your work, the insistence that methods are not divorced from politics, but embedded in the dominant political economy.

The book emerged directly -- well almost directly -- out of teaching. I noticed a problem in the methods curriculum in our department. It's basically the same in sociology departments generally, which is that we teach the techniques of research but not really the strategies of how to do research, particularly from a social justice perspective. That is to say, we don't teach how to do research in ways that are not just ethical, in the sense of not doing harm to people, but that actually help a process of empowerment of the disempowered or that further democratization through the research process itself, while gathering veridical data. It's not a matter of 'corrupting the data', but doing the research in a way that is sensitive to the social justice concerns that surround the issue that you're looking at.

Basically, I convinced the department to introduce a social justice concentration within our degree programme about a decade ago and part of that concentration was a new course called 'Critical Research Strategies.' After teaching that course for a term I was asked by Barry Adam at the University of Windsor to give the inaugural lecture for the University of Windsor's new doctoral programme in social justice studies. This was in 2002. I prepared a lecture on sociology as praxis, and the lecture reflected on various critical research strategies for developing knowledge that address issues of power and domination and that tries to press for justice. These are methods like institutional ethnography, participatory action research, critical discourse analysis and of course, good old historical materialist dialectics, as ways of generating emancipatory theory and practice. This was the idea. And this is how I teach the course – I still teach the course, I'm teaching it this term.

That lecture became the backbone of the book. The book took shape from the lecture and the lecture took shape out of my teaching the course. And the book became the textbook for the course. It's been used in some other courses in Canada, but it hasn't had an enormous up-take, partly because, as I say, the methods curriculum tends to be fixed in stone and really overly oriented around technique. There is not a lot of space in the curriculum for these kinds of discussions. But it's been a very successful course and the

students in it certainly seem to get a lot out of it. It's part of our social justice studies minor/diploma programme, as an elective.

You insist that the way research is carried out cannot be separated from politics, especially a concern for progressive, socially just politics. But, your concern with social justice carries over to other aspects of your life. Of course, I am referring here to your song 'Do We Pull the Monster Down', about the injustices built into capitalism, which you wrote for one of your sons. So, I wonder if you could talk about where this fits in with your more obviously academic work?

This is a very good question, particularly coming after the question on critical research strategies because it's important to recognize that we can, that we *need* to find the truths about the human condition, not simply through the use of scientific method. Artistic, literary aesthetic kinds of modes of presentation and that kind of work, like novels, for example, are a tremendous source of insight about the human condition. They are not the same genre, if you like, as a social science research article, but they are not to be dismissed. They can't be appraised using the same kinds of standards and everything, but I don't think that the social sciences have a monopoly on truth and insights about the human condition.

In terms of songs, and this particular song… Well, it's really one in a long series of songs, of birthday songs that I have written for my sons over the years, since they were tiny tykes. As they have matured, so have the songs. Many of the recent ones are political in one way or another. Both of my sons are politically pretty engaged. Last summer, for example, I wrote a rhumba based on Ernst Bloch's notion of the 'Not Yet', for my older son Myles who was turning twenty. This song is entitled 'Not Yet.' It's very much a song about utopia and the possibility for utopia. That possible future, as potential, already inhabits the present, as what Bloch called 'the concrete forward dream'.  But the realization of that dream is not here, not yet: it's over the horizon, it's waiting for tomorrow. Nonetheless, it's still a possibility that's not to be denied *as a possibility*.

But, of course, 'Monster' is much more of a dystopic piece and it's really the only one that I have recorded and shamelessly uploaded to Youtube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rf8xB8gLp_I). It's been used in popular education, it's been put to use in political film festivals and in various teaching contexts. That's one of the great things about the internet, you can put

something up, and people will make use of it: if it's useful to them, they'll make use of it. The internet, in that sense, is a tremendously subversive communications medium.

I consider this song and the kind of visual presentation that goes with it, as a socio-poetic intervention. It does connect with my sociology work. It's not research, it's a different mode of expression. But, in many respects, using aesthetic modes can be much more powerful and effective in reaching people with a message and inspiring people: that was the idea with this. I'd like to do more of this kind of work if I had the time (laughs) but so far that hasn't presented itself.

Your forthcoming work (Carroll 2010) revisits capitalist networks and some of your earliest work, likewise investigates network relationships amongst the capitalist class. Empirically, can you describe some of your findings, from this book?

I have just completed this book and the working title is *The Making of a Transnational Capitalist Class*. In terms of thinking about what it all means, off the top, I would emphasize the extent to which the decades since the late 1970s have been a time of class struggle from above. You can see this in the comments of insiders like Warren Buffet. You know his famous interview with the *New York Times* in 2006 where he declared --this is a close paraphrase-- 'Yes, of course there is a class struggle, and my class is winning.'[1] It's a very interesting quote from the third wealthiest capitalist of the world. There is no doubt that capitalists understand that they are engaged in class struggle. Unfortunately, the rest of humanity is confused about it (laughs).

Looking at the actual architecture of global corporate power, certainly you can see that it is a pretty tight world up at the top. There are regional clusterings and still, definitely, national corporate communities, such as Canada's. These national corporate communities connect into a transnational network of business leaders who are often also involved in transnational policy planning groups, like the World Economic Forum or the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and so on. There is what Stephen Gill has called a transnational historic bloc in support of neoliberalism. From a social movement perspective, we need to

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[1] "There's class warfare, all right," Mr. Buffett said, "but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning" (Stein 2006).

recognize this as a social movement from above that has been very effective in promoting and consolidating the neoliberal project. In general, we have, then, an era of development and consolidation of neoliberalism as a hegemonic project both within countries and on a global scale.

The specific way this has played out in Canada is, I think, quite interesting. Of course, we have our own right-wing think tanks and policy groups closely integrated with the top tier of the capitalist class. They've been very effective in producing and disseminating neoliberal propaganda, getting on the inside of certain parties and governments and so on. In Canada, we have this interesting federal-provincial dynamic where the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA were major strategic moves in leveraging a low–profile, molecular accretion of neoliberal policies and provisions at the federal level that gradually shifted the burden for social programmes to the provinces, particularly under Paul Martin's years as Finance Minister in the Liberal government and the cutbacks he instituted. In a number of ways, relatively low profile changes were made and a kind of passive revolution took place in bringing neoliberalism in at the federal level.

At the same time, this was punctuated by wars of manoeuvre in the provinces. I mentioned the 1983 restraint programme in BC, that was massively opposed by the Solidarity Coalition, but unsuccessfully. Of course, this goes right through to Ontario's Common Sense Revolution in the 1990s. You have this dynamic of neoliberal transformation by stealth at the federal level, to the point where now we have one of the most conservative politicians in the world as our Prime Minister. He is able to cash in on the hegemony of neoliberalism today and relatively few eyebrows are raised. I mean, I read *The Globe and Mail* and so on and you occasionally find someone writing in and saying that this obsession with cutting taxes is thoroughly irrational. Not particularly from a socialist perspective, but from a managerial perspective of trying to look after the basic infrastructure and basic needs in reproducing labour power, within the dominant social formation. But I think it's gotten to the point where neoliberal ideology has made it virtually taboo for a politician to suggest that taxes need to go up, which is obviously the case. We need to restore a progressive system of taxation. Taxes need to go up, particularly on wealthy people, but even on middle-income people. …. Basically, what we are talking about is a return to a logic of decommodification, which was part of the logic of the Keynesian welfare state – to take things out of the marketplace and to supply them to citizens as rights.

I think neoliberalism in Canada has established itself to the point that a politician like Jack Layton or Carole James, the NDP leader in British Columbia, these representatives of social democracy are so intimidated by neoliberalism and their actual parties have become so neoliberalized in practice, that they refuse to go there. The last election here in BC, Carole James used as her major plank a kind of right-wing populist tax revolt rhetoric. And I don't know what she was trying to do: capture the red-neck vote for the NDP? Instead, she could have responsibly and rationally critiqued the blatant hypocrisy of the provincial Liberals here on their so-called green strategy for the province. It would be very easy to point to the contradictions and holes in the actual policy of the Liberals. But because social democratic leaders have turned to neoliberalism, they don't believe that they can state anything outside that discourse and make it attractive to people. Secondly, they have accepted the widely popular idea that the electorate is now dumbed down to the point where people can't understand a rational political argument: this is the Baudrillardian scenario of the post-modern condition, people have turned off politics and just want to be entertained.

I think this is a misreading of the population completely. But, you can see this way of thinking in the strategies of social democratic leaders who refuse to try and put out any kind of complex political argument. Of course, this completely serves the right. The right is always served by opportunism and the dumbing down of politics: it is only a sophisticated political culture that would ever entertain a transition out of capitalism. This is really one of the big problems that we face. Certainly, it's not only in Canada that we face this, although Canada is one place and the United States perhaps even more so, where there is a political culture that is, on the one hand, minimally democratic and that, on the other, has been articulated overwhelmingly in terms of the neoliberal mantra of tax cuts and personal responsibility, shrinking the state, getting the state off our backs and so on. There is a need for the left to really break decisively from that and to offer a different social vision. I don't see that happening from the social democratic side of things, though. I think it's coming from the social movements.

I haven't talked much about my actual research on elites (laughs), but a lot of that work is fairly technical. I've kept it up over the years, over many, many years now, as a kind of service responsibility, in a weird way. It's obviously academic work, but it's also a service to try and map out the structure of capitalist power, to make it really tangible, as a research project. Of course, since the structure is being reinvented and changing all the time I

could do this into my afterlife (laughs). As a project, it doesn't disappear. But in some ways, you could say it's a rather mundane research activity compared to the more intrinsically interesting research on social movements. … But for me it's a kind of responsibility to continue to do this kind of mapping, and I think that the most recent research has been very fruitful in enabling me to map out these elite structures on a global scale, which is an important piece of the puzzle.

I should add that we can also see the very tentative rise, partly in response to neoliberalism and its contradictions, of a global left, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos has put it. This global left includes quite a range of groups and activities, yet there is a fragility to it evident, for instance, in the cloud that hangs over the fate of the World Social Forum. Finally I would point to the increasing importance, strategically and ethico-politically, of struggles to democratize communication. Corporate and state control of communication, not simply through ownership but through the instrumental practices of commercialized, profit driven media, is an enormous challenge. It is a pillar of bourgeois hegemony. Again we see variegated responses from movements -- culture jamming and media literacy efforts, creating alternative media, campaigns to use state-centered reforms to rein in capital's cultural power.

You are quite lucid about things that don't work, for example, with respect to the NDP in power in provincial governments and regarding the organizational limits of social movements, as well as the problems posed by post-modern identities oriented to consumerism instead of progressive activism. But, in your critical methods books, I was struck by your interpretation of Marx's famous quote about 'history weighing upon us as a nightmare', as a hopeful phrase -- hopeful since our present activism can mean a different future. We are not simply captured by the past. What we do, right now, can create the conditions for a different, better future. Despite your research, are you ultimately hopeful?

This is certainly one of the biggest questions of all. Of course, I have to say that I am deeply pessimistic about the future. (laughs). In principle, I would defend the position that I take, that certainly the past does not lock us into a future. We can radically remake the world. This *can* be done. It's entirely possible. But this nightmare weighing on the brains of the living is Marx's way of saying that yes, people do make their own history. But they don't choose the circumstances. It can be very difficult to reverse tendencies that have achieved an entrenched position in the world. What we're talking about here is the

hegemony of transnational corporate capital, of states that are at best minimally, formally democratic. So it is, indeed, an uphill struggle. Nonetheless, the fact that the hegemony is thin, because of enormous inequalities and injustices in world capitalism, creates openings. You can see various movements, the movements of landless workers in Brazil, various actions, particularly in South America. There are very, very encouraging political developments in specific places, which, of course, is how political developments occur.

But, I am, I think, overall, pessimistic. Let me qualify that and explain what I mean, before I get too depressing (laughs). I think that we are in an organic crisis, where as Gramsci would put it, 'the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born.' We can recall other deep, protracted crises of this sort. There is the depression of the 1930s, for example, or the 1970s crisis of Fordist capitalism that eventuated in the triumph of neoliberalism. But this crisis we are in now is unprecedented. It is unprecedented because capitalism's ecological footprint has outgrown the biosphere. John Bellamy Foster recently published a piece in *Monthly Review* (Foster, 2010) that made an acute observation. The ecological crisis, particularly over climate change, is quite different from an economic crisis in its basic logic. Economic crisis, we know, is cyclical. It's cyclical under the assumption that no transformation of capitalism occurs. That is to say, if humanity is unable to figure out how to exit from capitalism, what will happen in an economic crisis is that the crisis will be resolved on the backs of working people and the subalterns of this world. You can see how the crisis of the Fordist Keynesian formation was resolved that way. That is what neoliberalism accomplished, for a certain amount of time.

Now, of course, I would say that neoliberalism is in crisis, most visibly since at least 2008. But the point is that ecological crisis is not cyclical, it's degenerative. That is, there is no future recovery whose condition is being prepared by the collapse. The collapse is a cumulative collapse and it's ultimately a matter of fundamentally changing humanity's relationship with the rest of nature. Avoiding this crisis is about avoiding getting to the tipping point. Once the positive feedback mechanisms -- which are quite well known now, in terms of the melting of the polar ice caps and the release of methane from the tundra regions as they thaw -- once these mechanisms kick in, the long term future is really grim. I think that the situation is extremely urgent. Of course, capitalism has built into it this grow-or-die expansionary logic that makes it incapable of solving this crisis. Yet the window for a solution is pretty narrow. So, I think it's hard not to be pessimistic, quite honestly. But,

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pessimism is not the same thing as fatalism. On intellectual grounds, I don't think it's realistic to be optimistic today. But to allow one's will to be broken by pessimism eliminates all hope for a brighter future, or really any future for most of humanity. So I think collectively, through some complex convergence of many movements and communities pushing out the new, we really have to pull the monster down.

To twist around Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase, I don't see any alternative.

## Not Yet

William K. Carroll
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'Fermenting in the process of the real itself is the concrete forward dream: anticipating elements are a component of reality itself.'   -- Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

Can you hear it?
Softer than a whisper
Sounds like someone singing
Maybe several singing

Everybody
Knows that song they're singing
Slaves who picked the cotton
Never were forgotten

Every night and day music laughs and plays
And the bodies sway along
Gently to the pulsing beat that moves the feet so wondrously in the
        symphony of song.

Can you taste it?
Just like fried banana
Pisang drenched in honey
Richer than all money

There's a sweetness
Growing in the garden
Swords beat into ploughshares
Can feed a billion confreres

Every night and day music laughs and plays
And the bodies sway along
Gently to the pulsing beat that moves the feet so wondrously in the
  symphony of song.

We can't see it
It's over the horizon
Waiting for tomorrow
Tomorrow and tomorrow

Yet we feel it
In every movement rising
With every new beginning
A world is ripe for winning

Every night and day music laughs and plays
And our bodies sway along
Gently to the pulsing beat that moves our feet so wondrously in the
  symphony of song.

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For Myles
20 June 2009

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*SPECIAL SECTION*
*TWENTY YEARS AFTER KANEHSATÀ:KE: REFLECTIONS, RESPONSES, ANALYSES*

# Then and Now, For the Land

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**Abstract**

Taiaiake Alfred is from Kahnawá:ke in the Mohawk Nation. He lived in Kahnawá:ke in 1990 and worked in the intergovernmental relations office of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake during the crisis.  In this piece, he reflects on the aftermath of the events at Kahnawá:ke and Kahnesatà:ke, reflecting on why this was the moment that the Mohawk people decided to make a stand.

**Résumé**

Taiaiake Alfred vient de Kahnawá:ke dans la Nation Mohawk. Il vivait à Kahnawá:ke en 1990 et il a travaillé dans le bureau des relations intergouvernementales du Conseil Mohawk de Kahnawake pendant la crise. Dans cette contribution, il réfléchit à la suite des évènements à Kahnawá:ke et Kahnesatà:ke, analysant pourquoi ce fut le moment que le peuple Mohawk a décidé de saisir pour se revendiquer.

**Keywords**

• Oka • Kahnawáke • Kanesatake • anti-colonialism • Mohawks

**Mots-clés**

• Oka • Kahnawáke • Kanesatake • anti-colonialisme • les Mohawks

A couple of years after the Oka Crisis I received a request from the Québec government to make a presentation at a meeting of their cabinet. They

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Taiaiake Alfred vivait à Kahnawá:ke en 1990 et il a travaillé dans le bureau des relations intergouvernementales du Conseil Mohawk de Kahnawake pendant la crise. Il est l'auteur de trois livres : *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors* et *Peace, Power, Righteousness* d' Oxford University Press, et *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, de l'University of Toronto Press. Il est professeur dans la Faculté de Developpement Humain et Social, et directeur et fondateur de l'Ecole de Governance Autochtone à l'Université de Victoria.

asked me, as a professor of political science in a public institution, to meet with them and answer some questions to help them understand the Mohawk view on sovereignty and our relationship with Québec, in the interest of resolving the still simmering conflict. I decided it was my responsibility as a Mohawk of Kahnawá:ke and as an Indigenous intellectual to do what I could to clear up the misunderstandings clouding our relationship, so I accepted the invitation.

Arriving at a Montréal hotel conference room, I was given a cordial reception and was asked to make a short presentation to the gathered ministers. I was to the point: my talk was a restatement of the historic and well-known Mohawk position on the nation-to-nation relationship between our people that we have always defended by all means necessary, and which, I made clear, needs to be respected if our people were ever going to enjoy peaceful co-existence like our ancestors had since the Great Peace of 1701 that ended the Mohawk war of resistance against French settlement in our homeland.

The cabinet ministers listened respectfully to me as I spoke, but once I finished speaking and they turned to question me, I sensed change in their tone. One of the ministers asked me what my thoughts were on the cigarette trade and its role in the recent conflicts between our people. I explained to him that my views were not 'expert' on this question so much as reflecting the general Mohawk opinion that we are a free and unconquered people with inherent rights to unimpeded trade between and within our territories.  But before I could finish or explain myself fully, another minister - I believe the minister of public security - barged into the conversation, red-faced and violent, slamming an open hand on the conference table and shouting, 'What you are saying is nonsense. The problem is that you people are taking money out of our pockets. You are selling illegal cigarettes and stealing our tax revenue! You are stealing from the government. That's the problem!'

The crisis may have been about money to Québec politicians all along. In their minds, it must have seemed like a brilliant strategy guaranteed to provoke an armed conflict as justification for implementing a siege of Kahnawá:ke and Kanehsatà:ke to contain Mohawk movement and break the networks of trade and communication among communities supporting the tax-free cigarette trade. Mohawks had been generating huge profits from selling tax-free cigarettes brought in from the sister community of Ahkwesáhsne to willing Québécois consumers since the mid-1980s, and much of this money had been channeled into building the capacity of the Mohawk Nation to resist Québec and Canadian authority in

physical, legal and political ways. Attacking the economic base of such a resurgent Mohawk sovereignty in its midst must have seemed imperative to the government of Québec at the time. If the cigarette trade were only about money to Mohawks, Québec's strategy may have worked.

As it was, Québec seriously misunderstood us and the situation they faced in confronting our self-determination. Their strategy, as was proven by the events that followed, was fatally flawed. Québecers failed to understand that Mohawks were not involved in the cigarette trade simply for the money. This cigarette economy was a means to an end; the goal was the resurrection of our nation. It was a time of true nationalism when the economy served politics. Québec may have expected Mohawks to be intimidated and to surrender ground in the face of an armed attack by the provincial police. If Mohawks had been motivated by money, calculations and rationalities would no doubt have prevailed in our minds and we would have stood down and allowed Québec to assert its authority again on our lands and over our people.  But our people did not respond rationally to the challenge, we responded with our hearts.

It was a real surge of anger and pride – I might even say a thirst for vengeance – that allowed our people to overcome initial confusion, political factionalism, personal jealousies, infighting, logistical nightmares, and straight up fear to stand collectively against Québec (and later Canada) during the summer of 1990. Mohawks were not only reacting to Québec's armed attack on a peaceful protest in the Kanehsatà:ke pines, we were remembering 300 years of being in the way of white society, and how the inconvenient truth of our being the Original People of this land had made us despised targets of hatred and conniving strategies of dispossession. When we heard the Québec police had attacked our relatives in Kanehsatà:ke early in the morning of 11 July 1990, no one was thinking about money. We were righteous in our rage at the lies of white society and being cheated out of two-thirds of our reserve. We were coming together in remembrance of all the police beatings and killings our people endured for many years. We were preparing ourselves for the worst, still hurting from the dismembering of our beautiful riverside village to make way for the St. Lawrence Seaway. We were forced into action by disgust at the thought of grown men yelling '*Maudit sauvage*!' at ten- year old kids and throwing stones at our bus after hockey games in French towns. On that summer morning and in the days that followed all of this was on our minds and in our hearts. And we were determined that 11 July 1990 was the day that shit ended.

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*SPECIAL SECTION*
*TWENTY YEARS AFTER KANEHSATÀ:KE: REFLECTIONS, RESPONSES, ANALYSES*


# From Paintings to Power
The meaning of the Warrior Flag twenty years after Oka

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**Abstract**
As Indigenous peoples we have found it necessary both to react to and to differentiate ourselves from the beliefs, values and practices that have been imposed upon us through colonization. To make our resistance effective, we sometimes use the tools of the dominant society. The Unity Flag in the incarnation that is commonly known as the 'Mohawk Warrior Flag' is one example of this phenomenon. Flown all over the world, it serves as a symbol for the unity of Indigenous peoples, illuminating our discordant relationship with a world that remains dominated by beliefs and values that are alien to us. This paper will introduce a Kanienkehaka perspective on the Flag, reconstructing its symbols and history and illustrating how it carries the message of unity-in-resistance for the various peoples who have turned to it for support in their ongoing struggles with colonialism.

**Résumé**
En tant que peuples Autochtones nous avons trouvé nécessaire de réagir et de se différencier des croyances, valeurs et pratiques qui nous étaient imposées par la colonisation. Pour rendre notre résistance efficace, nous utilisons parfois les outils de la société dominante. Le Drapeau de l'Unité dans l'incarnation, plus souvent connu sous

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le nom de « Drapeau du Guerrier Mohawk » est un exemple de ce phénomène. Flottant partout dans le monde, il sert de symbole de l'unité des peuples autochtones, mettant en lumière nos relations discordantes avec un monde qui reste dominé par des croyances et valeurs qui nous sont étrangères. Cet article introduit une perspective Kanienkehaka sur le Drapeau, reconstruisant ses symboles et son histoire et illustrant la façon dont le Drapeau porte le message de l'unité-en-résistance pour les divers peuples qui se sont tournés vers lui comme soutien dans leurs luttes en cours contre le colonialisme.

The flag that has become known as the 'Mohawk Warrior Flag' began its existence during the early 1970's, though it did not become widely known until it appeared in mainstream media during the 'Oka Crisis' of 1990. At that time, it fluttered defiantly over the heads of the Kanienkehaka people who were introduced to the public as 'Mohawk Warriors' during a seventy-eight day stand-off with the Canadian government. At issue was who had authority to determine and enforce 'the law'. Or, more specifically, could the town of Oka, near Montréal, appropriate a sacred Kanienkehaka burial ground to expand a golf course? The ability of this Flag to provoke comment and action is remarkable. For those who fly it, the Flag means active resistance to a dominant political hegemony. For others who look upon it, it is a painful symbol of anger, hatred, division and racism. Since the Oka Crisis the Flag has shown up all over the world, in such far-flung places as Chiapas, Australia, and Germany, as well as in diverse disputes closer to home such as tenants' rights demonstrations in Toronto, Ontario. Again, the Flag appeared in another prominent Indigenous dispute with the Canadian government. This time the issue concerned control of the lobster fishery at Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church, New Brunswick, Canada) and the conflict was with the Mi'kmaq. Once again, the core issue concerned what the law was and how this was to be interpreted and implemented. The Flag's use is so wide-ranging and uncontrolled that it would be impossible to catalogue all of the places and circumstances in which it has made an appearance since the Oka Crisis.

My research set out to examine what the 'Warrior Flag' signifies for some of the Indigenous people who use it. My reading could be understood as a semiotic analysis of the Mohawk Warrior Flag as a symbol that

circulates, that has meaning, and that enters into dialogue with other national symbols, ideologies, and social, political and spiritual structures. My investigation revealed that issues of unity, self-determination and resistance to colonization ran as constant themes through the genesis, use and perceptions of the Flag. For those who seek its support, this Flag serves as a poignant symbol. It represents resistance to assimilation and the assertion of an Indigenous way of looking at the world that is separate and distinct from the ones that the colonial states have attempted to impose. The sense of identity it represents is firmly rooted in Indigenous values, characterized by a connected relationship, to one another and to the land. Both the Kanienkehaka and Mi'kmaq that I spoke to in the course of my research expressed this same understanding about the Flag.

Remarkably, the message of resistance is exactly the message that the Flag's creator hoped it would communicate. Its original name was the 'Unity Flag' and it was designed by Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall, a Kanienkehaka philosopher and activist. Karoniaktajeh was a prolific writer, artist and radical thinker. Some may say he was 'ahead of his time'. Much of his artistic work concerned the assertion of a distinct Kanienkehaka identity. He passed away in 1993 at the age of seventy-six in a relative's house, leaving a prominent legacy in the Warrior or Unity Flag.

Like in the original work where this piece derives, I don't distance myself from the Flag. Signs and symbols of any culture speak to things about that culture that go without saying. Often it takes an insider perspective to translate those signs and symbols in order that they may be understood by others. As a Kanienkehaka woman, my personal connection allow me a certain insight into the history and use of the Flag. Additionally, as an Indigenous scholar, and figurative bridge between our culture and the other, I see it as my job to translate these signs and symbols in a way that makes sense. An accurate translation breeds understanding and dialogue rather than misunderstanding and fear.[1]

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[1] Mainstream academic formalism is always problematic for Indigenous scholars, making invisible the ways that the 'academic', the personal and the political are always linked. From this perspective the use of 'I' and the explicit mentioning of personal ties is a rejection of the typically problematic distance imposed by a more formally academic style. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work on Indigenous methodologies promotes the use of cultural protocols, values, and behaviors as an integral part of the research method (1999, 15). With this in mind the Iroquoian word for democracy is said to be '*owennasohna*' which means 'many voices'. This particular conception of democracy is in line with Iroquoian tradition where true democracy listens to many voices. The concept speaks to the recognition of the collective

In the course of my research, I came to understand that Karoniaktajeh's Unity Flag is a visual representation of the *Kaienerekowa*, the Great Law of Peace that united the Kanienkehaka with the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca nations long before European colonists arrived on our shores. Rooted in the laws of nature and meant for all Indigenous peoples of the world, the Kaienerekowa, as we understand it, represents a legally constituted social order that is, and always has been, separate from both the Canadian and the American colonial states. This is the source that inspired the Flag as an expression of our sense of our distinct identity. As Kanienkehaka scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred writes,

> Values and symbols are drawn from the traditional cultural complex and operationalized as key elements of the reformed identity. The various permutations of the collective identity are understood as forms of nationalism because they maintain traditional cultural boundaries and create group self-identification as a political community distinct from the state, and consistently committed to the right of self-determination (1995, 182)

This process of identification is viewed by Alfred as a form of nationalism. It is this deeply rooted sense of our social self, combined with the revitalization of traditional cultural symbols that speaks to the Indigenous nations through the Flag. Strengthening our relationship to creation is the root of the Kaienerekowa and unity is implicit in this relationship. Relating to the natural world on an equal level fosters a sense of unity with it. This is reflected in the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen* - The Words That Come Before All Else – or the Thanksgiving Address that we use to open public events. These sentiments were carried into the Kaienerekowa when it was developed to stop blood feuds and unify the five founding nations in peace. The Kaienerekowa turns the philosophy of unity into a legally constituted social order and, because the Unity Flag is a successful visual representation of the philosophy of the Kaienerekowa, the Mi'kmaq people of Esgenoopetitj understood what it was intended to represent without ever having been told its history.

The Flag's genesis in the Kanienkehaka communities and its subsequent use in Esgenoopetitj revealed that issues of unity, self-determination and resistance to colonization are integral components to its creation, its use and perception. Until now, this knowledge remained in the oral history of our people and in the original study from which this work derives. The original inspiration for my research on the Flag came

knowledge held by all members of a community. Therefore the use of "I" in this work is my exercising of this concept of 'owennasohna' in the research setting.

from personal and familial experiences with Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall. After his death, I decided to learn what I could about this man whose work was so influential in our community. I wanted others to be able to see what I saw – that here was an extremely intelligent and singular man who lived alone and devoted much of his life to ensuring Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) survival by teaching about and enhancing our culture.

Originally I wanted to do a biography, but he lived a simple life and there is not much about him in the historical record. I began to realize that his philosophy was more important than the man himself. This has been preserved in his writings and paintings, as well as in the memory of the people who knew him. His philosophical perspective is encompassed in the Unity Flag which is his most prominent legacy. This focus on the Flag itself, rather than on the man, serve as a vehicle for accessing a broader range of reflections that form a part of the oral cultural tradition that I inherited and that Karoniaktajeh dedicated his life to perpetuating.

Like other members of the Kanienkehaka community involved in my study, my life is governed by two frames of reference: the native and the non-native views of the world. As such, my work demonstrates how Indigenous methodologies can be incorporated into the western ethnographic experience of research and writing by incorporating Haudenosaunee philosophy into the fieldwork and writing. Western theoretical considerations within the dialogue engendered by post-colonialism (Tyler 2001; Giddens 1995; Ahmed and Shore 1995), is an area of controversy for Indigenous scholars, but one which may be loosely defined as a debate where the voices of the formerly colonized are gaining strength (Smith 1999). As the situation of Indigenous peoples changes and our relationship with the dominant culture evolves, our true history and culture is becoming more accessible to others.

Karen A. Cerulo's work *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation* (1995) serves as a foundation to understanding how the Flag is a poignant symbol of the 'collective conscience' (Durkheim 1933) of a common Indigenous identity. Kanienkehaka identity, and all that underlies it, has remained separate from the one imposed by the state. What is written and spoken about us is not entirely accurate. With this in mind, when the ways and thinking of the Indigenous peoples are understood, then this 'hidden culture' as described by Daniel Corkery in relationship to Ireland, will be revealed (Spicer 1992). This work shows that the Flag is a symbol that serves to remind Indigenous peoples of their culture, connections, and responsibilities to Mother Earth and to one another.

Central to the ongoing discussions raised by my semi-participant observation are the concepts of self-determination and sovereignty as they relate to Indigenous peoples. These concepts have a multitude of definitions rooted in each Indigenous culture's own perceptions. My work accordingly illustrates how formerly 'hidden' cultures may provide guidelines which will allow colonial administrations to accept governance of Indigenous communities on our own terms in a way that fosters positive relationships rather than disunity. Karoniaktajeh's invention of the Unity Flag is a manifestation of the ideas that nourish this collective movement towards action. In accord with Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' (Bhabha 1994), new cultural symbols, like the Flag, are inevitable manifestations of the changing relationship between the native and non-native. Use of the western term 'nation' by Indigenous peoples is similarly a way of removing ourselves from, what is to us, the imagined jurisdiction of the dominant structures.

From our perspective, the idea of human equality was not invented by the United Nations or by the American and French revolutions. The equality of human beings with each other and with the elements of nature is fundamental to the culture from which I gather my strength, my thoughts, and my understanding of the world. The Kanienkehaka have ceremonies and political procedures that reaffirm this perspective in ritual and social practice. A particular relationship with the natural world is what shapes Kanienkehaka philosophy and a tangible manifestation of this, is found in our law, the Kaienerekowa.[2] The Kaienerekowa is our constitution. It was designed to protect and affirm the independent status of nations and individuals engaged in the quest for a unified approach to mutual problems. The Kaienerekowa contains all the codes of conduct, thought and knowledge needed for people to function, to understand their ceremonies and to maintain a civilized social and political life. These codes are based in nature. So our symbolism is easy to understand and follow. One simply has to look at the world around them to understand the Kaienerekowa in its strength and elusive simplicity.

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[2] This relationship with the Kaienerekowa is what the western culture would call ideology but the word that we use to describe this is the word '*tsionkwetáh:kwen*'. This word, literally translated, means 'the things that we really believe in'. It reflects our connections to one another and to nature, in that these are natural connection, ones that we don't have to think about and analyze. They are from nature and so they just are there to exist with us. So, we don't have to think about whether it is true or not, it just comes from inside, from that very core that is tied to Mother Earth when our mothers place our placenta in the ground after birth.
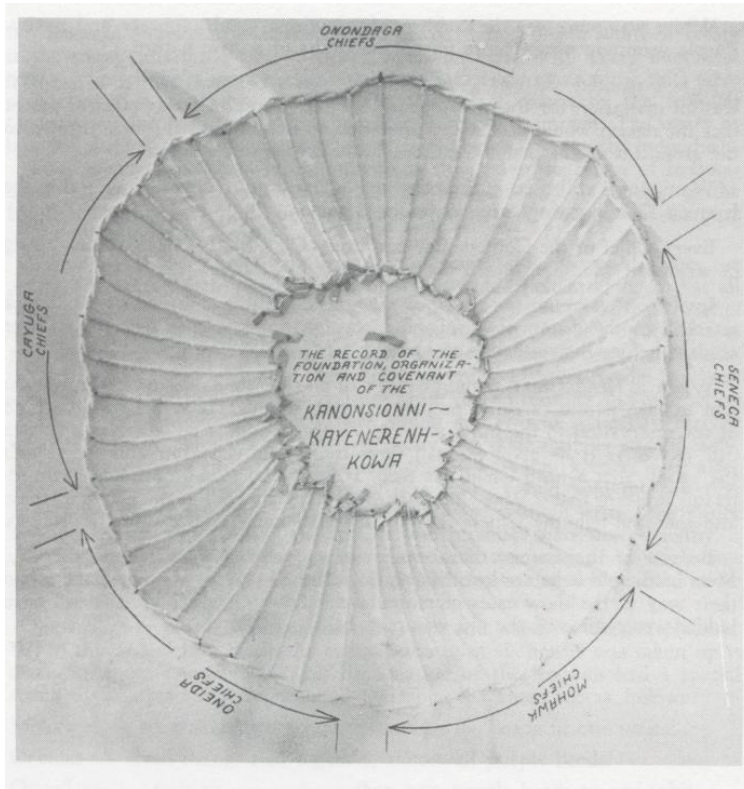
Covenant Circle Wampum (Tehanetorens 1993).

The legend of the founding of the 'Iroquois Confederacy' has been passed down for many generations through oral tradition. Only in the last one hundred years or so has it been recorded in three versions that are widely used. [3] The Haudenosaunee Confederacy began as a confederation of five nations: Kanienkehaka, Oneida,

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[3] 'Version 1- The Newhouse version, gathered and prepared by Seth Newhouse, a Canadian Mohawk, and revised by Albert Cusick, a New York Onondaga-Tuscarora. This version has been edited and published by Arthur C. Parker of the Rochester Museum in "The Constitution of the Five Nations, or the Iroquois Book of the Great Law" (*New York State Museum Bulletin* no. 184. Albany, 1916).

'Version 2 - The Chief's Version, compiled by the chiefs of the Six Nations Council on the Six Nations Reserve, Ontario, 1900. This version appears in the "Traditional History of the Confederacy of the Six Nations," edited by Duncan C. Scott (*Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 5. Ottawa, 1911).

'Version 3 - The Gibson version, dictated in 1899 by Chief John Arthur Gibson of the Six Nations Reserve to the late J.N.B. Hewitt of the Smithsonian Institution, and revised by Chiefs Abram Charles, John Buck, Sr., and Joshua Buck, from 1900 to 1914. This version, which is still in manuscript, was translated into English in 1941 by Dr. William N. Fenton of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, with the help of Chief Simeon Gibson.

'A revision and expansion of his own earlier version was dictated by Chief John Arthur Gibson in 1912 to Alexander A. Goldenweiser of the Anthropological Division, Geological Survey, Ottawa, Canada. This is still in Manuscript, untranslated, in the care of Dr. Fenton.' From Wallace 1994, vii.

Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca[4], organized into a symbolic longhouse structure with the Great Law or Kaienerekowa as its governing constitution. The longhouse was the original dwelling of the Haudenosaunee People and it was designed so it could be extended. The Tuscarora joined the confederacy during the early 18th century. The Covenant Circle wampum represents this unification of the six nations under the principles of the Kaienerekowa.

The six nations of the Haudenosaunee were united for peace and mutual protection under the Kaienerekowa, based in fundamental principle of maintaining peace. Our law provides a method of counselling and decision-making, involving ceremonies and procedures which help people build consensus.

I was able to draw on the philosophy of our law to guide the methodology I used to research the evolution of the Unity Flag and Karoniaktajeh's story. Between November 2001 and June 2003 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, first with Kanienkehaka from three Kanienkehaka communities surrounded by the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec - Akwesáhsne, Kahnawá:ke and Kanehsatà:ke, and then Mi'kmaq people in the community of Esgenoopetitj in New Brunswick.

From those who had known him, I learned that Karoniaktajeh, whose name means 'on the edge of the sky', was a self-educated man who read extensively on many different subjects, especially philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.[5] In doing so, he came to his own understanding of the way the Church and the State had collaborated to oppress our people. Karoniaktajeh spent most of his adult life helping people become aware of traditional and social elements in their lives. He used evocative images in his artwork and in his writing to encourage our people to reconnect with our Kanienkehaka identity and heritage. He was the founder and editor of many texts, initiating the *Longhouse News* and the *Warrior Society Newsletter* which inspired those who read them to act and react. His work strove to reshape our understanding of history which had become twisted through the distortion and omission of facts. He coined the term 'twistory' to describe the situation, choosing not to accommodate, but rather to

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[4] In the early 1700's, the Tuscarora nation began the long process of joining the Confederacy as the sixth nation. They went in under the wing of the Seneca who acted as their elder brother and now they sit beside the Senecas when there is a Grand Council. This is why the Confederacy is sometimes called the Six Nations Confederacy.

[5] He also read the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which many people remarked upon.

challenge all those who read his writing. He made those who saw his work take a closer look to find what already exists within themselves.

The images he created, both verbally and in his paintings, made it easy for people to see the dimensions of our struggle and to understand the ongoing importance of the Kaienerekowa. People within our community began to understand that our Kanienkehaka perspective was as valid as any other. As a strong proponent of the traditional Longhouse, he concluded that the Kaienerekowa was more than just a spiritual guide. It provided all the mechanisms needed for the Kanienkehaka to behave and live as a nation. All that was needed was for the people to assert their nationhood. One of the most evocative artistic images he created to this end is the Unity Flag, originally conceptualized in a painting sometime in the early 1970s then drawn as a flag before the *Rotiskenrakete*, or Men's Society, took the idea and put it to use. No one has really been able to say for sure when Karoniaktajeh first came up with the concept of a flag. In his research, he noticed that nations all over the world have flags and so he felt that the Indigenous peoples should have a flag as well. He may have harboured this idea for as much as ten years before he put it on canvas.

This symbol derived from European heraldic tradition has come to embody the beliefs of Indigenous peoples providing a clear illustration of Homi Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, hybridity and third space. Since the time of contact, mimicry and hybridization have worked both ways with both colonizers and the Indigenous peoples learning from each other though maintaining their parallel existences in Kanienkehaka and settler communities. According to Bhabha, mimicry on the part of the colonized is a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which appropriates the other as it visualizes their power (Bhabha 1994). As the Kanienkehaka moved into the nineteenth century, colonization forced foreign systems and beliefs upon us and a certain amount of mimicry and hybridization were necessary in order to ensure our survival. As a result, Kanienkehaka culture and identity have been preserved, ensuring our marginal presence in North America. Accordingly Kanienkehaka men went off to European wars, they established band council and tribal systems of governance on the reserves following the dictates of the colonial states, and they attempted to gain international support, first at the League of Nations, then at the United Nations. Meanwhile, many took up colonial religions and belief systems, to name just a few of the adaptive strategies used.

Bhabha's concept of hybridity is what occurs when other denied knowledges (of the colonized 'other') enter into the dominant discourse. This reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal of the other by tilting the

basis of its authority (Bhabha 1994). When aspects of the colonizer's and the colonized societies are brought, coerced, or drawn together, they may repel, mingle, or do a bit of both. What results are cultural changes that manifest themselves in literature, art, music and, taking Bhabha's concept one step further, in politics. It is a place where the production of new forms of cultural meaning occur (Graves 2003) and this is the context in which the Flag was created. As a flag it is a European construct and for it to be displayed so prominently amongst Indigenous peoples is extraordinary. Examples of Kanienkehaka musical, artistic, and literary hybrids abound as the post-colonial period of history looms on the horizon. In an attempt to shake off the metaphorical chains of colonization, Indigenous peoples are finding ways to communicate their current realities. Using various aspects of the dominant culture, we adapt them to our traditions so as to ensure our continued survival as distinct peoples. What results are various hybrids, of which one is the use of a flag to communicate the Indigenous world view. The result is a new world of writing, art, music and politics that can not be compartmentalized according to land, language, and political borders. It speaks to the wider global Indigenous community and situates the Kanienkehaka in a liminal state (Turner 1969; 1988) with regard to what we once were and what we envision ourselves to be. This is defined by Bhabha as the 'third space'.

This third space presents a place where familiar points of reference and meaning are lost. The Kanienkehaka are experiencing the push and pull that characterize this state of being. There is also a constant fear that we will die as a people because that is what many were told as youngsters - that we were 'a vanishing race'.[6] According to Bhabha, 'the non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – this third space – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences... Hybrid hyphenizations emphasize the incommensurable elements as the basis of cultural identities' (Bhabha 1994, 218) There is thus no mirror in which to look for recognizable concrete forms. This 'third space' challenges the old notion of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by an ancient past, kept alive in the national traditions of the people. The Kanienkehaka experience fits Bhabha's description of the 'third space'. The effects among the Kanienkehaka are an awakened consciousness of history, tradition, culture, community and politics and a resultant series of events such as the move to establish an Independent

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[6] Personal communication, July 2003.

North American State of Ganienkeh in the 1970s, the Oka Crisis of 1990, and the blockade of a housing development at Caledonia, to name a few. The Kanienkehaka continue to mimic the colonizing society by attempting to use things like the concepts of 'sovereignty' and 'nation'[7] to get back to what is believed to be authentic Kanienkehaka classifications and ways of living and doing things. The Flag is part of this dynamic.

Early on in my research I learned that there was more than one version of Flag. In fact there are two flags. The first is known as the 'Unity' or 'Ganienkeh Flag'. It was created in the early seventies during the assertion of sovereignty that led to the establishment of the Independent North American State of Ganienkeh. The second flag is known as the 'Kahnawá:ke Warrior Flag' or 'Mohawk Flag' which emerged during

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[7] Defining these terms are difficult because the Kanienkehaka world view is different from that of the dominant culture. The dominant language is English and so English terms are used to describe foreign concepts. As such, the Kanienkehaka ideas of sovereignty and nation stem from the principles of non-interference that is one of the oldest principles of international law. It is this principle that shapes the treaty relations that the Haudenosaunee had with other nations and is based on the Two Row Wampum Principle which is symbolized by a belt containing four rows of alternating white and black wampum: 'This belt symbolizes the agreement and conditions under which the Iroquois welcomed the white peoples to this land. You say that you are our Father and I am your son. We say, We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. This wampum belt confirms our words. These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, traveling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel' (Tehanetorens 1993, 10-11).

Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776) makes reference to this freedom encompassed in this idea of sovereignty in his *History of the Five Indian Nations* (1902). He states: 'There is not a Man in the Ministry of the Five Nations, who has gain'd his Office, otherwise than by merit; there is not the least Salary, or any Sort of Profit, annexed to any Office, to tempt the Covetous or Sordid; but, on the contrary, every unworthy Action is unavoidably attended with the Forfeiture of their Commission; for their Authority is only the Esteem of the People, and ceases the moment that Esteem is lost. Here we see the natural Origin of all Power and Authority among a free People, and whatever artificial Power of Sovereignty any Man may have acquired, by the Laws and Constitution of a Country, his real Power will be ever much greater or less, in Proportion to the Esteem People have of him' (quoted inVogel 1972, 259). Further, the terms sovereignty and nation are used with reference to indicate the inherent rights of all Indigenous peoples to survive on the land of their ancestors without oppression and persecution and the second term indicates the Kanienkehaka people as a distinct group from Canada.

another assertion of sovereignty in the late 1980's. This is the version that is the most widely known.

Karoniaktajeh's contemporaries believe he spent a long time conceptualizing his idea for the Flag though it is difficult to define the stages of its development for there is no written documentation. The only evidence of his thought processes is found in his other works and drawings. By looking at these, one can find elements that became incorporated in the Flag. One example can be seen in his depiction of *The Neverending Longhouse.*



The Neverending Longhouse (Hall, *Longhouse News*).

Significant elements in this illustration are the sunburst pattern over the door and the perpetual nature of the longhouse building. Both relate to the same elements in the Flag. The image represents the Great Law of Peace spreading out into the world. It is evident that Karoniaktajeh spent many years learning and developing his ideas in other ways that eventually manifested themselves in the Flag we know today.

The first Flag may have originated from this painting.



The Indian Flag (Horn Miller, 2003)

This drawing by Karoniaktajeh depicts the first Flag which was used in Ganienkeh.
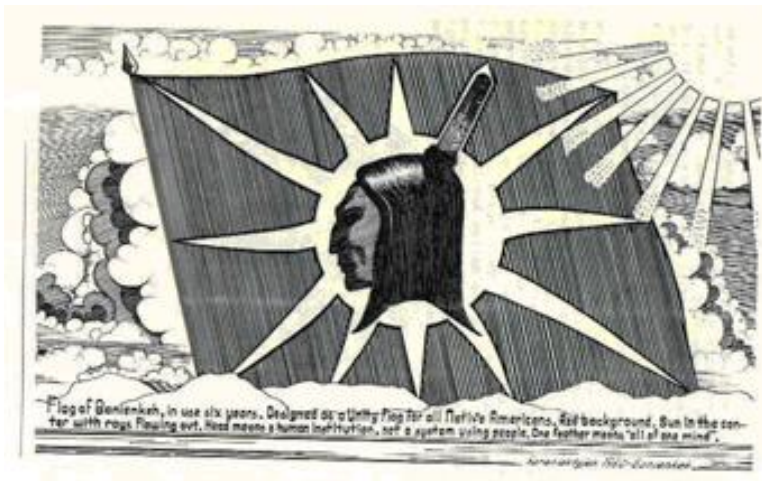


There are slight stylistic differences in the sunburst pattern but essentially they are the same. This final rendition was painted on arm bands worn by the men, on a billboard at the entrance to the Ganienkeh territory and hand-

Flag of Ganienkeh (Hall, n.d.)

sewn into a flag by non-native women. The hand-made version of the Flag was used by the community of Ganienkeh. It was not changed until the late eighties when another version was created and mass-produced. In 1988, the Kahnawake *Rotiskenrakete* Warrior Society asked Karoniaktajeh to make a flag specifically for them in response to the organization of a bridge blockade to protest a series of raids on the community's thriving cigarette industry.

Flag created for Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Warrior Society (Horn-Miller 2003)

The new Flag that Karoniaktajeh designed contained the same symbols as the original Flag. The only difference was in the face and hairstyle. The Warrior head on the Kahnawá:ke flag depicts a traditional Mohawk hairstyle, the scalp lock as seen in the picture. This one is now the one most easily identified and available for sale in flag, patch, pin, and sticker formats.

**Elements of the Flag**

The elements of the Flag itself reflect Karoniaktajeh's own interpretation and understanding of the Kaienerekowa and the Kanienkehaka relationship to the natural world. Each symbol not only serves as a reflection of particular laws or wampum but can also be traced to core symbolic elements of Haudenosaunee spirituality and daily life. Karoniaktajeh sought symbolic elements that would be relevant for all

*Onkwehonwe*[8] by using a design that was not specific to any one Indigenous culture. Thus, the four main symbolic elements of the original Flag presented so long ago in Ganienkeh, are the Indigenous face in profile, the single feather, the sunburst, and the red background.

*Profile*

The Indigenous profile serves as a reminder to the men of their path in life, their responsibilities to their clan, community and nation enacted through daily life, ceremonies and community protection. Though commonly known as 'warriors', the male role in Indigenous societies is much more comprehensive than the English term implies. *Rotiskenrakete* the word from the Mohawk language that is translated into English as 'warrior' has a meaning that might more literally be translated as 'he is carrying the burden of peace'.

*Hair*

The original Flag depicts a profile with long hair falling to the shoulders. All Indigenous nations have particular traditional hairstyles that they use. Karoniaktajeh sought a symbol that would be identifiable for all so the hair was made to fall at the shoulders. Long dark hair is common amongst Indigenous peoples. What makes the cultures different is how they style it yet, when we take our hair out of our traditional styles at the end of the day, it falls at the shoulders and we all end up looking similar. This aspect, like others included in the Flag was meant to promote a sense of common identity so all would feel able to use the Flag for their own needs, no matter what nation they were from.

      The hairstyle on the Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Warrior Flag is different. In times of war, the men of the Haudenosaunee would shave their heads, leaving a round patch at the back of the skull, referred to as a scalp lock. Its purpose may have been to taunt the enemy, teasing him into an attempt to grab and scalp the warrior or it may have made it easier for rapid travel through the trees. Long hair would be more easily snagged and be an impediment to rapid travel needed in times of war. The men would also place ornaments such as silver and feathers in this scalp lock. In preparation, hardwood ash[9] was rubbed on the bare scalp to remove

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[8] *Onkwehonwe* is the work used to describe all Indigenous peoples. Literally translated, it means 'the original people'.

[9] Hardwood ashes are also used in ceremony in where the people and buildings are rid of bad spirits. The ash is rubbed into the hair of the individuals sitting in the center of the longhouse,

stubble and make the hair take longer to grow back. In times of peace the hair was allowed to grow. The Flag introduced at Ganienkeh has long hair. It has accordingly been suggested that perhaps this was another way for the Flag's symbols to promote peace. The stylized version of the scalp lock on the Kahnawá:ke Warrior's Flag indicates, perhaps the need for resistance for it was designed to support the people in a time of tension and conflict.

*Direction of Profile*
The direction face by the profile is explained in two ways. First of all, it depends on which way the wind is blowing, thus it has no significance. It is also facing west in all the depictions of it in Karoniaktajeh's drawings and paintings. The significance of the western direction lies in the fact that it is the opposite direction from which people are removed from the Longhouse upon death and buried. Colonialism came to us from the East, so it is also facing away from colonial influences.

*Blue Eye*
In the Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Warrior Flag, the Warrior Profile has a blue eye. The meaning of this particular aspect of the Kahnawá:ke Warrior Flag did not become clear in the interviews. Three theories emerged. The first is that it was a printing error. The second version is that Karoniaktajeh had blue eyes and this was a way of putting himself into the Flag. The third version is that Karoniaktajeh, being realistic, knew that the Kanienkehaka had mixed with non-natives and therefore through successive generations had begun to look different. This takes Bhabha's concept of hybridity even further, underscoring the fact that we have become a hybrid of our former selves. There are, today, many are instances of Kanienkehaka people with red hair, blond hair, blue eyes, and fair complexions, yet they declare themselves to be and are recognized as Kanienkehaka. The traditional sense of Indigenous belonging is based on philosophy and heritage, not blood quantum. Yet our Kanienkehaka ancestors had the black hair, dark eyes and dark skin, characteristic of many Indigenous peoples. As such, it is felt that including the blue eye was in recognition of this fact, and relates to Karoniaktajeh's desire to encourage people to be realistic about their circumstances.

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which is then left in for three days. Hardwood ash is also used in the preparation of corn for consumption. The kernels are boiled in the ash and the lye works to remove the husk from the kernel. The corn turns from yellow to red in this process.

*Single Feather*
The single feather is described in Karoniaktajeh's other work as representing the concept of one mind. This incorporates the Indigenous philosophy of the unity of body, mind, and spirit into a single entity such as the person or people as a whole. Unity is a fundamental aspect of the Kaienerekowa and can be found through the cooperative efforts of diverse people who help each other and respect their differences. Unity does not mean sameness or homogenization. Onkwehonwe know that each of us is unique. Every person has some characteristic that is celebrated and we look to find what each one has brought with them that can help everybody else. A single feather denotes a kind of unity which brings about *kariwiio* or 'a good mind' and a unity of the person with all of the Indigenous peoples together. As such, the eagle is also a positive symbol for many Indigenous nations. This idea is reflected in the use of its feathers in ceremonies, regalia, and in the burning of natural plants such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar and Indian tobacco which bring our words of thanksgiving up to the Skyworld where our ancestors dwell. It is felt that the eagle has the ability to bring messages to the Skyworld because of its natural ability to soar at great heights.

*Sun Rays*
The sun's rays go out in all directions and give life to the plants, animals and humans. It is thought of as the elder brother or *rotiskenrakete kowa* and plays an important role in the ceremonial, symbolic and spiritual life of the Haudenosaunee. As one Kanienkehaka man stated:

> …he [Karoniaktajeh] found the sun played a very important part in all Onkwehonwe peoples culture in the way they looked at life, they way they looked at nature. For us we call the sun our eldest brother. Right across Onkwehonwe country no one ever had anything negative about the sun. He thought that was a positive symbol.[10]

Further, the symbol reminds the man of his responsibility as a rotiskenrakete or carrier of the burden of peace. This symbol also serves as a powerful reminder to the men that they are not merely warriors: they have powerful relationships to one another and to the natural world. This symbol also illuminates the contrast between the relationships that the men and women have with Mother Earth. The women are reminded every day of their relationship by virtue of being women with a spiritual

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[10] Personal interview, February 2002.

connection to Mother Earth, whereas, the men are reminded of their roles and responsibilities by the sun. The illuminating powers of the sun are also symbolically represented by the light it sheds on the injustices and wrongs that hinder the path or river of life heading towards true peace, power, and righteousness.

The rays of the sun in the Flag reach out in all directions. Recalling Bhabha's hybridity again, the rays in one of the early versions of the Flag followed the pattern of the crosses on the British Union Jack flag. But Indigenous symbolism prevailed and the eventual design also draws on the symbolic white roots of the Tree of Great Peace that, like the sun's rays, reach out in all directions to serve as paths for other nations or individuals to follow back to shelter under the safety of the Kaienerekowa.

*Red Background*
The meaning of the red background is not so clear. It is described as representative of redness of blood, which is a life-giving force shared by all. The 'red man' is a common descriptive term for Indigenous peoples who are seen in contrast to the yellow, white and black nations of the Far East, Europe and Africa. Ferocity and anger are often described as in 'seeing red'. Courage and valour are represented by the color red as is power, perhaps because of the color of fire and blood, which , in turn, is a metaphor for life itself. As one Seneca man explained, red is '*kahsastensera*, that power. That power that comes from within every single man, woman and child. When that is released, there is no overcoming it.'[11] Red represents the power that comes from a collective body of people all with the same intent. When the time comes, that that they must use their power, the Kaienerekowa teaches us to look inward and around us in order to find it. Power, in this sense, is a natural ability. Righteousness exists in every one of us. The red background thus serves as a reminder of the humanity, the life that the Onkwehonwe have been given and so of the responsibilities we have to our mother, the earth for sustaining that life.

**Connections**

Because of the power of the symbols chosen by Karoniaktajeh, the Flag has remained essentially the same as it was on the day he unveiled it to the community of Ganienkeh. Since that time it has spread so far, it seems almost incredible. Through careful reflection, this one man

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[11] Personal interview, February 2002.

succeeded in identifying simple yet powerful symbols that he combined in a Flag that serves as a conduit to the philosophy and culture of the Haudenosaunee and thus to the Indigenous way of thinking. The Flag created by Karoniaktajeh seems to speak to something in many people who want to move forward and take a united stand. This is not the case for most other Indigenous flags. For example, there is only local interest in the flag of the *Mi'kmawei Mawiomi* or Mi'kmaq Grand Council and a more recently proposed Mi'kmaq flag that comes from a symbol carved in rock. These flags speak to the Mi'kmaq people as a collective and they have not been used by any other Indigenous group. Their symbolic elements speak only to the Mi'kmaq peoples and their meanings are not easily referenced to the cultures of other Indigenous peoples as is the case with the Warrior version of the Unity Flag.

It is worth remembering that, even with slight modifications in the hairstyle, the Flag still holds the same underlying meaning for those who look upon it. The image of the Flag is powerful because it isn't selling seasons tickets, beer, or oil. It functions behind the scenes, providing references to traditions and culture which connect Indigenous peoples to one another and to the natural world.

Karoniaktajeh took images of Onkwehonwe from the popular culture and turned them around to make them powerful as symbols and meaningful to us all as Onkwehonwe. This image may officially belong to the Men's Society of Kahnawá:ke but it is meant for everyone to use. If someone sells a t-shirt or a pin with the image on it, so be it. If someone uses aspects of it to communicate their own message, so be it. Copyright and exclusion are the antithesis to this flag's meaning. Karoniaktajeh would be happy to see that the message of unity is spreading further, as he intended it to.

When the Warrior version of the Unity Flag first came to international prominence in the summer of 1990, during the Oka standoff at Kanehsatà:ke, it flew alongside other Indigenous flags and the symbol of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Hiawatha Belt[12] depicted in flag form.

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[12] The Hiawatha Belt is described as this: 'A broad dark belt of wampum of thirty-eight rows, having a white heart or Great Tree in the center, on either side of which are two white squares, all connected with the heart by white rows of wampum shall be the emblem of the unity of the Five Nations. The first of the squares on the left represent the Mohawk Nation and its territory. The second square on the left and the one near the heart, represents the Oneida Nation and its territory. The white heart or tree in the middle represents the Onondaga Nation and its territory, and it also means that the heart of the Five Nations is single in its loyalty to The Great Peace—that the Great Peace is lodged in

Since that time, the Flag has been sought by others who are caught in David and Goliath struggles, showing up all over the world and continuing to represent the strength that comes through resistance in unity. These concepts form the basis for various demonstrations of Indigenous sovereignty including the establishment of Ganienkeh, the Oka Crisis, Ipperwash, Gustafsen Lake, the Lobster Dispute at Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church), and the blockade of a housing development at Caledonia, Ontario. Upon cursory examination, these events, involving different people at different times and in different places, all represent unified Indigenous resistance against the Canadian state. They are all Indigenous responses to our loss of land and resources. They all involve showing our strength and a call for assistance from supporters. They are acts that reflect the messages that Karoniaktajeh wrote, drew and painted about.

Because the Flag is used in other places and by other people besides the Kanienkehaka, it is obvious that it communicates the shared meaning and relationships that Indigenous peoples have with one another and the Mother Earth. It is this shared meaning and culture of Indigenous peoples that characterizes them as a bounded entity which can be understood using Benedict Anderson's concept of 'Imagined Community'. It is imagined because 'in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1998, 6). In accord with this common understanding, Indigenous peoples move freely amongst each other regardless of the lines drawn on colonial maps. They are not tied by man-made boundaries, but rather by their relationship to the land itself.

In order to understand the unifying power of the Flag, it is worth considering why the Flag brings out such strong emotions, both positive and negative. National symbols crystallize the nation's identity by enabling the state structures to tell their citizens who they are. They dictate approaches to what is unfamiliar. As Karen A. Cerulo writes, 'National

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the heart—(meaning with Onondaga Confederate Chiefs), and that the Council Fire is to burn there at Onondaga for the Five Nations, and further, it means that the authority is given to advance the cause of peace whereby hostile nations out of the Confederacy shall cease warfare. The white square to the right of the heart represents the Cayuga Nation and its territory and the fourth and last square represents the Seneca Nation and its territory. The two lines extending out from each side of the squares of the belt, from the Mohawk and Seneca Nations, represents the Path of Peace by which other nations are welcomed to travel, to come and take shelter beneath the Great Tree of Peace or join the Iroquois Confederacy. White here shall symbolize that no evil or jealous thoughts shall creep into the minds of the leaders, the Chiefs, while in council under the Great Peace. White, in this case, is the emblem of peace, love, charity and equity and it surrounds and guards the Five Nations' (Tehanetorens 1993, 7-8).

symbols enable a unique collective "self", distinct from any other entity in the international arena. Via these symbols, political leaders inject the essence of the nation into every citizen' (Cerulo 1995, 15). In western thought, this is what comprises true sovereignty – freedom from external control. In order to be sovereign, And so, in order to feel sovereign, an external 'other' must be defined and labelled as happened through the dynamic that Edward Said defined so well.[13]

Indigenous peoples, by contrast, have a different understanding of this concept. For example, the Kanienkehaka language does not even contain a word comparable to the European concept of 'sovereignty' though a similar idea is encompassed in three words – *kahsatstenhsera*, meaning 'power', *kanikonhriio*, meaning 'a good mind', and *skennen*, meaning 'peace'. These three concepts form the foundation of the Kaienerekowa. It is what gives us our 'sovereignty', expressed by the two row wampum principle[14], which founded our early treaties with Europeans. The Mi'kmaq, did not have a word for the concept of 'sovereignty' until the Europeans arrived on this continent. There was simply no need for it. Instead, they too used words in combination to communicate similar ideas.As explained by Mi'kmaq historian Stephen Augustine, *melgigenowati* means 'the strength of our clasping hands together' and *tepluotatin* means 'we are standing in a circle holding hands until we speak with one voice'. As such, the word that is used to describe sovereignty as it is widely understood in the dominant society is *elegeowoti*, which means 'the way or method of kings'. A different term is used because it expressed the different relationship that the Mi'kmaq had with the people who came from Europe.

The Flag speaks to Kanienkehaka, Mi'kmaq and other interpretations of sovereignty because it enables people to think of

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[13] We can't go back to what we were before the Europeans arrived on our shores. We have been taken through so many experiences as a people that colors how we see the world. No longer are we purely Kanienkehaka but we are made up of our many experiences and so we define ourselves always in contrast to the other. Edward Said has described this phenomenon with regard to the view of the exile, 'the essential privilege of exile is to have, not just one set of eyes but half a dozen, each of them corresponding to the places you have been…There is always a kind of doubleness to that experience, and the more places you have been the more displacements you've gone through, as every exile does. As every situation is a new one, you start out each day anew' (Minh-ha 1994, 16). In a sense, the Kanienkehaka are in exile from our traditional homelands and way of life because of colonization. We are always on the outside looking in.

[14] See footnote 7 for a detailed explanation of the Two Row Wampum.

themselves as a unique collective: as Kanienkehaka, Mi'kmaq, Cree, or simply first nations, Indian, or Indigenous. The Flag allows all individuals to relate its meaning in terms of their own cultures. This is why the Mi'kmaq were able to use it to support their own ideas on unity and resistance. The Flag relates directly to feelings and conceptions of unity and strength that can be found in both the Kanienkehaka and Mi'kmaq cultures. This same idea is also communicated in the Mi'kmaq word *melgi-glosoagan* which means 'the strengthening of our words until only one voice is heard'.[15] In Kanienkehaka language, this is expressed as *skanikonhra* which means 'one mind'. One mind comes from the Consensual Decision Making Process. *Skanikonhra* creates the strongest consensus in the world because it draws from the strength that is found in each and every one of the people.

The Flag then, serves to remind the people of their duties as they are codified in the Haudenosaunee Constitution, the Kaienerekowa. If its laws are followed, then peace will be achieved. As Cerulo states, 'national symbols codify the subjective nature of the nation: its moods, desire, and goals – its complexion. They function as modern totems that merge the mythical, sacred substance of the nation with a specified, manifest form, one that is grounded in the everyday experience of sight, sound, or touch. By blending subject and object, national symbols move beyond simple representation of nation. In a very real sense, national symbols become the nation' (1995, 4). The Flag then has come to represent the Indigenous collective or 'Imagined Community' that exists in spite of colonially imposed nationalisms.

Despite the minor changes in the design, it is interesting to note that the different versions of the Flag essentially mean the same thing.[16] Usually, any alteration of the components of a flag will change its meaning. As Cerulo states, 'Study upon study demonstrate structure's centrality to the communication process, as it orders or organizes the various components of symbols. Thus, the syntactic combination of a symbol's components conveys a meaning that differs from that of any single component of the symbol' (1995, 37). Each symbol has no inherent meaning, rather it is the culture that injects it with meaning and that meaning can change when it is combined with other shapes or colors and becomes part of a message. In this case, this has not happened. All versions

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[15] Personal correspondence with Stephen Augustine. June 2003.

[16] Although it is important to note here that the Warrior Flag is the one most readily seen and sold.

of the Flag have retained essentially the same meaning. For the Indigenous observer, the Flag evokes a sense of goodness, pride and the fighting spirit required by those involved in various struggles across the continent. It does not speak exclusively to any one group, leaving the way open for others to join in support and allowing each individual to identify with it in their own way. This freedom inspires and invigorates similar acts of resistance elsewhere which are, in reality, struggles for survival in response to state induced genocide. It stimulates the will to live.

This feeling of linking and shared consciousness was expressed by both Kanienkehaka and Mi'kmaq in Esgenoopetitj. The Flag lends strength to the unity of our common struggles. It makes Indigenous people feel connected as they man their barricades at lonely roadsides in the middle of nowhere or sit on fishing vessels in the middle of the night. There is a simultaneous reaction from desperate peoples all over the world. This type of connection, referred to by the Mi'kmaq, has been described by Emile Durkheim, who observed that 'By uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gestures in regard to these [symbolic] objects, individuals become and feel themselves to be in unison' ( quoted in Cerulo 1995, 21).

Further to this idea, national symbols can also become a rallying center. The actions of ritual, honour, statements of purpose and justification bring the symbol to life. This is characteristic of the resistance to the United States and Canada that occurred at Ganienkeh, Oka, Burnt Church, and more recently at Caledonia. As Cerulo states, 'By merging action and symbol, a national collective creates and recreates the ideals embodied by the symbol' (1995, 21). The work of Karoniaktajeh created an awareness that fostered a resistance movement that began at Ganienkeh, was carried to Oka and eventually found its way to Burnt Church and Caledonia, among others.

Each time it is used, the Flag continues to raise awareness to the common issues that Indigenous peoples continue to face. As people look upon it, it evokes the memory of where else it has been used before, the strategies, and the outcomes of those situations. When the people of Esgenoopetitj looked at the Flag, it reminded them of Oka, which in turn confirmed the rightness of their actions in their own struggle, and made them feel not so alone. The Flag reminds us that we know that when we stand up for the land and what's on it, it is always the right thing to do.

The Oka Crisis and the Lobster Dispute were both derived from the ideals of unity, resistance, and survival embodied in the Flag because the people were reminded of their natural instructions. Both groups drew on

the spiritual roots that Indigenous peoples have connecting us to one another and to the land. These can never be destroyed unless we are all killed off and forgotten. The roots lie in the common responsibilities and power that we have as Indigenous people, and therefore we must act to defend the land and the resources for future generations. As Michael Walzer states, the nation 'is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived... these images [national symbols] provide a starting point for political thinking' (quoted in Cerulo 1995, 4-5). The Flag, therefore, serves as a symbol of unity for all Indigenous peoples involved in a common struggle for survival. The symbols in it provoke us in ways that speak to particular aspects of our Indigenous cultures but on a more fundamental level it also connects us all. It is a tangible reminder of our common relationship to the natural world.

When I asked the Mi'kmaq at Esgenoopetitj what the Flag meant, the message they related to me was strikingly similar to the message of unity and resistance that the Kanienkehaka had expressed, all without having known about Karoniaktajeh or the Flag's genesis and meaning in the Kanienkehaka communities. Regardless of cultural, territorial, or linguistic differences, the Flag has the ability to speak to different peoples.

As we face common struggles, we unify with a common bond that is rooted in our shared tie to the land. This unification is similar to the way nations lump themselves with their geographic neighbours. What I am proposing with regards to the Flag is that the Indigenous people that use it are identifying themselves with their philosophical neighbours who share the philosophy concerning our tie to the land and our responsibility to maintain our resources and opposition to colonialism. This sense may even be seen in the use of the Flag by non-natives protesting homelessness in places like Toronto.

The Flag's simple design consisting of four elements speaks to fundamental principles found in all Indigenous cultures. Referring again to Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community' this common relationship is what inspires use of the Flag in various circumstances. It is the similarities of world view and relationship to the earth that unite the members of this larger group rather than the definition of physical space represented by territorial boundaries. The Flag represents a meeting place for the minds of the people, a place where they assemble, merge and form a collective entity that overrides the reality of any one individual. It encompasses all areas of social life. The Flag's simple design is easily understood and communicates its message powerfully.

The struggle that took place during the summer of 1990 put Indigenous resistance and human rights issues on the Canadian and international stage. The symbols that were used to communicate Kanienkehaka identity, those who were involved, and the actions they took to protect land in Kanehsatà:ke have come to symbolize Indigenous resistance in North America. Many, when first asked what the Flag meant, would answer with the word 'Oka'. An awareness and awakening seems to have been communicated to many who viewed the Oka Crisis on television. As a distinctive symbol with vibrant colors, the Flag is hard to miss. Each time a situation occurs that involves Indigenous peoples the Flag is usually present. If you have been in a similar situation, when you see it flying in these contexts you understand what is happening or if you are currently involved in one, you don't feel so alone. The Flag acts as a trigger for the mind. Where the Flag is flying, Indigenous people who view it can relate to the issue more clearly and see their responsibilities as Onkwehonwe. In essence, it serves as a sort of wake-up call which then provokes action.

The responsibilities of the people at Oka were to protect the land for the future, for the seven generations to come. It is this same sense of responsibility to the culture, community, and future generations that is communicated by the Flag. The Oka Crisis and the Lobster Dispute, did just that. Both crisis monopolized the collective, bringing together all factions of the Kanienkehaka and Mi'kmaq communities in a common struggle. The Flag united the people in opposition to a common foe: the Canadian state.

The meaning of the Flag for Indigenous peoples comes down to the simple idea of connections. The Flag, as Karoniaktajeh intended, is a way for us to place ourselves and then talk across cultures. This dialogue has been going on for centuries. The Flag is a modern representation of this phenomenon. The ideas encompassed in the Kaienerekowa exist in many other Indigenous cultures world-wide. Because of this, we all feel a great sense of connection to one another that surpasses the different languages we speak, the diverse songs dances, and ceremonies we perform, or the assorted styles of clothing we wear or foods we eat.

Indigenous peoples have a different kind of spirituality and way of life. It is one that comes from our connection to our conception and understanding of the natural world, the natural working of cause and effect in our universe, and of our responsibilities to it. There is a highly developed sensitivity to each other's feelings, as well as a high degree of non-verbal communication, which is felt to be a survival mechanism. The belief that all elements of the universe are equally valuable and inextricably related is the centre of the Indigenous worldview and results

in a very different way of creating knowledge and relating to the world and to other human beings. It concerns the ways in which natural phenomena evoke an emotional response that goes beyond understanding. It is more than what we see, but what we feel. This sensitivity is at the root of our lives and influences everything we do.

In the description of the four main elements of the Flag created by Karoniaktajeh, we saw how they are meant to relate to the culture and ceremonies of the Indigenous peoples. These connections that Indigenous peoples speak of, were well established when the European peoples came to these shores. It was with this in mind that the original peoples attempted to establish relationships with the newcomers. As such, they did not succeed. As a consequence, this relationship with the land has been eroded and it has become a struggle to maintain this tie to the land that is now scarred and damaged.

Our cultural traditions are not just a matter of different names, stories and social events. They are tools for learning about and maintaining our distinct Indigenous identities. They remind us of where our responsibilities lie as Onkwehonwe by enabling us to act out our relationship with the earth as our ancestors had done. For many Indigenous peoples, they see that their responsibilities lie in providing a future for the next seven generations of our children – and yours - by protecting the earth.  That is why events like the Oka Crisis and the Lobster Dispute at Esgenoopetitj occur.

In conclusion, there are many more similarities and connections that can be made, but it is unnecessary to do so here. One only has to take a closer look at the world around them, at the people they meet, even in a museum setting, in my case, to understand the connectedness of Indigenous peoples. It goes beyond the colour of our skin, eyes and hair, the material things we share, the knowledge about the plants and animals that we passed to one another. This connection goes deep into Mother Earth, its white roots bring spiritual nourishment to us as we face our daily struggles with such things as social problems, land theft, racism, and cultural survival. It unites us all in our cultures, ideas, ceremonies, world views, and our attempts to alleviate ourselves of the affects of colonialism. It is a connection that will manage to survive because we see its expression in the past and present through things such as the Flag created by Karoniaktajeh.  This is but one version. It is meant to inspire awareness and, perhaps, to give others the impetus they need to look deeper within their communities to see what richness is hidden beneath the surface that will tell a remarkable story like that of the Flag.

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It has been over seventeen years since Karoniaktajeh passed away. As I look around my community of Kahnawá:ke, I still see his pervasive influence on my people. At each summer's Echoes of a Proud Nation Powwow, the Mohawk Warrior Flag can be seen everywhere. The powwow is an event that not only brings many nations together to share in the celebration of Indigenous cultures through the dances and songs, but also in the foods. It is a time to renew old friendships and serves as a gathering of the wider family of our common humanity.

Powwows always run the risk of being kitschy with plastic dreamcatchers or fluorescent coloured feathers and 'Made in China' stickers.[17] But it has its redeeming qualities such as the traditional songs, dances, regalia and use of a wide variety of Indigenous languages. At the most recent powwow, the Mohawk Warrior Flag could be seen flying over a fish and chip stand operated by local people, printed on various items at the Ganienkeh booth, on a man's traditional dance regalia, on car windows and license plates in the parking lot, painted on houses throughout Kahnawá:ke, and for sale on t-shirts, flags, and key chains. Yet, it was not carried in with the official color guard of the Grand Entry Parade that opens the powwow grounds each day.

Irony lies in the fact that the most visible symbol used by Indigenous peoples in the last one hundred years was absent from any official aspect of a powwow originally meant, in part, to commemorate the events and actions of the Kanienkehaka people during the Oka Crisis. This aspect of this annual event has been lost and it has become a wider celebration of Indigenous cultures. This is okay. Whether people realize it or not, the little stickers they put on the back of their car windows, or the fake tattoos they pay a dollar for at the annual powwow each summer are a pervasive symbol of who we are as Onkwehonwe. Its unofficial acceptance shows me that the Flag still belongs to the people, as Karoniaktajeh intended.

On a surface level, the Flag is understood as a symbol of unity and resistance. On another level, it communicates a message that transcends the material world and evokes long developed beliefs and feelings that directly relate to the natural world. Karoniaktajeh's message will last because they are the same 'words' that have been spoken for centuries that communicate to what is inside us. Our actions speak louder than our words. Indigenous peoples everywhere understand that message in the

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[17] This comment is not meant to belittle China's struggle with colonialism, which, in itself, is another vast topic.

Flag because it speaks to their own past, present and future. Its use in times of crisis, such as the Lobster Dispute at Esgenoopetitj are pervasive examples of the power of the Flag, in its ability to evoke emotion, whether a feeling of pride and unity in an Indigenous person or fear and anger in an east coast fisherman.

Karoniaktajeh was wise to see the need for such a symbol and took a chance. Who dares to make a flag? Nations make flags. The Flag speaks of him and of us as Onkwehonwe. It crosses those linguistic, cultural, and social boundaries and says 'we are here'. I wonder if Karoniaktajeh realized that by running this flag up a pole, he had also replaced an old white one that had been there for years. One that had been there so long we thought it was part of the clouds.

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