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Promoting Social Justice, Human Rights, and Peace

THE GLOBAL BANQUET: POLITICS OF FOOD, Parts I & II

Maryknoll World Productions (2001: 50 minutes)

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GLOBALIZATION AND HUNGER, Part I: "Get Big or Get Out."

FRED KIRSCHENMAN: This is a prairie ecology here, a mixed grass prairie. I have to go for a walk on this prairie every few days because it really restores me; the grasses, the winds, the wetlands. All that is here as a gift from the soil. I think there's an important -- and I'm going to use the word ministry here - there's an important ministry to farmers. Because the message they get is that it's their fault if they're not succeeding. So, picture this: There's a middle-aged farmer, probably in his mid-forties. The farm he is on now has been in that family for maybe three or four generations. And now it's his turn, and his responsibility. And he has the mandate to pass that farm onto the next generation.

But he's in this difficult place where the market does not reward him for what he's doing, and he, for the first time in the long generation of that family has to face the fact that he's the one that's going to lose it. And there isn't anybody that's saying, "Wait a minute, you know it really isn't your fault." If farmers at that point decide that they will quit and sell to pay off their debts, very often they find that their assets, while it may cover their debts, will not pay the income tax bill they have on the assets which they sell. And that's where many of the suicides come, when farmers recognize that not only can't they continue farming, they can't even quit. And particularly if they have life insurance, they figure that this is the way that their families, at least, can cope and can go on. And so the suicide rates have been going up dramatically over the last decade.

THOMAS FORRSTER: We have seen a steady erosion of the farms. Every year people are told how many thousands of farms have been pushed out. But it's not because of a natural order of competition. This is a very direct consequence of a

deliberate policy geared toward supporting what was called in the seventies a "get big or get out" policy. The irony is as small farmers are replaced by larger farms, and more quantities of food are grown, in fact, hunger increases, especially among those who were formerly food producers. And in many countries these food producers go to cities and become additions to that country's population of hungry people.

ANURADHA MITTAL: You see big cities like Delhi and Bombay full of people who are migrating from the countryside because we cannot feed ourselves. Almost 2 million small family farmers are being driven off the land. Many of us have heard about Indian farmers drinking pesticides in sheer frustration and committing suicide because they cannot feed their families. So you have a model of a country which was making progress since independence, trying to provide the basic human right to food, to a decent standard of living to all its people, and that model has been shattered by this free market prescription which has come from countries like the United States.

PETER ROSSET: Countries are forced to open their borders to an influx of products from abroad. As long as we have that kind of free trade policy, it's very difficult to imagine a way to end hunger. What free trade does is it allows large companies to dominate the markets of local countries, to undercut local farmers, and to destroy the ability of countries to feed themselves in the future. And that really perpetuates and deepens the structures that promote hunger. I think if we're going to seriously deal with hunger, we have to step back from extremist free trade policies.

We have to say countries need the ability to design policies that are in accordance with their own needs. And if that means protecting basic food production, so be it. I'd like people to imagine a global food system comprised of various companies at each stage, all the way from the growing of the food and the providing of the seed, the fertilizer, the tractor, shipping, processing, packaging, wholesaling, retailing to the supermarkets where we buy the food here in the United States. All these pieces of the global food system have, in the last 20 or 30 years, undergone a huge concentration through mergers, leveraged buyouts. Fewer and fewer companies have come to control each step along that food system. For example, Philip Morris, a tobacco company, after acquiring Nabisco, is very likely now the world's second largest food corporation after Nestle.

GEOFFREY BIBLE (CEO, PHILIP MORRIS): The combination of Kraft Nabisco creates a real global leader in the food industry. Scale is a real advantage in this industry.

GEOFFREY BIBLE: It hasn't made an enormous difference; food was probably 31% of our revenue. It's now going to be 35% of our revenue. Beer is about 4%, tobacco, 60%. But if you look at the international tobacco opportunities, we have about 16 or 17

market share points of the world. So there still remains considerable opportunity out there for us and we plan to take advantage of it.

PETER ROSSET: We have companies like Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill that together control almost the entire grain trade in the world and they unilaterally set the price and they set that price low. Large corporate farms stay in business because they're getting these huge subsidy payments. Small family farmers can't stay in business because they don't have enough acres to get a significant subsidy payment; the subsidy is paid per acre, and because the prices are below the cost of production, they can't survive on what they sell, either. So U.S. grain goes abroad, and it's placed in a local economy - the Philippines, Mexico, whatever - at prices that are so low that local farmers can't compete. We have small corn farmers in Mexico. They have provided the basic staple food for the entire population of the Mexican nation. They cannot do that if cheap American corn is dumped into the Mexican economy through NAFTA. And so, they're driven off the land. In desperation they move to cities, they may move to the United States, or they may even rise up in arms, thus we have the Zapatista Rebellion in southern Mexico in Chiapas.

NETTIE WEIBE: You have this tremendous struggle in many parts of the world for access to land, access to productive land, and that's a particular struggle for women who want access to land - not so they can produce crops for export and hard cash, but so they can grow food to feed themselves and their children. The corporate interests in the world can't see any profitability there. And they're right. This is about feeding people. It matters whether you're on a rocky hillside or in a fertile valley whether you can grow enough food to feed your children and your village, and bring food to the marketplace. You have places like Honduras, for example, where I was a visitor among farmers who were struggling under very adverse conditions there on the hillside to grow beans for their use.

HONDURAN: That's right. Land isn't distributed fairly because land is controlled by the rich. We poor people don't have the right to land that's good for growing crops. We're cornered on the hillsides. It seems like a cow is worth more than a woman, you know? A stud bull is worth more than a man and a calf more than a child because they're eating from good grazing land, on good level ground, while the poor - the man with his wife and children, we're on the hillsides.

THOMAS FORRESTER: The fresh fruit and vegetables that most of us eat are picked by the hands of farmers who have been displaced from their own land and are now very low wage farm workers.

HONDURAN: You feel very unhappy, like you've been abandoned, you know? That there's no one for you to turn to, that everything comes hard for you, and you don't

think there's anything you can do because, first of all, when we don't have any money, we can't even go to the grocery store.

HONDURAN: In Honduras, you're earning \$2 a day, working from 7:00am to four in the afternoon. And if you have eight children and two adults, it can be hard to survive. So all the young people do is look toward the United States. These are people who swell the ranks of hungry, and they were owner-operators of their own small farms which they cannot farm because of the drop in food prices as a result of what's come to be known as globalization.

DAVID KORTEN: There are really two very different dimensions to globalization, one of which most of us consider to be very positive, and the other which is sparking the protests and the reaction. The positive part is the opening up of global communications and exchange between people, recognizing that we live on one planet, earth, that we must share and that we must learn to protect the natural systems of the earth. The other dimension of globalization is how it leads to a loss of democracy as we open up the borders of nations to the expansion of corporations, creating a system of economic rule and economic institutions that are controlling our governments and that are solely engaged in the creation of profits for their shareholders.

NETTIE WIEBE: The global market is organized in such a way that only the big players survive. And the biggest players who control the markets set the price for the raw product low enough that you can't make a living on your own small place. A low price is always an argument that people want to use to say, "Well, we can feed more people if food is cheaper. More people will eat." Ironically, that's not how it seems to be working. There's lots of data by now from around the world that a plentiful cheap supply of food is in fact, inaccessible to people unless they, too, are part of a money economy. It doesn't matter to you that bread is only a dollar a loaf if you're not making any dollars during the day.

DAVID KORTEN: When a large corporation like Archer Daniels Midland comes forward and says, "We want to feed the world," the statement is absurd on the face because these corporations are only in the business of feeding people who have the money to buy their food. You get the roughly 1.2 billion people in the world who have an income of less than a dollar a day, these people are not on the screen of the Monsanto's and the Archer Daniels Midlands. They can't make any money selling food to them.

PETER ROSSETT: A very powerful myth, that for many years American farmers believed, was that they were feeding the world, and that all the suffering of low prices and an impossible economic environment that the family farmer went through was justified because at least we were feeding the world. Well it turns out that providing

our food cheaply to other countries destroys people's ability to feed themselves. It destroys nations' ability to feed themselves.

KATHY LAWRENCE: I think that many people in many different debates have sort of accepted this suggestion that corporate agriculture is necessary to feed the world, that there is a scarcity out there and the only answer is bigger and bigger agriculture. First of all, scarcity is not the problem. There's enough food in the world right now to feed every woman, man, and child three to four thousand calories a day; that's enough to get nice and fat on. Hunger is a symptom of poverty and inequality, and that's what we're going to have to get to the root of if we're going to solve hunger. What we need to get back to is people either being able to feed themselves because they have access to land to do so or people being able to feed themselves because they have sustainable livelihoods that allow them to purchase food for themselves and their families. That's the end to hunger; not more food production, particularly not the kind of food production we have now that's focused on maximum yield per acre, maximum short term profit for a very small number of corporations.

PETER ROSSETT: Sometimes we're confused by the concept of yield. You may say that a thousand-acre soybean farm produces more soybeans per acre than a one-acre farm does. What that forgets is the soybean farm is producing only soybeans. The one-acre farm, on that one-acre, is producing soybeans, corn, animal products, fruits, vegetables, tree crops. And when you add all that together, you see the much greater productivity of the small farm. We've done very careful research at Food First for every country in the world for which data is available. Comparing different farm sizes we find that contrary to the myth, in fact, smaller farms the world over, including the United States, produce anywhere from 200 to a 1000 per cent more total food per unit area than large mechanized industrial farms.

Not only that. The kind of technology that the smaller farmer uses is much more sustainable. Small farmers conserve trees and the agricultural landscape. They do more soil conservation practices than large farmers. They're capable of using methods like organic and other kinds of alternative methods that don't contaminate the soil much more so than large farms are. Essentially, what we're doing is we're taking the most efficient, the most productive, the most sustainable kind of farmers, the family farmer, and we're driving them out of business. And the most inefficient, unproductive and environmentally destructive, socially destructive kind of farmer, the large corporate farmers, they're staying in business because the larger they get, the more subsidies they get.

FRED KIRSCHENMAN: If you are one of these large industrial farms, you will not be in a position to pay very much attention to how the land is cared for. The sole objective is going to be to produce as much as possible, and if that means that the land is going to be destroyed in 10 or 15 years, it's not going to be of much concern because

the immediate goal is short term profit, not long term survivability. My father, on this farm - his whole life was devoted to making sure this farm was in good condition when it was passed on to me. I mean that was his passion. He never cared about money. He often said I want to make enough money to keep the farm operating, but beyond that it's not a concern to me. So that's a very different mindset about economics from the industrial corporate model.

If you are going to farm in a way that takes care of the land, you have to be close enough to the land to know how to take care of it. I learned how to farm here. I know this land. I know every square inch of it. I know what needs to be done to take care of it. I couldn't do it if it were a fifty thousand acre farm because I couldn't be close enough to that much land to do it well. Farmers used to regard the soil almost as a sacred thing because they knew that's where their food came from, and so they cared for it and had a relationship with it. We were lovers of the soil. Soil is a living thing; it's a living being. Soil scientists tell us that there are over two billion species of micro-organisms in a spoonful of soil.

HENNING SEHMSDORF: You can't really see it with the naked eye, but this is filled with micro-organic, microscopic, organisms. And it smells good. And this is the only fertilizer we use on the farm. And of course it was produced by these animals. I have a farm that produces pork, lamb, chicken, eggs, vegetables, fruit, fish, beef, all the feeds that we feed our animals, all the fertilizers that we use in our vegetable production or in taking care of our pastures. So we try to be as self-sufficient as we possibly can. I absolutely love this place. And I love this work. And I love these animals. And I love these plants. And I love to get up in the morning and work 10 hours a day.

ELIZABETH SIMPSON: Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by how much there is to do, but on the other hand the rewards of living here are just marvelous. All the little life coming up. We have a lamb, Heidi, who should have died when she was born. She fit into Henning's hand. And we started feeding her round the clock, every three hours. So at 4:00am in the morning, I'm out in the kitchen in that leather chair holding this tiny lamb, feeding her, and then the two of us would fall asleep out there.

HENNING SEHMSDORF: This is Heidi, this is the one lamb the shepherd goes out to find.

ELIZABETH SIMPSON: And life here is full of things like that all the time with the animals. And growing plants is also marvelous. I went out today and the peas are coming up. It's so exciting. And it's enormously satisfying to feed our customers.

HENNING SEHMSDORF: And we sell the produce through a CSA - community supported agriculture at a very low price.

ELIZABETH SIMPSON: People pay an up front amount at the beginning of the season. And then every week, all summer long, and all winter long too, we supply them with a week's worth of vegetables.

HENNING SEHMSDORF: We feed about 25 people out of that garden, and the bed space is only 2,500 square feet.

NETTIE WEIBE: As someone who has never myself been hungry, I'm completely committed to the view that those who are well fed need to think long and hard about how hunger is actually created, and then how we solve it. And it seems to me, the way we've tried to solve it . . . the tools we've reached for have been the tools of technology and of trade and control over nature and control over others. What we need to do is to revalue food and food production, and we have to stop this idea that what nature gives us is for free and hence deserves a low commodity price. We have to start thinking that what nature gives us is the most precious and is, in fact, the key to our sustainable continued existence in the world.

FRED KIRSCHENMAN: If we're really interested in keeping the world fed, we have to start looking at how people can get access to the resources to produce food for themselves, and how we can create a social system/and an economic system that will enable people to have access to that. And that probably in the long term means that those of us in the developed world are going to have to consume less because we're having such an enormous impact on the planet in terms of the planet's capacity to continue to produce in the future, that that could, in fact, be the limiting factor.

GLOBALIZATION AND HUNGER, Part II: Winners and Losers

NETTIE WEIBE: When we were in Seattle for the WTO, there was a tremendous amount of upset around the food system, and the question that everybody has to face now is who is going to control it? Are we going to put the food we eat in the hands of millions and millions of small producers who for thousands of years looked after the land and grew food? Or are we going to be content to watch it being concentrated and controlled by fewer and fewer corporate players who are further and further away from the land, completely uninterested for the most part, if you really look at it, in feeding the world.

KATHY LAWRENCE: It's no mistake that our food system has gone towards ever larger farms, and fewer and fewer farmers on the land. It's not an accident and it's not

inevitable. It's the direct result of about four decades of very deliberate government policies and investment.

I would also say that it's not just food production alone that's driving small farmers off the land in the United States, off their land in the developing countries. It's also food consumption. The food, especially that we as Americans eat, has a tremendous impact on the world environment, and on the employment of people, millions of people throughout the world.

When we walk into a grocery store and buy something, we don't think about who produced that, what kinds of working conditions they're subjected to, whether or not they were driven off their land and are now tenant farmers. We don't think about that and I think we need to. We need to understand that our meat consumption is driving the devastation of the rainforest and putting farmers out of business. The flip side of that is that our food choices can absolutely support a sustainable system that's good for everybody, that's good for the planet, that's good for local farmers, that's good for the economy.

NETTIE WEIBE: I think it would surprise a lot of North Americans to find out that about 65% of the food that they eat has some ingredients that have been genetically modified; GMO products. I think a lot of North Americans are unaware of that. So, that's one thing that you might want to know because it's real intimate. I mean, it's going to be right inside you, literally.

For consumers, you're being told that you will have better food in the long term; for example, the fish gene introduced into the tomato supposed to give the tomato a longer shelf life. What is it about the tomato that lasts such a long time, with the fish gene in it that is so wonderful? And it's this, the possibility of controlling foodstuffs and moving them for profitability into more and more places. I mean the long lasting shelf life is only of interest to you if you've got a long way to take that tomato. If I'm going into my garden and I see a ripe tomato and I pick it and bring it into the house to serve, I couldn't care less whether it's got a long shelf life or not. It's everything to do with profitability for corporations and very little to do with farmer profitability, with consumer well being, and it has nothing to do with environmental care.

What we have done with genetically modified organisms is such a fundamental change that it's ludicrous to think that we have any real ideas of what the consequences will be. The risks are enormous. In terms of the food you eat, is it as safe as other foods? We don't know. The corporate players that are doing the propaganda around this are very quick to say, "Look, it's biotechnology. We have done biotechnology forever. Why are you worried?"

PETER ROSSET: When we talk about biotechnology, the part of it that's controversial is genetic engineering; no one's concerned about fermentation to produce yogurt, or beer, or a number of other things that might fall under the general term biotechnology. What's controversial is taking genes from one species and putting them into another where they would never be found in nature. These effects could be very environmentally dangerous. Imagine an insecticide gene moving out into wild weed populations and wild habitats, and beginning to affect the food chain by killing enormous numbers of wild insects that are not pests of crops but which are the basic food for other animals or for birds. We have no idea what the ecological consequences might be. By the same token, there are enormous unknown health risks. You put a new gene into a new genetic background. Yes, it may do one thing that you want, but it will also be interacting in unknown ways with other genes and other metabolic pathways, and therefore may cause new products to be produced inside the cell. Those new products could be an allergen, it could be a toxin, it could be a carcinogen. There may not be a problem. But we don't really know if it's not tested. And unfortunately, the Food and Drug Administration has required no mandatory testing for any genetically altered foods.

DR. JANE RISSLER: We believe that the information released today that the Taco Bell taco shells contain a kind of genetically engineered corn that has not been approved for human consumption raises disturbing questions about the adequacy of the U.S. regulatory system for genetically engineered food. Allergens may cause reactions ranging from skin rashes, to respiratory problems, to anaphylactic shock, to death.

KATHY LAWRENCE: There is a 500 million dollar media effort on the part of the biotech companies to really enhance the profile of biotech. And I think, as with any technology, anywhere, the crucial issues are who makes the decisions? And who's benefiting at who's expense? And so much of what's going on in biotech is being done at the expense of indigenous people all over the world.

PETER ROSSETT: For millennia farmers in the third world saved the seed from the best plants from the previous year to use the next year and so over generations, centuries, millennia, today's different crop species were developed by small farmers who chose the best characteristics for generation after generation.

CHIEF NANA OWUSU BOAKYE II: This cocoa my uncle planted. I planted the small ones and married them together. This one is very, very sweet.

PETER ROSSET: That's a lot of work and a lot of investment that peasant communities around the world have put into today's food supply. It wasn't until a few years ago when the US Supreme Court ruled that life could be patented that a new situation arose which many people call biopiracy. That opened the door for giant biotechnology companies to take these different seed lines developed by farming

communities over millennia and patent them. And say, basically, "From now on, if anybody uses this variety they have to pay us for it because it's become our private property." This is called intellectual property rights by companies who say it's their right to be able to do this because they put intellectual effort into identifying and saying what the gene sequence is. But farming communities in the third world say, "This is biological piracy. Our ancestors developed this and nobody has been compensated for it."

DR. TETTEH HORMEKU: It's an attempt to give to big transnational corporations the legal right to appropriate knowledge systems that have been produced by traditional communities over generations and generations, and own those knowledge systems and prevent anybody else from using it.

KWAME PIANIUM: You cannot patent life. You cannot patent the West African cocoa flavor. And if you go ahead and patent the West African cocoa aroma, and it leads to the a decimation of the livelihood of many people, then we cannot be talking about the west being a partner in poverty alleviation in developing countries. There will be another war. Not a war for decolonization, but a war to free ourselves from their intellectual and scientific dominance.

DAVID KORTEN: If you talk with people who are working directly with the poor, you hear story after story of how much harder life is becoming, how much harder to get access to food, to find a job that pays a living wage. There's lots of public relations from corporations, massive advertising, telling us about how their concern is with the environment, with creating jobs, with creating prosperity for all people. But you look behind that, you read the financial pages or you hear what corporate CEO's talk about in their own forums, and what they're talking about is that our fiduciary responsibility is to our shareholders, and it is to maximize their short-term returns. They can be fired by shareholders if they're not really focused on the immediate short-term bottom line, getting the stock price up.

Now, when you look at the participation in stock ownership, we get the message that 'well, when the share prices go up, everybody benefits.' But if you look at it globally, I think it's very reasonable to estimate that probably no more than 1% of the world's population has any kind of consequential ownership of shares. Which means these corporations that control so much of the economy, their legal responsibility is to capture as much of the wealth as possible out of the global economy, and shift it over to bank accounts and the stock portfolios of this 1% of the population. We've created a corporate dominated economic system which says: Where can we find the cheapest labor to exploit? Where can we find forests that we can cut down? Where are the last remaining fish that we can send our trawlers out to harvest? The corporate system, being attuned only to those financial indicators is simply not attuned to the living health of the planet. In fact it's mining the living wealth of the planet in order to turn it

into money, so that the very rich can compete for a higher ranking in the Forbes list of The World's Richest People.

NETTIE WEIBE: And that's what global trade is really about; who gets to use whose resources from all around the world. You see the decimation that kind of agenda creates for the people and the cultures. And that's another part of our inter-relatedness that we just ignore. We ignore what kinds of cultural losses we're suffering. We're not just suffering losses in terms of soil degradation, in terms of people from the land, in terms of water quality. We're suffering a very acute cultural loss. As we move to monocultures, -- I'm not talking just wheat fields now. I'm talking about monocultures in terms of urban global MacDonal culture. As we move towards that, in spades, we lose the thousands, the millions of cultural nuances and the diversity which I think in the end is absolutely necessary for our survival as a civilized people.

I'm part of an organization here in Canada, the National Farmer's Union, which is part of a global peasant movement, the Via Campesina, so I have the privilege of sitting around the table with peasant leadership from many places in the world where the majority of the people are farming people. And everywhere the story is the same. We're no longer supposed to focus on food to feed ourselves and the people around us. We're supposed to grow commodities for international trade.

So, I'm in Honduras working with some farmers and the advice to them is, you have to stop growing beans and start growing chili peppers because that has an international market. It's a cash crop, that's how you get ahead. And one of the peasant leaders said, "But what will my children eat? I can't feed my children chili peppers. We have to have beans."

And sitting there as a Canadian farmer, I'm saying to myself: "Ah, that's us. we're bigger, we grow food for an export market, we're highly industrialized," and you know what else I need to tell these people: "We can't make a living doing this. We're the success story on this treadmill, and we can't make a living."

ANURADHA MITTAL: The state of Punjab, which is a fertile state, the most fertile state in India, called the granary of India, produces wheat, but most of it is used for feeding the cats and dogs of Europe. The state of Haryana produces tulips instead of feeding its own people. There's also cash crops such as sugar cane, such as cotton which basically are draining the ground water, and these are the states which are facing drought every year. At the same time when people do not have access to drinking water, Coca-Cola is buying up local wells in the state of Maharashtra and Gujarat. So, basically everything that is sacred to life, whether it's food, whether it's water, is being commodified and when you meet people in the street who are feeling the day-to-day frustration, they'll tell you what's going wrong. They know where these prescriptions

are coming from. They know they're coming from the World Bank, the IMF, from this body called the World Trade Organization.

DAVID KORTEN: It's very hard to find any actions taken by the World Trade Organization that actually regulate trade. What they're actually regulating are governments, prohibiting governments from putting any restrictions on trade that might interfere with the freedom of movement of some global corporation, working from the premise that any corporation, simply by its existence, and by the fact that it controls enormous wealth, has an inalienable right to engage in business in any country, to access whatever natural resources it finds profitable to access and to sell whatever products it finds useful, no matter what the consequences may be for health or for the environment.

PETER ROSSET: I hold the corporate system culpable. I wouldn't want to say that I hold the individuals culpable, rather it's a kind of an economic and legal system that has allowed corporations to get too large, and to have each sector of the economy dominated by only one, two or three - it invites collusion. It just invites corruption of politicians. It leads to good people doing bad things.

Perhaps we see the most scary version of that in factory farming of animals. Farmers who want to produce chickens, or who want to produce hogs, today can pretty much only do it if they sign an exclusive contract with one of three or four giant companies. For example, Perdue in poultry or Con Agra or one of its subsidiaries in hogs. That contract requires that they construct, at their own expense, factory-like facilities where the animals are basically stacked on top of each other. When you have animals out on a pasture, a disease doesn't pass very easily from one to the other. When you have them in a high population density, highly stressed, on top of each other, diseases race through the factory facility. The farmer has to continually pump the animals up with antibiotics. This creates a perfect environment to create diseases resistant to antibiotics.

NETTIE WIEBE: They're raised in conditions which tell us only one thing and that is that we don't view them as part of creation. We view them strictly as objects for use and control, propagation.

PETER ROSSETT: So, many times in the past, either out of good intentions, or sometimes out of bad intentions, we have exported ways of doing things to the third world that have ended up making things worse. Whether we're talking about industrial agriculture destroying the environment, driving peasants off the land, whether we're talking about arms we've sent to the third world - I think if there's one thing we've proven, it is that we do not know best about what's good for other people.

Many of the problems in the third world originate with institutions based right here in America. What we should do as Americans is make companies based in our country

accountable; make our government serve the interests of the majority, and not the interests of a tiny group of corporations. We really don't know best and we have to start realizing that there are strong movements in third world countries.

DAVID KORTEN: What is very exciting is the extent to which you're seeing solidarity developing among grassroots groups across the world. This is what many of us call the globalization of civil society, which is a very positive side of globalization. This is about people waking up, discovering their own energy, the sources of their power, the possibilities to act cooperatively in solidarity across national boundaries around the idea that ultimately all people in the world share the same interest in creating a society that works in balance with the planet, and a society in which we live in peace with one another. So what we have then are these two competing forces: One a globalization from below, based on people, their values, their connection to their own inner spiritual core, in competition with this force of a global financial system; global corporations coming down from above to suck the resources, to suck the life of the community and turn it into money. People always ask me, do you think we'll work our way out of this? I avoid making any predictions because I don't think it's a matter of prediction; I think it's a matter of choice.

ANURADHA MITTAL: We have seen the farmers movement in India when almost half a million farmers marched on the streets of Delhi to demand justice, to say no to the agricultural clauses in the World Trade Organization. But they are today celebrating the fact that the youth and farmers and the civil society in the United States are marching on the streets too, so that is the kind of linking up that we were waiting for.

PETER ROSSET: A few years ago, people would have said it's not possible to buck the trend towards free trade. But since the protests around the WTO in Seattle, I think a lot of people are revising that opinion. I personally feel a tremendous new hope in the power of the citizenry around the world to say, "No." These are policies that only benefit a tiny minority of very powerful corporations that are hurting everybody else. They're hurting farmers, they're hurting consumers, they're hurting the environment, they're hurting labor, they're damaging human rights. Those who are hurt by these policies are the majority and now we come to realize that and because we are the majority, we have the only kind of power that could counterbalance the power of money and politics, and that's the power of numbers.