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(liste au 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 2002)

**FROM THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT  
TO THE ANTI-GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT**

with

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7th June, 2001

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**Overview**

The Seattle demonstrations in 1999 as well as the Global Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001 are signs of the growing importance of opposition to current forms of globalisation. France is strongly represented within this movement. What are the principles of its action and the aims of the new militant movement ? What are the trade unionist, political and associative components of this movement ? What is there in common between the different groups *SUD*, *AC!* and *ATTAC* ? What is the driving force of this new 'International' on the more established organisations, such as the *CGT* (French Trade Union) ? What are the consequences of its actions for companies ? Should we translate this emergence as a new form of extremism with limited demands, or as a renewal of social dialogue ?

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## TALK : Hubert LANDIER

Trade unionism has been in crisis for more than twenty years. This crisis is currently deepening. There is a dual movement of disintegration and reconstruction, which results in a widening of the field of militant action. We can call this double movement the new 'International' or even 'the new Alliance', to use the term coined at the Porto Alegre Forum.

### The disintegration of the French trade union movement

With a rate of 8 %, France has currently the lowest percentage of trade union membership in Europe, and a very large number of organisations. These large organisations are also in the process of breaking up. About ten years ago, on the basis of a speech by the General Secretary of the *CGT* (French Trade Union), it was easy to predict the contents of pamphlets which were distributed to companies two weeks later. Today, this is no longer the case. A gulf has developed between the trade union body and the militants. A mechanism has developed quickly which manages portfolios, a form of financing which comes increasingly from sources other than union subscriptions. It also follows more often methods of reasoning and logic which distance it from the practical concerns of the militants.

In the case of conflicts as complicated as those which resulted from the law on the 35 hour working week, the militants were not always satisfied with the advice given by their federal superiors which would have enabled them to negotiate better conditions. More often than not, they had to comply with injunctions to sign agreements which did not meet their concerns. This caused schisms.

For this reason, the militants increasingly prefer to use computer data bases or even to ask the chartered accountants of the works council for advice, rather than ask for help at the legal aid centre of the local union office which is manned every Friday from 4pm to 6pm by a retired, former member of an industrial tribunal.

### From Berlin to Seattle

At the same time as the disintegration of the unionist movement, upheavals took place elsewhere in the world allowing the creation of what I refer to as the new International.

In 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the Cold War. Nothing seemed to stand in the way of economic liberalism any more. An American philosopher even talked about the *end of history*. It was true that for several years we were able to talk about the overriding triumph of the market economy. There were, however, some hitches for example, the events following the Gulf War and the financial crisis of the Southeast Asian economies.

Ten years later, in 1999, at the regular meeting of the committee of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle, to everyone's surprise there was violent opposition to financial globalisation. Since then, this so-called *anti-globalisation* movement has taken part in more and more events of which the most recent is the Porto Alegre World Social Forum which dissociated itself from the World Economic Forum held in Davos.

### The components of the anti-globalisation movement

In France, this movement has trade unionist, political and associative components.

From the trade unions' point of view, it is made up of a number of organisations : the Group of Ten and the group *SUD* (about which Daniel Labbé will talk more), the *Fédération syndicale unitaire* which has a majority in the State Education system, the *CNT* (*Confédération nationale du travail* : the National Work Confederation), the *Confédération paysanne* (the Farmers' Confederation) represented by José Bové, and numerous militants of

the *CGT* (even if this trade union has never really made its relationship with the anti-globalisation movement official).

As far as the political element is concerned, there are the Trotskyites, in other words the Revolutionary Communist League (with the exclusion of members of *Lutte Ouvrière* (Workers' Struggle) and the Workers' Party), various anarchist organisations originating from the May 1968 student movement, the Socialist Left, the Green Party, the *Mouvement des citoyens* (Citizens' Movement) since its leader Jean-Pierre Chevènement was present at Porto Alegre, and finally the dissenting communists who criticise Robert Hue (head of the French Communist Party) for being involved with a government deemed to be in favour of financial globalisation.

The associative element is the largest. It comprises all those groups of people who are 'Without' (those without official papers, those without a job, those who have no rights, those without housing), including the *Mouvement national des chômeurs et précaires* (National Movement of the unemployed and the casual workers), *Agir ensemble contre le chômage* (United against unemployment), the *Association pour l'emploi, l'insertion et la solidarité* (the Association for work, professional integration and solidarity), the committees of the unemployed from the *CGT*, *Droit au logement* (Right to Housing), *Droit devant* (Right Ahead), and also think-tank associations such as the Copernicus Foundation, the *Coordination pour un contrôle citoyen de l'OMC* (Co-ordination for the citizen's control of the WTO), and *ATTAC*.

### **An organisation which functions by networks**

Whereas the Third International worked in accordance with a clear-cut ideological base which was Marxist-Leninist, the anti-globalisation movement offers a larger ideological diversity. Within it, there are Marxists, anarchists, left-wing Christians, ecologists, feminists, Third World supporters, each one with his or her own reasons for belonging to the movement.

Similarly, whereas the Third International was organised in a very hierarchical way, the anti-globalisation movement functions by networking, based on the principle of a *shoal of fish* : the whole group moves in sequence simultaneously without an obvious leader. Clearly, some fish get left behind or pushed out as the shoal moves on, but they come back into the shoal with subsequent movements.

The key figure of the movement has changed. It is no longer the exploited factory worker, but the citizen : he may be a worker or a resident, or a humanist, or an ecologist, or a consumer, and so on.

The aim is also different. The Third International tried hard to take power on a national level in order to transform society by means of State institutions. Today, there are two strategic levels, the local level and the international level. The aim is not to take power, but to play the role of an opposition force and to reinvent, on an international level, the rules of a democracy in which the people take part, as well as the means of bringing this about.

Finally, it is no longer a case of mobilising large numbers of demonstrators, but of presenting issues for public attention by the effective use of the media. The three means most commonly used are strong legal means, the Internet, and media coverage. The first, in the absence of the ability to mobilise the workforce *en masse*, turns to the resources offered by law to ensure that their demands materialise. Secondly, the Internet replaces the former method of sending out pamphlets with instantaneous emailing of information to thousands of people. Finally, media coverage ensures that conflicts are no longer played out on the factory floor, but in front of a jury of public opinion. It is noticeable that, in this respect, the Danone boycott was not organised by the trade unions, but by an association, in this instance *ATTAC*.

## TALK : Daniel LABBÉ

I would like to talk about the trade union *SUD* (*Solidaires unitaires démocratiques*) which was founded in 1989 within the framework of the *PTT* (French postal and telecommunications service) and which is part of the anti-globalisation movement described by Hubert Landier. Today, *SUD* has between thirty and fifty thousand members. This is a significant number since it represents about half the members of the *CFTC* (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens* : French Christian Workers' Trade Union) or the *CGC* (*Confédération Générale des Cadres* : French Executives' Trade Union). Its most recent achievement was when it gained a foothold at Michelin, where, following the latest round of elections, the new section of *SUD*, emerging from the rubble of the *CFDT*, came second behind the *CGT*, with more than a quarter of the employees' votes.

### The birth of *SUD*

This rapid rise is all the more surprising since *SUD* appears to have emerged almost by chance. It clearly arrived at a time when the conditions for the development of a new trade unionist organisation were favourable.

The origins of *SUD* were founded in the crisis within the *CFDT* following the decision taken by Edmond Maire, at the end of the 1970's, to refocus this trade union by abandoning socialist worker management, the class struggle and the alliance with the *CGT* in order to achieve a trade union spirit of negotiation more in keeping with the inspiration of the founders when they decided to make the *CFTC* non denominational. This refocusing has always aroused strong opposition from the militants who joined the *CFDT* after 1968. This left-wing movement, which included anarchists, Maoists and Trotskyists, was united in its opposition, but never managed a consistent front in the face of the confederation created by Edmond Maire.

At the end of the 1980's, the executives of the *CFDT* knew that Quilès law was about to be passed, and they intended to negotiate the changes which would affect trade unions with the authorities and the managers of the *PTT*. The resulting conflict within the *PTT* in 1989 interfered with this strategy. The left-wing militants stuck firm to their strike despite attempts by the state and federal authorities to negotiate. Since reaching an agreement seemed impossible, several hundreds of these militants were excluded and they created the trade union *SUD*.

In the elections which followed, *SUD* gained 5 % of the votes. This may seem small but it is relatively important in a company which has four hundred thousand employees. When the *PTT* split up into *La Poste* (the French Post Office) and *France Télécom* (the French Telephone Company), *SUD*, as oppositional as ever, continued to grow by encroaching firstly on the *CFDT* and then on the *CGT* and other trade union organisations. It grew to such an extent that today it has become practically the biggest trade union in *France Télécom*, and the second biggest (with half a point separating it from the *CGT*) in *La Poste*.

### Two historic meetings

Two key historic events marked what happened next in the growth of *SUD*. The first was the meeting with the Group of Ten. This was a group of ten trade unions which yearned nostalgically for the trade union unity of 1936 and which, since the election of François Mitterrand in 1981, tried to reconstruct this unity but with little success with the five principal trade unions. This meeting may seem paradoxical since *SUD* is traditionally left-wing and has its origins in the 1968 movement and in the *CFDT*, whereas the Group of Ten represents the old *CGT* tradition of the Charter of Amiens (traditionally extreme left-wing). Nevertheless, the marriage appeared to be successful.

The second meeting took place during the long strikes of 1995. *SUD* emerged from under the wing of the *PTT* and spread to various public – and private – companies.

## Reasons for the success

Why was it so successful ? One could say that *SUD* combined the inheritance of traditional trade unionism with modern day Internet.

Firstly, *SUD* proposed stripping away the old concepts and a complete review of trade unionism. It is a practical form of trade unionism which criticises the institutionalisation of traditional unions and denounces their archaic practices but does not hesitate to win over institutions itself.

Secondly, another new notion was the idea that there is no longer strength and legitimacy in numbers. *SUD* shows the capacity of the avant-garde, which by definition has fewer members, to create events and mobilise the media by marrying the rational with the emotional, and instant demands with historical perspectives.

The next event will be the elections of the industrial tribunals. If *SUD* manages to achieve its aims, the French trade union arena will change its appearance. This will naturally pose new problems to companies which are accustomed to the routine of relationships with social organisations which they know well and whose reactions are predictable.

## TALK : Christophe AGUITON

To follow on from what Hubert Landier said about the historic events which marked the birth of the anti-globalisation movement, I think that we have to mention the Gulf War. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many people had hoped that there would be democratic worker involvement in Eastern Europe but these hopes were quickly dashed. Many people also hoped that the end of the Soviet bloc would lead to some sort of weakening of American power and that a multipolar world, with a balance restored towards the East, would emerge.

The Gulf War shattered these expectations and showed that the United States was still *the* big economic, military and political power and that each one of these aspects merely served to reinforce the others. This event cast light on past developments and played an accelerating role for the changes to come. I would like to show that Seattle played a similar historic role.

### Capitalism up and running

In the course of the past ten years, one can consider that capitalism has got into its stride. The rate of company profitability, which had fallen from an insufficient level as far as capitalism was concerned during the 1970's, was restored. Today it has found the level it enjoyed during the 1950's and 1960's, thanks to various offensives launched against social benefits, either by the austerity measures of Raymond Barre or Helmut Schmidt, or as a result of the even more violent reforms of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

This restoration of company profit rates was achieved in the framework of a new productive order, characterised by the considerable weight of finance, the opening-up of markets on all levels, and the flexibility of work.

Between 1860 and 1870, the first phase of globalisation had enabled English workers who met at the world fairs to constitute the First International. Similarly today this new productive order which we can refer to as *liberal globalisation* is accompanied – in reaction – by another globalisation. This is a new International which emerged in the first place in the two countries where liberalism became most quickly established. These countries were the United States of course, but also France, where, despite the official speeches, the right- and left-wing governments carried out massive privatisation programmes, opened up the markets and greatly facilitated the flexibility of work. In comparison, in Germany and Japan, resistance

from society and from the State was greater and these countries which were less liberal were also less affected by the anti-globalisation movement.

The anti-globalisation reaction is based on three main themes : social issues, the environment and democracy.

### **Social issues**

The new productive order is primarily characterised by a rapid increase in inequality between countries in the North and in the South, but also within each country. Many theoreticians judge that each time a new productive order is established, that it is normal that there is firstly a growth in inequality and then an internal strengthening, under the pressure of social struggle. However, nothing suggests that this process can operate this time. This is due to the fact that the opening up of frontiers, the flexibility of work and the general increase in job instability deprives the workforce of a large part of its capacity for action.

This phenomenon generates a justifiable feeling of anxiety, and puts an end to the belief that our children will have a better life than us : this in itself constitutes a civilisation shock. Of course, this anxiety is even greater and more painful if one is at the bottom of the ladder but it also exists for company managers, even if they have stock options. It entails a massive rejection of the system, not only in intellectual, militant and trade union circles, but also in the majority of public opinion.

This rejection is particularly noticeable if one compares the reactions aroused by the Maastrich Referendum, concerning France's entry into the Eurozone in 1992, and the opinion surveys about the globalisation process. The referendum on Europe revealed, to everyone's surprise, that France was divided. On the one hand there were the poor, the workers, and the farmers who were against Maastrich, while on the other hand, the city-dwellers, and the middle and upper classes who were for it. The France which was represented in newspapers and which appeared on television, in other words, the France which *counted*, seemed to think that 70 % to 80 % would be in favour of Maastrich, whereas in the end it was 50-50.

The dividing lines are not the same with regard to the questions concerning globalisation. Between 60 % and 70 % reject it, 15 % approve of it, and 15 % remain undecided. These proportions are true for all social classes, regardless of the level of education. The vast majority of French society is in favour of globalisation of people, the process which allows exchange and cultural mix, but is anxious about economic globalisation and its social consequences. This difference in attitude with regard to membership of the Eurozone and globalisation and the anxiety generated by the latter is noticeable in the reactions of the media which demonstrate a relative benevolence to the anti-globalisation movement.

### **The environment**

The second consequence of the new productive world order concerns the environment. The general opening of barriers has led to a sharp increase in competition which results in growing pressure on the environment. For example, this is the argument used by Total to explain the run-down and dilapidated state of the *Erika*. The race for profit also speeds up the devastation of the tropical forests, and the appropriation of the genomes of tropical plants in order to constitute data bases by important industrial companies. This race also breeds anxieties about the food chain and what we eat.

### **Democratic issues**

The third consequence of the new productive order is the challenge it poses to democracy. France is part of the exclusive club of countries which belong to the G7 and are also members of the UN Security Council. France is supposed to be privileged to take part in the management of world affairs. However, neither you nor I know what is said in the name of our country which is supposed to represent us within the IMF, the World Bank or in the majority of financial institutions, since these meetings and their decisions are secret. There is

not even a parliamentary report on these negotiations. Consider that you are an average citizen from a country like China or India whose opinion is even less respected than in our countries which are supposed to be democratic, and where the average citizen's opinion is considered to be 'important' ! And yet, every day, these international issues are becoming increasingly important for our lives.

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, as the United States did not want to assume a political leadership role on a global scale and did not accept the establishment of a multi-lateral leadership as envisaged in the Treaty of Vienna, we have found ourselves in a world which, in spite of appearances, is really very fragile. This situation gives rise to the very widely shared desire for us to control our destinies and to decide our collective future.

### **A common ground between these three themes**

After Seattle, many observers thought that the unexpected alliance between those who defended tortoisés, the members of the Steel Workers' union, and food campaigners such as José Bové would not last very long. What followed, showed that, on the contrary, the alliances became stronger.

It is very striking that each organisation, whatever its initial aim, progressively integrates into its own reasoning the demands of the others. For example, the question of the environment is no longer considered secondary by trade unions, and likewise the problems of democracy on the other side of the planet are equally important. The environmentalists, for their part, are increasingly interested in the opening up of markets. They see the consequences of this in terms of the appropriation of genetic research by large companies. Finally, one can mention an association for the defence of human rights such as Amnesty International which is also undergoing change. From now on, it will no longer purely act to defend political prisoners but it will also be interested in social issues raised by globalisation.

### ***SUD's alliance policy***

This same alliance policy can be found in the development of *SUD*. In 1993, for example, *SUD-PTT* took part in the creation of *Agir ensemble contre le chômage* (United against unemployment) with the League of Human Rights, and with Pierre Bourdieu and the team of the association which he launched, *Raisons d'agir* (Reasons to act). The same kind of action was launched with the co-ordination of those without official papers, a revival of a movement for the defence of women's rights, the right to housing and even *ATTAC*.

In the beginning, we had not preconceptions about this type of approach. With hindsight, I think that one can analyse it as a new form of interprofessional trade unionism. In general, the interprofessional tradition consists of grouping together railway workers, postal workers, metalworkers and chemical workers into a local union which enables them to help each other in times of strikes or important social conflicts. Our approach anticipated that they would realise, as is the case today, that the trade union movement was too fragmented and too limited in certain sectors. This feeling is now largely shared. The *CGT*, for example, recently decided to create a section for the unemployed. This was no easy task given the context of a confederation whose centre of gravity is represented by the employees of *EDF* (*Électricité de France*), the *SNCF* (French National Railways), *La Poste*, and at best, Renault or Michelin.

Of course, *SUD* will never become *Greenpeace* or vice versa. However, it is unquestionable that among these organisations there exists a capacity for alliance and a common ground which accounts for the force which this movement is in the process of acquiring.

### **The historic role of Seattle**

I would now like to discuss the consequences of the Seattle demonstrations which initially only constituted a micro-event. If Seattle failed (as far as the WTO was concerned), it is because of the confrontations between countries from the North and the South, and between the Americans and the Europeans. The demonstrations which involved more than thirty

thousand people in the United States, forty thousand in France, ten thousand or so in London and equal numbers in New Delhi were merely the last straw.

In fact, if it is possible to make comparisons, the events can be likened to those occurring during the Paris Commune or during the Chinese Revolution both of which happened at times of 'fissures' in history, when there were conflicts on a large scale being played out in the background. The Paris Commune would never have taken place without the Franco-Prussian war. At the end of the Long March, Mao had no more than two thousand weary soldiers and the Chinese Revolution was only able to take a new turn because of the Rape of Nanking, the second Japanese offensive in China and because of preparations for the Second World War.

Similarly, the occasion of a stormy international conference was the moment for a small scale Franco-American protest movement to transform itself into a large global movement, capable of making the most important global institutions back down. The last World Economics Forum which took place in Australia ended in disaster, and the World Bank has just cancelled the conference set for Barcelona in June 2001 for fear of potential demonstrations.

### **New actors, new actions**

It is clear that the current movement shows many similarities with the 1968 movement. For example, young people (the majority of the demonstrators are aged about twenty) who are not just ordinary students play the dominant role. In the United States, they are Harvard undergraduates and those who will go on to become the future American elite, who are the equivalent in France of students from our best schools (*Normale Sup, Polytechnique*). In Japan, they are students from the Tokyo Law University. In other words, the anti-globalisation movement is not the rebellion of the excluded who have nothing to lose because they are deprived of resources or housing. It is, as was the case in 1968, a movement firmly rooted under the controlling influence of universities and prestigious places of learning and encouraged by those who one might have thought to be defenders of the system.

The second characteristic of this movement is that it is based on an in-depth transformation of trade unionism, whether it be in France or in the United States. All the trade unions think that the conflict against liberal globalisation is the theme of their struggle for the next ten years. They are in the process of making a major alteration in direction. For example, the principal American trade union, the AFL-CIO, which traditionally only defended the white population, is today demanding the regularisation of all illegal workers !

Finally, the methods of action have changed radically as the Nike affair showed. This company was the dream of every boss, namely a company without workers and therefore with no risk of strikes, since apart from the small design office and a marketing company, everything was handled by companies spread throughout eastern Asia. The only real value of the company was its brand name and it was on this Achilles heel that the opinion campaigns were focussed which managed to sway the social policy of the company.

### **The future prospects**

Constitutionally, today we are in the process of developing something which seems to resemble a new International which is supple and flexible. We are trying to shift its centre of gravity towards the South, because until recently, the movement grew primarily in the North. We should also, despite the universal definition of the movement, try to understand better individual questions relating to each country raised by these kinds of approaches.

Another challenge of the anti-globalisation movement is to suggest an alternative solution to economic globalisation. The crisis of the 1930's prompted thinking and global suggestions both by those who opposed systematism and advocated a break with capitalism, and those who were in the system and were followers of Keynes.

In the light of the current crisis, those who are in favour of the system are not suggesting anything new. At best, when they are challenged, they apologise that the system is *not able to*



*do any better. As for our movement, it is still too early to put forward real proposals; after all, we are only at the beginning of the process.*

## DISCUSSION

### The ability of trade unions to be representative called into question

**Question :** *Does the growth of SUD not call into question the ability of the current major trade unions to be representative ?*

**Christophe Aguiton :** Obviously, I am one of the people who think that one has to change the rules of trade union representation. Some confederations are clearly tempted to keep the various aspects of their power to themselves. Even though our trade union gained in stature at *France Télécom* over four years, the *CFDT* made sure that we never met anyone from the company and that we never had access to information. The *CFDT* hoped that our movement would run out of steam. It was a bad risk to take since a trade union which does not take part in negotiations grows much faster than one which does. It therefore cannot be accused of underhand dealing. The time which would have been spent in meetings, was spent drafting pamphlets. Of course, we had all the information we needed : in an open society such as ours and thanks to modern computer technology, it is illusory to think that information can still be totally controlled.

**Hubert Landier :** At the present time, the *CGT* and the *CFDT* are challenging the rules of trade union representation and would prefer the representation of each trade union organisation to be weighted according to its results in the professional elections. This reform, which would substitute the notion of trade union legitimacy with the notion of representation, does not appeal to everyone, since it clearly entails the loss of influence of two or three of the five main trade unions on a national level.

**Daniel Labbé :** During the negotiations concerning the law on the 35-hour working week, it was obvious that in numerous factories the ability to genuinely represent the employees and to take into account their diversity and the complexity of the problems, as well as the ability to talk with them and to advance the dialogue and thinking, went well beyond the representation of laws recognised by trade union organisations. Another fundamental aspect of the problem of trade union representation is the simultaneous holding of mandates, which leads to the constitution of a stratum of elected representatives who are truly cut off from the reality of the lives of employees.

**C. A. :** The distance between the trade union representatives and the ordinary militants is of major concern to the founders of *SUD*, who themselves are the heirs of this movement of self-organisation launched in the context of the strikes of 1995 in sectors as diverse as the railway workers and the nurses. This is why we have established a management rotation system. Annick Coupé and myself, who are among the most senior of the permanent employees of *SUD-PTT*, went back to our original jobs this year. She works for the Post Office and I work for *France Télécom*. We both work part-time in order to continue our activities within the association and in the trade union. However, we have left the management of *SUD* to a team which is better informed about the events of the past ten years in these two companies.

### Will the trade unions flourish again in the future ?

**Q. :** *Whatever you may say, trade unions today are a sad reflection of their former selves. I have a great deal of difficulty in believing that they can rise from the ashes. The change which you describe in American trade unions seems to me to be just a desperate attempt to hang on to something.*

**C. A. :** It is clear that the trade union movement such as it was in the 1950's and the 1960's was adapted to the economic world of that particular period and it is no longer functional today. It seems to me that there are two ways forward. Firstly, within companies, to listen to

the employees and construct a fruitful dialogue with them. Secondly, outside of companies, to form new alliances and to invent new forms of interprofessional trade unions. These two ways have been studied by *SUD* but they are also part of the strategy of the *Fédération Syndicale Unitaire*, the *CGT*, certain confederations of the *CFDT*, and even, I believe, of certain American trade unions. The regeneration is therefore well and truly here.

**Q. :** *Taking into account the continued decrease in the number of employees who belong to a trade union, realistically how is the opposition force directed within companies ?*

**C. A. :** It is quite amusing when one notices that even though today the power of employees within companies has been considerably weakened, it is possible to invent new ways of putting pressure on companies, as was shown in the case of Nike or Danone. Having said that, it is regrettable that, apart from 1995 when there were massive demonstrations, the working of our movements relies too heavily on small groups. Only a small number of people are the actual actors and the majority of those who support our cause seem to be content to let us speak on their behalf.

**H. L. :** I often explain to Directors of Human Resources that it will no longer be sufficient to discuss matters with members of some well-known and representative organisations, but they will also have to answer to action groups which are infinitely variable and which comprise trade unions and associations, in relation to topics which will not only concern the relations the company has with its employees, but the relations it has with its environment, whether it be with regard to ecology or to human rights.

### **Those who are ‘anti’**

**Q. :** *Clearly, the anti-globalisation movement brings together above all people who are ‘anti’.*

**H. L. :** It is true that this movement can be essentially defined as an opposition force but this does not mean that there is nothing to defend. The movement brings with it strong moral values, such as solidarity and equity and is opposed to the current established order. It also defends the meaning of democracy and reintroduces discussion into a system governed by political correctness.

**C. A. :** The anti-globalisation movement brings with it strong demands, such as the cancellation of Third World debt, the implementation of the Tobin Tax on speculative financial movements, and an end to IMF policies. In the sector of social demands, we do not have a complete and coherent programme yet. To resolve this, we shall have to overcome a certain number of differences. For example, certain people campaign for international regulation, whereas others want the establishment of a global government. The former are suspicious of this solution which, according to them, might result in a sort of regency council. Politically speaking, the trade union and associative movement which I described tends to lean more and more to the left since fundamentally it is a movement which opposes the new productive world order, which is considered to be right-wing. Conversely, the political parties, even those on the left, tend to lean more and more to the right. At the present time, all governments are applying more or less the laws enacted by the Washington Consensus, a sort of neo-liberal recipe book which is used as a reference in the US Treasury Department and also in international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Apart from a few local and isolated exceptions (in France, for example, the law on the 35-hour working week or the law against exclusion), it is these precepts which define what is possible throughout the world. The fact that, for the time being, the anti-globalisation movement, which is, of course, violently opposed to the principles of the Washington Consensus, finds little in the form of intermediary in the political world, obviously poses a problem.

### **The other side of the fence ?**

**Q. :** *In view of the political crisis which Christophe Aguiton described, will the anti-globalisation movements try to enter institutions, for example in France by putting forward candidates in the next election ?*

**C. A. :** I do not think so. The most likely person to do this would be José Bové, but apparently he does not want to, since this would pose enormous problems in his movement, the *Confédération paysanne*. Having said that, I do not think that the problems which we raise can be resolved by certain people from any social movement entering politics. It is more complicated than that !

**Q. :** *The fusional nature of the anti-globalisation movement seems quite superficial to me. Once you leave behind the current haze, and notably once you start thinking of political propositions, you run the risk of being confronted with conflicts of interest which will tear apart this wonderful unanimity. The ecology movement also started out by being fusional and today it does not even know how to cope in the face of a movement like Chasse, pêche et traditions (Hunting, fishing and traditions).*

### **Nothing new under the sun ?**

**Q. :** *You talk about the involvement in your movement of brilliant students as if that was something new, but young people have always rallied to important causes of the day. As for the dialectic between those who are for the system and those who oppose it, this confrontation has also always existed. The former feeds on the criticisms of the latter, the system continues, and from time to time a change of context calls for a change in the rules. However, in this case, I cannot see clearly what contribution your movement makes. Does it attack certain big brand names ? Some will disappear and others will survive. It has always been like that.*

**C. A. :** I am nonetheless struck by the fact that these student movements in the United States, for example, are still present ten years later and that contrary to other movements, they have broader aims than just the improvement of student life. As in 1968, they strive to challenge and question society.

As for the dialectic between those for the system and those who oppose systematism, it effectively always works in the same way. Either the system is capable of reforming itself and it finds a new way forward in the form of a new social compromise, or it proves to be incapable of adapting itself and is replaced by another system. Either way, it is essential that the dialogue continues between the two parties and between the different intellectual circles, the circles of power, the social forces, the unionist movements, the associations, and the institutions so that new ideas can emerge.

**Michel Berry :** *If the French Revolution was, in the space of a few years, able to trigger off such profound changes, it was because it had been inspired by the work and reflections which thinkers and philosophers had been formulating for decades. The problem is to invent places where such discussions can take place outside of the political arena, which clearly is not propitious for this. Perhaps it should be away from the media which do not facilitate the in-depth development of study and thinking.*

Presentation of the speakers :

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Christophe Aguiton : founding member of *SUD-PTT* and *AC !*, in charge of international relations, *ATTAC*. He has published various articles such as *Le retour de la question sociale* with Daniel Bensaïd (Éditions Page 2, 1997) and *Le monde nous appartient, les acteurs de l'autre mondialisation* (Plon, May 2001).

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