

- Find an alternative program for the

[CTRL] An Alternative Program for the Global Economy | Brecher | Z Commentary

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Commenting on the Battle of Seattle, Newsweek wrote, "One of the most important lessons of Seattle is that there are now two visions of globalization on offer, one led by commerce, one by social activism." Globalization from below's vision has been articulated in scores of international statements and above all in the movement's own actions. The following summary is designed to provide a win-win framework for the many constituencies converging into globalization from below, providing ways that their needs, concerns, and interests can be complementary rather than contradictory.

1. **Level labor, environmental, social, and human rights conditions upward.** Globalization from above is creating a race to the bottom, an economic war of all against all in which each workforce, community, and country is forced to compete by offering lower labor, social, environmental, and human rights conditions. The result is impoverishment, inequality, volatility, degradation of democracy, and environmental destruction. Halting the race to the bottom requires raising labor, environmental, social, and human rights conditions for those at the bottom. Such upward leveling can start with specific struggles to raise conditions for those who are being driven downward. Ultimately, minimum environmental, labor, social, and human rights standards must be incorporated in national and international law. Such standards protect communities and countries from the pressure to compete by sacrificing their rights and environment. Rising conditions for those at the bottom can also expand employment and markets and generate a virtuous circle of economic growth.

2. **Democratize institutions at every level from local to global.** Globalization from above has restricted the power of self-government for people all over the world. At the heart of globalization from below lies democratization—making institutions accountable to those they affect.

3. **Make decisions as close as possible to those they affect.** The movement for globalization from below should aim to construct a multilevel global economy. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, power and initiative should be concentrated at as low a level as possible, with higher-level regulation established where and only where necessary. This approach envisions relatively self-reliant, self-governing communities, states, provinces, countries, and regions, with global regulation only sufficient to protect the environment, redistribute resources, block the race to the bottom, and perform other essential functions.

4. **Equalize global wealth and power.** The current gap between the global rich and poor is unacceptable; it is unconscionable to act as if it can be a permanent feature of the global economy. It is equally unacceptable to assume that the rich countries of the world can call all the shots regarding the global economy's future. Policy at every level should prioritize economic advancement of the most oppressed and exploited people, including women, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples. It should increase power, capability, resources, and income for those at the bottom.

5. **Convert the global economy to environmental sustainability.** The world is in the midst of a global environmental catastrophe. Ill-conceived economic activity is disrupting the basic balances of climate and ecology on which human life depends. Globalization is rapidly accelerating that ongoing catastrophe. The sources of environmental destruction lie primarily in the wrongly developed countries of the North and in the activities of global corporations in the South. The only way to reverse this catastrophe is to halt the present dynamic of globalization and meet human needs by technologies and social practices that progressively reduce the negative impact of the economy on the environment.

6. **Create prosperity by meeting human and environmental needs.** Today, an estimated 1 billion people are unemployed. Millions are forced to leave

rural areas and migrate to cities or around the world seeking work. Meanwhile, the world's vast need for goods and services to alleviate poverty and to reconstruct society on an environmentally sustainable basis goes unmet. A goal of economic policy at every level must be to create a new kind of full employment based on meeting those needs.

7. Protect against global boom and bust. The era of globalization has been an era of volatility. Its repeated crises have destroyed local and national economies overnight and driven hundreds of millions of people into poverty. An unregulated global economy has led to huge flows of speculative funds that can swamp national economies. No one country can control these forces on its own. Yet neoliberal economics and the major economic powers have resisted any changes that might restrict the freedom of capital. Economic security for ordinary people requires just such restrictions.

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