

CNS CONFERENCE KEYNOTE

“War is the Father of All Things” (Heraclitus)
“But Nature is the Mother of Life” (Claudia von Werlhof)*

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The clearest and most worrying manifestation of the contradictions of globalized capitalism, particularly its ecological and imperialist consequences, are the recent wars that the dominant economic and political powers, the United States and the European Union, have waged against poorer and weaker nations: Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars were not legitimized like earlier wars by the need to defend national borders or the “fatherland.” They were justified by a changing list of so-called “moral reasons”: to halt ethnic cleansing, dethrone a dictator, introduce “democracy,” prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction, fight terrorism, and even liberate women in far away lands. Everybody knew these justifications by U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair were lies. And both Bush and Blair openly admitted so after they started the war in Iraq.

These lies, however, more than anything else, brought to light the true nature of global capitalism and its basic contradictions. They had been hidden for some time behind the smokescreen of social democratic reforms, particularly in the European welfare states. Moreover, after the breakdown of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, capitalism appeared as the only viable form of economy. The terms “capitalism” and “imperialism” almost completely disappeared from the public discourse. The “economy”—one could not speak of “system” any more—came to be referred to as the global “Free Market.”

Only those who opposed the introduction of these neoliberal “free market reforms” understood that this restructuring of the world economy was nothing new, that it was based on exploitation and neo-colonialism, that it was just the latest manifestation of capitalism, and -that it would lead to new wars. These new wars are a necessary consequence of neoliberal globalization, and they have made clear that both the capitalist economy and the new militaristic “interventions,” as these wars are now called, are driven by the same logic: war logic.

This war logic becomes evident if one looks at the concepts being used to propagate the “new economy.” Take “competition,” one of the key concepts of neoliberal ideology. In reality this means a worldwide war between the stronger and the weaker and a race to the bottom for the latter. “Conquest of new markets” is another important concept. The overall aim of neoliberal, global capitalism is limitless growth of capital and the capitalist economy, which means expansion by *all means* and *beyond all borders*. Hence national borders, national rules and regulations have to be dismantled; laws that have protected the rights of workers and weaker sections of society and the environment are now being considered obstacles to the free expansion of capital and its strive towards worldwide domination. These militaristic and imperialistic tendencies within capitalism are not new. Marx wrote about them more than 150 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*. But since neoliberalism has been declared the only viable economic philosophy, they have come to the surface more openly and can now be thought of as a single economic and militaristic *war system*.

A relatively new development is that erstwhile socialist countries like those of the former Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam have now also embraced this capitalist war system as the only possible economic model. In light of capital's seemingly victorious march over the globe, one can indeed ask whether it makes sense to still speak of socialism, ecosocialism, or ecofeminism as an alternative.

Is War our Eternal Destiny?

Despite former U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's declaration in 1978 that "there is no alternative" (TINA) to neoliberal capitalism, it is more urgent than ever that we find alternatives. The negative consequences of this "new economy"—including these new, seemingly unlimited wars—are becoming more and more visible in the North, the South, and the East.

"War is the Father of All Things"

Since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the phrase above was repeated time and again in Germany. It was mentioned by those wanting to legitimate these new U.S. wars by justifying war as the most normal thing in the world by saying war is part of our human condition and that peace will automatically give way to war like the day will end in the night. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who first said it, was one of the fathers of European dialectics.

"War is the father of all things" is taken to mean everything has its opposite—its contradiction—and that these two struggle against each other until something new emerges. But there is a deeper, more literal meaning. For Heraclitus—and the whole of later European history—war is the *father* of all things. That means, war is the *creator* of all things and the king of all things, which accurately expresses the logic of the new, more blatant patriarchal worldview that has surfaced in the last few years by the emergence of fundamentalist tendencies in all the world's major religions, a phenomenon I call *neopatriarchy*.

According to this patriarchal worldview, the origin of everything, including the origin of humans, is not Mother Nature or the human mother but Father in Heaven. Most patriarchal religions hold that a transcendental Father in Heaven created everything "out of nothing." This is the dominant worldview of Western civilization, and it could not have emerged without warfare.

Matricide: the Origin of Western Civilization

This changeover from Mother Right to Father Right was, as Engels had already noticed, not a peaceful, evolutionary process. It was pushed ahead by warfare and conquest followed by slavery. Accumulation of new wealth under patriarchy was not and is not based on subsistence work but on tribute, plunder and robbery, the division of society into castes and classes, the subordination of women to men, and the construction of the state with, typically, the most brutal of the warrior heroes at its head.

This process did not start in Greece but in Mesopotamia. The Babylonian origin myth of Tiamat and Marduk expresses very clearly how the old, matriarchal worldview symbolized by Tiamat was destroyed by warfare and substituted by a new world order constructed by Marduk, her son and adversary. In the myth

Tiamat was *The Creator* of everything. She was the Mother and the beginning of all life. She was the great water, the ocean, and the rivers. Heaven and earth were not divided. Everything came out of the undifferentiated waters—the gods, the humans, the animals and plants.

Marduk—the first warrior—killed his mother, Tiamat. First he cut up her body into two halves—“like a fish.” One half he put up against the sky, the other became the earth. From then onwards, heaven and earth were separated. Immanence and transcendence were hence separated and hierarchically arranged, with heaven being higher and better than earth, and gods more important than humans.

Marduk, the Great Warrior, was also the first Great Engineer. He dammed in the waters from the ocean and the rivers and thus separated dry land from marshy land and water. The rest of Tiamat’s body he cut up into pieces and strew all over the land. Wherever these pieces fell, new large cities were created and temples and palaces were built. A whole new culture and civilization sprang up where the people saw the God-King Marduk as the Father of Everything. Matriarchy, meaning “Mother is *arche*, the beginning,” was substituted by patriarchy, meaning “Father is the beginning.”

The feminist scholar Catherine Keller has traced the path of this matricidal myth of origin of European civilization through Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Christian and European history, the Enlightenment, Sigmund Freud, and into modern times. Today George W. Bush and his war in Iraq—“the cradle of our civilization,” as Iraq is often referred to—epitomizes patriarchy-driven war. The underlying ideology guiding our civilization, then, is that Mother Tiamat—who is no other than Mother Nature—is chaos, a dragon, a snake, and a monster that has to be tamed and forced to serve man, so that he can “father many things.”

Is Nature our Enemy?

Many may ask why we must go back 5,000 years in history to look for answers to the burning questions of today. Is it not sufficient to identify capitalism as the true enemy of nature? While capitalism is undoubtedly destructive of nature, capitalism itself is a manifestation of the underlying patriarchal ideology. The old stories reveal the basic, subconscious principles and structures shaping our worldview and our societies. They teach us, above all, that much of our ancient past survives in our present, and if we do not consciously look at it in our conceptualizations for a better future, we will not find solutions to our present problems. In my view, therefore, one cannot safely speak of “socialism,” “ecosocialism,” or “ecofeminism” unless one is able to understand why, when, and how nature was made our enemy—i.e., why the relationship of humans to nature became an antagonistic one. Since the killing of Tiamat by her son Marduk, nature has been seen as chaotic, dangerous, monstrous and wild. According to this worldview, only Man the Warrior and Engineer can create civilization, progress and culture by conquering nature and forcing her to serve him.

The matricide of Tiamat, or Nature, is being enacted again by the modern Marduks: the scientists, technologists, economists, statesmen and militarists. In her brilliant book, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, Carolyn Merchant has convincingly demonstrated that before modern times, Nature had been thought of as a living and *female* organism. This organism had to be killed conceptually and practically before the modern scientists and engineers could

“create new things” out of the dissected and fragmented parts of her dead body. Bacon, one of the main philosophical “fathers” of the scientific revolution, legitimized this killing of Nature by arguments that are very similar to those of the ancient Babylon warrior king Marduk: that she is only female, and that she has to be forced to yield her secrets to the “New Man,” the scientist. Bacon used the torture of witches by churchmen and the state to justify the war against nature.

Here we find the closest link between exploitation and subordination of nature and that of women. What you do to nature, you do to women. And what you do to women, you do to nature. This is the basic logic of ecofeminism.

From Mater to Matter—the Methodology of the Scientific Revolution

Marduk dissected, fragmented, separated and divided the parts from the whole to kill and subdue mother nature. Only after the New Man (Bacon) had thus killed the living *interconnectedness* (in German, *den lebendigen Zusammenhang*) of which we are all part and parcel and which is the condition of life, could he recombine and “order” these parts into his own creations, machines, and inventions—nuclear technology, chemical technology, biotechnology, etc.—and thus create his own civilization. Only after the living, self-generating, organism, Mother Nature had been killed—only after the living Mater, a creative force with her own subjectivity and generating capacity, had been turned into dead matter—can the Marduk engineers of all times construct new “things,” new machines, even living machines as the genetic engineers are trying to do nowadays. This re-combination then introduced a hierarchical order into the new, war-generated universe: Gods more important than matter, men more important than women. The concept of progress from the beginning of the scientific revolution *presupposes* this killing, dissecting, segmenting, and reordering of nature, including our own human nature.

But in the process of killing Mother Nature, or Living Mater, and turning her into dead matter for raw materials, the Marduk-engineers encounter a severe problem. Despite all the *things* they have constructed, the fantastic machines they have invented and their attempts to find the secrets of life in the smallest particles of matter—the atom, or the gene, or in the farthest “black holes” in the cosmos—they cannot create life. Even worse, their attempts to create a better life result in damage and destruction and increase misery and poverty all over. All their victories over nature are at the same time defeats.

Marx and Engels noticed this contradiction in the 19th century. They were both children of the Enlightenment and had a very optimistic view of progress. But they could not close their eyes to the destruction that this “progress of productive forces” brought to the natural environment. In his famous text, “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition From Ape to Man,” Engels wrote:

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere destroyed the forest to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing, along with the forests, the collecting centers and reservoirs of moisture, [they] were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries

Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conquerer over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but

that we, with flesh, blood and brain belong to nature, and exist in its midst.

Marx also saw that capitalism, particularly capitalist agriculture, would destroy the social and natural interconnectedness and would mean a rupture in the metabolism between humans and nature. Thus it would destroy soil fertility, and international trade would carry this destruction far away.

I shall not dwell here on the question of whether Marx and Engels were ecologists. Others can do that much more competently than I can. I am more interested in understanding what the "second contradiction"—as O'Connor calls the present antagonism between humans and nature—means in our times and how we can overcome it. Therefore, we must look at the havoc capitalist patriarchy and the development of productive forces are bringing about in today's context of neoliberal globalization, or neo-imperialism.

The Economic and Social Consequences of the War against Nature

The whole project of killing Mother Nature and subjecting her to the will of the "New Man" was spelled out clearly by Bacon in the beginning of the new Era of the Enlightenment: the purpose was to accumulate more wealth. Bacon legitimized the "digging of holes into the womb of mother earth"—which was formerly tabooed—by declaring that the new riches (silver, gold, other metals) could be acquired "for the king." Later it was the bourgeois class that profited from this conquest of nature and foreign lands, because the war against nature was immediately connected with the conquest of new lands. Thus the destructions brought about by the victories over nature were first felt by the people in the colonies. For example, the new machines invented in the textile industry destroyed the highly developed and productive textile industry in Bengal, India. The consequence was not only impoverishment of the Bengali-weavers and spinners, but also the destruction of their land through monoculture, which ruined the soil fertility. This deadly nexus between "development of productive forces" and imperialism resulted in hunger and starvation for millions of people.

Under capitalism this nexus is not moral but necessary; one could not exist without the other. The development of new technologies and increases in productivity is only possible as long as more and more areas of the world are subjected to the capitalist process of exploitation, appropriation and accumulation. Without the cheap cotton from Egypt and India, the textile industry—in spite of all the new spinning and weaving machines in England—would not have been "productive." Without the cheap labour—primarily female—in Southeast Asia, the computer industry would not have emerged as the latest technological revolution. And without the cheap, female labor in the textile and computer industry in India and China, the Chinese and Indian governments would not be able to boast that in a short time they will conquer economically the European and American continents.

Since the beginning of capitalism, this necessary nexus between the development of science and technology in the metropolises and the exploitation of the colonies in the South has been largely ignored. Economically, these two sides of the one capitalist system were treated as two independent economies. Both left

and bourgeois analysts characterize the gap between colonized and colonizing countries as “uneven development.”

Underlying the concept of uneven development is an *evolutionary understanding of development and history*. Some countries—i.e., the wealthy nations of the North—are understood as being “faster” than others—i.e., the countries of the Global South—in their development. It is assumed that these others would follow the same path as the “advanced countries” and reap the same benefits, though they may come a bit later. The concept of uneven development contains no acknowledgment that colonizing processes create a polarization between those on top and those below, a realization that would, of course, lead to a totally different vision of the future. The evolutionary view of history has been responsible for ignoring the ecological costs of this capitalist/imperialist development throughout the world; capitalist countries and socialist ones, such as the former Soviet Union and China, share this world view.

But as I demonstrated in my earlier writings, the cure-all of “catch-up development” to close the gap between “uneven” economies is a myth. That’s because if one country tries to overcome its status as a colony, it must create new colonies, both inside and outside its territory. This contradictory process is evident in Europe today in East Germany and in the Eastern European states that have been integrated into the European Union. While these countries hope to become “equal” with Germany, France, and Great Britain, they are jealously closing their borders to countries still further to the east. By doing so they maintain a colonial gap between themselves and “others” outside whom they still can exploit.

Catch-up economic development in capitalism is also destructive to nature and people, because nature, women, foreign peoples and territories comprise the external and internal colonies that capitalism needs. Equality does not fit into this capitalist equation, where in the long run colonies can only be upheld in their subordinated state by direct and structural violence or warfare.

Crisis everywhere

In addition to shaping the military system, the logic of war has permeated the economic and social system. Neoliberalism started with the promises that its reforms would bring growth, growth would generate employment, and employment would bring wealth to all. Inequalities within countries and between poor and rich countries would disappear, and freedom and democracy would lead to peace. The Washington Consensus spelled out these principles, which were popularized by slogans like :

- Neoliberalism will create a level playing field
- The rising tide will lift all boats—not only the big luxury yachts but also the small fishing boats.
- Perhaps most famously, Margaret Thatcher, who introduced these reforms first in Europe, declared “there is no alternative” to globalized, neoliberal capitalism.

However, after more than 20 years of neoliberalism, competition worldwide has become a race to the bottom. The big transnational corporations have driven smaller, local firms out of the market. Super states like U.S. and E.U. have wrecked economies in poorer countries by dumping their publicly subsidized milk, cereals

and other products onto these economies for prices below what local producers and small-scale local industries can sell their products. As a result of this global economic warfare, the gap between the profiteers of globalization and its victims is widening in every country, including the U.S. and those in the E.U.

Despite the promises of its advocates and its steady advance, neoliberalism has not led to overall economic growth and well being for everyone. Even in countries where the Gross National Product (one of the main indicators used to measure economic health) has risen, the gap between the rich and the poor has also widened. One dramatic example is India which had a “fantastic” annual growth rate of about 9 percent in recent years. Most of the Indian people did not profit at all from this growth, illustrating that the theory of “trickle down” is a myth. The same is true for China where the losers in this game, the peasants, are revolting more and more. Even in the richest countries, like Germany, neoliberalism has failed. Instead of seeing new jobs, unemployment has risen to unprecedented levels in the most highly developed countries. In Germany 5 million people currently are unemployed, which is more than any time before, including the Great Depression of 1929-30 that spread throughout the world. In response, the present coalition government in Germany, consisting of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats has begun dismantling the welfare state, an objective the neoliberal theoreticians had right from the beginning.

This economic warfare does not target only tangible goods like farm products, cars, computers, textiles, steel, etc., but has in its sights the total commodification of *all* aspects of life. The legal vehicle for this usurpation is the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), one of the global “free trade” agreements under the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Under GATS, everything that secures the everyday life of people—health, water, transport, education, childcare, etc.—is opened up to the global market. GATS and other so-called free trade agreements enable the neoliberal agenda by codifying into law continued and brutal exploitation of nature by overturning ecological rules that some countries had introduced in attempts to protect their ecology and the health and welfare of their citizens.

Efforts to protect the ecology have been thwarted under neoliberal globalization. Further commodification, market radicalism and profit-seeking have become its only economic goal. The lack of political will to stop Global Warming is a case in point. In her recent article in *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Heidi Bachram pointed out how the destruction of life is turned into an opportunity for profit and growth by creating a new global market in greenhouse gases. We can conclude that death itself can become a commodity. But how long can this absurdity continue? The proponents of neoliberal globalization preach that there is no material limit to growth, but there *is* a limit if we want to preserve life on this planet.

Contours of a Life-oriented Society and Economy: the Subsistence Perspective

Today the socio-political climate in Europe is characterized by fear, anger and despair: fear of joblessness and poverty; anger against the big capitalists and our governments who have led our countries into a mess by dismantling the welfare state; and despair, because people, particularly young people, do not see how to get out of this morass and into a better future. Huge demonstrations all over indicate widespread resistance. In Germany this protest has resulted in the fall

of the Social Democrats from government in the last elections. In France and Holland it led to a defeat of the E.U. constitution. People despaired upon seeing that the Social Democrats and the Green Party, who unlike the conservatives had traditionally represented the rights of people, had nevertheless embraced the same neoliberal policy as the conservatives. They saw that the parliamentary parties did not present a real alternative to this policy, since they all accepted neoliberal capitalism as inevitable.

Discussions following the growing protests typically limit solutions to some kind of Neo-Keynesianism, which is only a reformist—or kinder, gentler—version of today’s capitalism. The more fundamental issues of globalization, capitalism, ecology and patriarchy are almost never raised in mainstream discourse. But if we want to live up to the challenges of the present historic situation, we have to ask these fundamental questions. We must present a new social, political and economic and cultural paradigm—a paradigm where *life is in the center*, not economic growth and profit-making. This new paradigm is the Subsistence Perspective.

The Subsistence Perspective

The subsistence perspective is based on a definition that I spelled out many years ago. Subsistence production is any and all work or activity that is expended in the creation, recreation, and support of life and living. It has no other purpose than this. Subsistence production therefore stands in contrast to commodity and surplus value production and capital accumulation. The aim of subsistence production is *LIFE*. The aim of commodity production is *MONEY*—and ever more money. Under commodity production, life is only a coincidental side effect.

A vision of a new society and economy has to start with the statement that such a society has, necessarily, to be nonpatriarchal, noncapitalist, nonimperialist and nonmilitaristic. One cannot construct the good life for some by conquering, oppressing and exploiting others and the earth. The vision of a subsistence economy and society must therefore be global. It must bring the worldview of all Marduks to an end. To achieve this it must be based on principles that stand in contrast to those that guide capitalist industrial society. What follows are a few subsistence principles:

1. ***The economy must be re-embedded again into society.*** *Capitalism*, as Polyani pointed out, separated the economy from society and gave it a quasi-autonomous dominating position. Neoliberalism has bestowed on the economy a totalitarian, god-like role. Under the paradigm of the subsistence perspective, the economy is just one of the human activities helping to bring about a good life for all—for humans and nature everywhere.
2. ***The concept of the good life must be redefined.*** *The good life* can no longer mean the continual abundance of cheap commodities from all over the world in our supermarkets. It cannot mean that Europeans can eat strawberries at Christmas and green beans from Kenya in the winter or fly from Frankfurt to London for 20 euros. Large and growing numbers of people understand not only that this consumer lifestyle is based on the colonization and exploitation of nature, women, other classes, and foreign peoples, but also that it does not deliver the satisfaction it promises. “We work and work and work, we shop and shop and shop, but the good life never comes” is a commonly expressed sentiment in the E.U. and U.S. A new concept of the good life cannot be based on the existing

production and consumption system. Instead, we must ask “What do people *really* need? And what is possible for *all* on a limited planet?”

3. ***All dominant social relations will have to change.*** *These relations include those of humans to nature, of men to women, of city to countryside, and relations between different nations so that colonies cease to exist. New, nonhierarchical relations must be created between intellectual and manual labor and between producers and consumers. All exploitative, dominating, colonial relations must be transformed into reciprocal, respectful, mutual ones.*

4. ***A new society must eliminate all patriarchal, violent and militaristic relations.*** *This means liberating men as well as women from such structures and ideologies, because the most central relationship is between women and men.*

Most feminists believe that the “woman question,” as it was formerly called in Germany, will be solved when women are legally made equal to men, a strategy of the socialist movement also. In fact, the woman question was called the “secondary contradiction” by the old socialists. Clara Zetkin said it would be solved after the revolution. Although the new women's movement criticized the concept of the secondary contradiction, it still maintained gender equality—understood as legal equality—as the strategic goal of the women's movement.

However, despite numerous programs for gender equality, violence and discrimination against women and the further ramboization of men did not disappear. It became evident, as English feminists remarked, that it does not suffice to “add women to any given policy and stir.” Even the introduction of a new terminology did not change these man-woman relations. To talk of “gender” instead of “women” has only made women invisible again. To talk of “gender mainstreaming” is a bluff, because nobody takes it seriously. A friend from Bangladesh wrote: “I am not a gender, I am a woman.”

Without the liberation of men from their patriarchal, militaristic, machoist self-concept, no women's movement will reach its goal. This must be the work of men, too. Therefore, if we take the liberation of women and men as seriously as the liberation of nature, we need nothing less than a total revolution of patriarchal capitalist society.

This revolution must start with the redefinition of basic concepts. We need to redefine the concept of work, especially “productive work,” which has come to mean the production of exchange values, and money in particular, in service of expanding capital accumulation. Under the subsistence perspective, *all* work, including the work of housewives, subsistence peasants, and artisans, is considered valuable, because it involves the production and reproduction of life. As such, it is valued in terms of its usefulness to survival and human satisfaction rather than in monetary terms, which typically rewards alienated work. Work valued for its intrinsic worth will not be alienated work and is much more likely to be a joy rather than just a burden. Along with the concept of “work,” the concepts of “productive work” and “productivity” will have to be liberated from their capitalist fetters. Unless these concepts are deconstructed so that they are no longer linked purely to the expansion of capital accumulation but to the process of promoting the good life for all, they are of no use.

5. ***A life-centered subsistence economy and society can only permit technology that serves life.*** *One of the illusions of capitalism—but also of traditional socialism—is that technology is system-neutral, that one can use the*

technology capitalism has produced to benefit socialist society. But it has been repeatedly demonstrated that capitalist science and technology has wrought the same ecological havoc in both capitalist and socialist societies.

The ideology of a system is not external to its science and technology but is intrinsic to the technology itself. For example, the idea of waste—of fast obsolescence of goods to maximize sales of new goods to take their place, which triggers the continuous production of scarcity—is inbuilt into capitalist science and technology. The same is true for the capitalist disregard of limits. Nuclear technology, which creates deadly radioactive waste, essentially forever, shows how dangerous such an ideology is. One of Marx's gravest mistakes was to believe that socialism and communism could simply be built upon the technology developed by capitalism, because he thought technology is value- and system-free. Therefore, a life-oriented subsistence society and economy would produce a different philosophy of science as well as a different, nonexploitative, antigrowth-oriented, nondominating, nondestructive technology.

It is useful to remember that most of our present technological “revolutions” are the result of inventions made for military use. Therefore, a new concept of science and technology would necessarily lead to a fundamental critique of the present concepts of destructive progress and productivity. Capitalist productivity presupposes monoculture—maximizing production of uniform products to achieve “efficiency”—and the colonizing and exploitation of foreign workers. But small farmers from Bangladesh, India, and other countries of the Global South have shown that their small, mixed agriculture using traditional methods and technologies is much more productive than modern agribusiness, which is based on ecologically destructive high-tech inputs to maximize production of export crops.

Technology shapes human relations and human communication. The early factory technology brought masses of workers together under one roof. Marxists saw this as the precondition for the creation of the industrial working class. Today, however, we experience a totally different technological strategy. Modern high-tech and computer technology atomizes this workforce on a global level, creating worldwide competition among workers, which, in turn, serves to lower labor costs for the capitalists and erode workers' solidarity.

In a subsistence society and economy, this Darwinian situation pitting worker against worker would not exist, because subsistence relations and subsistence technology require that the main means of production and reproduction are communally owned, be it in the form of commons or national property. Therefore, workers would be encouraged to combine their efforts and share in the fruits of their labor.

Subsistence technology gives communities control and sovereignty over their immediate conditions of life. Global capitalism has taken this control out of people's hands and concentrated it in the boardrooms of giant transnational corporations, international financial institutions like the World Bank, or capitalist bureaucracies like the WTO. Much of the thrust of the international movement against globalization stems from the desire to regain control, particularly sovereignty over food, water, education and health—our basic needs. To wrest this control out of the hands of international capital, we not only need struggle and solidarity but also new ways of doing things that sever our dependence on the

world market. By definition, subsistence production and subsistence technology would cease wasteful and useless production. By concentrating efforts and resources on sustaining life, subsistence production shifts away from organizing and ordering life based on competition, which creates scarcity. Instead it fosters cooperation to achieve rich, fulfilled lives for all.

6. Some may think that such ideas are just romantic and idealistic wishful thinking. The present situation demands no less than radically new economic and social ideas. Mahatma Gandhi articulated and lived such ideas. Although I am critical of Gandhi's ideas about women, caste and class, his vision of India's economic future was and remains truly ecological and farsighted. In his dispute with Nehru on the economic future of India, Gandhi rejected Nehru's enthusiasm for large-scale industrialization of India. In 1928 he wrote:

The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million (India) took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world base like locusts.

He advocated simplicity and rejected unlimited needs. Many ecologists quote his phrase:

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not for every man's greed.”

After witnessing the ecological and social destruction wrought by capitalist and socialist industrialization—despite its failure to satisfy people's basic needs—this statement is more true today than in Gandhi's time.