

The Right to a New Utopia: Learning and the Changing World of Work in an Era of Global Capitalism

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We make, by art, in...orchards and gardens, trees and flowers to come earlier or later than their seasons; and to come up and bear more speedily than by the natural course they do. We make them also by art greater much than their nature: and their fruit greater and sweeter and of differing taste, smell, colour and figure, from their nature

Francis Bacon, New Atlantis 1627

I think economic life is for teaching our species it has responsibilities to the planet and the rest of nature

Jane Jacobs, The Nature of Economies, 2000

We begin with what is not news. Corporations and firms have not simply taken over the mechanisms of production and consumption. They have equally usurped our private selves and our public spaces

Mark Kingwell, The World We Want, 2000 A.D.

...He laughed at me, at my promise to bring him all the wealth in Egypt, which was folly to his heart

from Tale of a Shipwrecked Sailor, 1940 B.C.

Opening Remarks

I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to address this impressive conference organized by UNEVOC. I am grateful because like many of you I feel that there is everything to gain by bringing the researchers, policy persons and practitioners in the fields of adult and lifelong learning together with those who see themselves as working with a framework of vocational education. In fact the interactions amongst many of us at the community, Provincial or workplace networks already demonstrate the unity

of our respective areas of concern. At the national and even international levels there are many ways that we might strengthen our alliances. I spoke with the Co-President's of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, the academic body which provides a focus for research in adult and lifelong learning. Both Profs. Butterwick and Clover have indicated to me that they would welcome proposals for presentations or other suggestions for collaboration at the May 29-31, 2003 meeting of CASAE.

At the Provincial and National levels the joint fields of adult and vocational education are not as well served as we once were historically. The national associations in our respective fields have either disappeared or almost disappeared.

At the international level, more dialogue is needed as well. Within UNESCO there is an high degree of silo behaviour with bridges between education for all, adult and lifelong learning and vocational education being difficult to arrange. I can assure you however that the International Council for Adult Education, the non-governmental body serving the field of adult education would be most interested in more dialogue and interaction. The current world President of this body is Dr. Paul Belanger who currently works at the Universite de Quebec a Montreal.

Introduction

In my remarks today, I will do four things: examine economic globalization as a form of global market utopia; discuss the impact of this project on our lives and on our work; explore responses to the form that this market vision takes; and finally make a case for New Utopian visions.

John Carey in his introduction to the Faber Book of Utopias (1999) tells us that, "Anyone who is capable of love must at some time have wanted the world to be a better place, for we all want our loved ones to live free of suffering, injustice and heartbreak. He goes on to say of Utopian ideas that, "their imaginative excitement comes from the recognition that everything inside our heads, and much outside, are human constructs and can be changed". He ominously notes as well that, "They (utopian projects) aim at a New World, but must destroy the old" (p xi). I have found Carey's views on Utopias and his encyclopedic anthology of visions from all ages and from all parts of the world fascinating and helpful. The idea of utopian projects helps me to understand both the power of the current market dreams and the importance of recovering our own right to create new utopias. Globalization is a Utopian vision. The creation of an integrated 24 hour a day economic system which allows for total

freedom for investors to find cheap money to borrow and high returns on investment anywhere in the world is a dream. That all limits on corporate and individual profits would be removed is a dream. That all workers in all countries would be integrated into global networks of production and consumption, which produce untold profits for investors, is a dream. That responsibilities to shareholders could take precedence over health and safety and environmental concerns is a dream. Evidence of the power and excitement of this dream is that multinational corporations have joined with the political leaders to promote this as the only dream that has a possibility of making this a better world. Not only is globalization the way for individual investors to accumulate riches beyond their wildest fantasies, but thank heavens the market utopia is also, its architects would argue, the best hope we have ever had to reduce poverty and create a better world at home and abroad. The global market utopia is a dream, but it may not be our dream. It may not be a dream for all. And keep in mind, as I have earlier noted, that like all Utopias, this one, “must destroy the old”(Carey: 1999).

The Global Market Utopia

Globalisation is being experienced in a variety of forms and practices. Important dimensions of globalisation also include the economy, the state, communications, movements of people, sales of arms, and violence and crime. The most dramatic financial figure, which illustrates the contemporary global market, is that each day, about one and a half Trillion disconnected dollars change hand for financial transactions totally apart from funds needed for global trade purposes. These transactions have to do with currency speculation by private and public banks, with investments of all kinds through the computerised stock markets of the world, with bond undertakings at both private and state levels. The political leadership in most parts of the world has joined the call for each of us to play our part in the competitive global market. Products are assembled everywhere, sold everywhere crossing borders sometimes scores of time before finding an ultimate place of rest or sale. And the movement of durable goods does not stop with sale. Within days, weeks or years most of the goods produced in the contemporary world will be discarded and our goods then rejoin the global search for another resting-place. If we live in the cities, we send our waste to the rural areas. If our waste is poisonous or toxic, we will send it to the furthest reaches of our countries or failing that to the poorest parts of the world where countries fight over the right to become a dumping ground for the waste of the rich. Jobs, health and safety conditions, environmental regulations, human rights, and immigration policies are thrown out as deregulation on a global basis strips national legislation of its force.

The state itself has taken on global forms. The richest states of Europe now work together in a powerful economic union where the restrictions and limitations of individual governments are giving way to regional forms of state control. In Asia no serious economic decisions are taken by a single state government without direct or indirect talks with governments of trading partners such as Japan, China,

Indonesia, Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and increasingly Thailand and Malaysia. The United Nations system and related regional banking and development agencies are a further layer of an internationalised state function. These multi-lateral bodies have more power and influence in the medium and smaller states with institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank taking on nearly full control of the economies of the least powerful states.

Crime and violence are also disturbing features of our globalising world. The complex combination of rich country drug use and poor country weak economies creates patterns of international activity which take advantage of all the modern means of communications and money transfers. All of the world people are caught in vicious patterns of cruelty and violence, which spills over into each, and every one of our homes (Commission on Global Governance, 1995). The arms trade is another dimension of globalisation. While the overall world expenditures on the military has declined since the 1989 accords between the former Soviet Union and the United States, the arms trade itself has taken on a new life. The United States in particular has accelerated its sales from roughly \$9 billion in 1987 to over \$22 billion in 1992 to over \$50 billion today. In that same period the former Soviet Union has decreased arms transfers from \$30 billion to \$2.8 billion. According to war historian John Keegan, those,

who have died in war since 1945 by cheap, mass-produced weapons have for the most part, been killed by small-calibre ammunition costing little more than the transistor radios and batteries which flooded the world during the same period. (History of Warfare)

Among the low cost weapons which cross our borders each day are land-mines which can be produced for several dollars each and which can kill or maim a person with ease. There are an estimated 100 million landmines distributed in roughly 60 countries around the globe (Grimmett, 1994).

While money flows with the speed of light, goods and services at the speed of air and sea transport, people are also more mobile than ever before. The combination of economic destruction, civil conflict and positive inducements to move has created global movements of people. On global terms over 100 million people are refugees, living in countries that they were not born in against their choice (UNHCR, 1995). Of course people do not move as easily as either goods or finance capital. Much of the contemporary movement of peoples is involuntary movement as economic and political refugees are forced to shift from their homes elsewhere in search of security of a means to survive. This is in spite of the fact that formal obstacles to the movements of people from the poorer nations to the richer are exceedingly difficulty. It would seem that at least one vision of the 'market utopia' is that people will stay in communities where low wages can be sustained which technology, tools and capital will move freely. In Canada, money can move in and out between Mexico, the United States and our financial institutions with ease, but people have much more difficulty. The open capital market has not

produced an open labour market. In spite of the legal restrictions against movement between our three nations which are partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), there are very large movements of people from Mexico into the United States illegally, some illegal Canadian movement into the United States as well and vast displacements of persons from the rural areas of Mexico, Canada and the United States to places where there chances of finding jobs are better. As Rajesh Tandon and Miguel D'Arcy de Oliveira observe, "the weaker, the more vulnerable, the powerless, those who do not produce or consume anything of value for the world market, those who can hardly be privatised or internationalised are becoming expendable." (1995:7)

Further Impact of the Global Market Utopia

On Children

Canadian scholars John McMurtry and Teresa Turner in a recent paper on the impact of globalization on the world's children argue that, "In truth what unifies global corporate investment patterns today is a ruling principle which is blind to the well-being or ill-being of children" (paper 2000 unpublished). Dependency on GNP and similar economic indicators is covering over a rising tide of social disintegration and exclusion.

The cry is expressed on the ground with the unprecedented horror of families selling their own children in exponentially rising numbers as sex-slaves into the new free market economies, with tens of millions of children across the world now driven not only into forced prostitution, but street beggary, slave labour and military enslavement as a consequence of the impoverishment of their families in the globalization dynamics. (McMurtry and Turner)

On the rise of social exclusion

The impact of globalization is not of course only on children or only in the majority world countries. In 1999, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD came out with a study which examines the role of adult learning in overcoming exclusion. In this study they draw attention to the report provided for the meeting of Social Policy Ministers in 1998 which notes that,

The labour market has turned against low-skilled workers, who in all countries are more likely to find themselves unemployed, non-employed or earning lower wages than their better educated colleagues...Unemployment remains high – 35 million or 7 per cent of the work force...over half of all unemployed persons had

been so for more than 12 months...households where children are present are much more likely to have low incomes than they were 10 – 20 years ago. (OECD: 18)

Accumulated evidence from the ‘rich’ countries which includes of course Australia and Canada is that in many countries there are widening income inequalities, worrying levels of unemployment and inactivity and growing poverty often amid a general increase in affluence. In Ontario, the province that I live in, household incomes after taxes have dropped from \$43,500 in 1990 to \$41,800 in 1997. For those in the poorest 20 per cent of the income spectrum there has been a 7.3 per cent decline of from \$12,066 in 1995 to \$11,185 in 1997. In the entire group of OECD countries there is a growing number of families where there are no wage earners as well as a vast majority where all adult members of the family are obliged to work. Indeed one in five of all households in OECD countries are now considered “work-poor”. They are working but at such low-income levels as to leave them below the poverty lines in their respective countries.

On the environment

On the 24th of November 2000 we learned that the Global Conference on Climate Change meeting in The Hague had failed to reach an agreement on measures to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And this just over one year after we learned that two islands in the Kiribati Archipelago in the South Pacific were the first to be submerged by rising sea levels due to global warming and that others in the area are also in danger. (Globe and Mail). Canada, along with the United States, Japan and Australia, was one of those countries which was reluctant to make an agreement which may in any way slow down the super heated production of automobiles or cut back other industrial processes which threaten the rest of the world. Canada has the highest per capita consumption of energy of any country on earth. But rather than take a creative look at what we might do to provide leadership for a greener options, our government prefers to hold out for recognition of our vast forest areas to be considered as credits in the global warming game for their role as global air filters.

The facts of the matter are those kinds of life styles and consumer patterns that fuel the global market utopia are a cancer for the planet. In the insightful work of William Rees, Our Ecological Footprint, he outlines a method for determining the percentage of the world’s resources that we use as individuals, as communities or as whole nations. His complex formula points out that if the entire world were to achieve the same levels of development and growth which characterize most lives in the rich countries, we would need four entire planets worth of energy resources to satisfy these demands. Clearly we are on an ecological collision path between a Utopia of the rich and the carrying capacity of a still fragile planet.

Effects on the structure of work

As capital has loosened itself from the restrictions of the nation state, so too has production. In Canada we produce “American” automobiles made from parts which are in turn made in both Europe and Asia and flown in for just-in-time assembly in the auto plants of southern Ontario and Quebec. Women workers in Mexico grow the tomatoes we buy in Canada except at the end of our short growing season where regulations on the use of toxic chemicals for production are lower. There are few clothes now available for purchase in Canada that are made, to use that old fashioned concept, ‘at home’. On the North American continent, like in other parts of the world production has been growing dramatically in the border area between the United States and Mexico. There in what are called the ‘maquiladoras’, lower paid Mexican workers, a majority of whom are women, live in company dormitories, work in US owned factories and send money home to their families in poverty stricken Northern Mexico. But in a newer trend we are also seeing that for example that New York City immigrant sweatshops can be as competitive on the global market as similar workplaces in Thailand (Sassan, 1991).

I am indebted to a colleague Brian Milani for his recent new book Designing the Green Economy (2000), and its’ insights on the restructuring of work. Technological change has had an extraordinary impact on production. The dominant tendency however remains the one which has prevailed throughout the age of industrialization; that of de-skilling of direct production. Rifkin in his study of work change in the United States estimates that 90 million jobs in the U.S. are vulnerable to replacement by machines. More and more we are finding that creative, fulfilling jobs are becoming rarer and rarer, “islands in a sea of work degradation”(Milani, 2000:39). The explosion in producer services has fed into a polarization not only between nations, but also within nations as the fastest growing categories of workers are in such categories as building attendants, sales clerks, fast-food workers, and security guards. Contrary to popular opinion or policy documents from governments, the majorities of new jobs are and will be low paid jobs. The U.S. Bureau of Labour statistics projected the greatest number of jobs as cashiers janitors, truck drivers, waiters and waitresses. In a recent report from Statistics Canada, it was reported that the fastest growth in jobs for men in Canada was as lorry drivers. And at the same time the state continues to push for more ‘flexibility’ in labour conditions. In the province of Ontario, the Conservative Government has recently introduced legislation which would make it legal for workers to work up to 60 hours per week if asked by their employers, after nearly 50 years of a 40 hour work week tradition.

At the same time, it is well documented that the pay of senior executives has grown much faster than average earnings. Eighty six per cent of executives in the top 500 companies in the United States received an average of \$8 million dollars a year in 1999. In doing so, they earned 60 per cent more than their any of their counterparts in any other part of the world. They were compensated at a rate 34 times

that of the average factory worker. This compares with multiples of 15 to 20 in Europe (Carr, 2000:100)

If there has been a growth in low waged work, for those workers fortunate to work in the larger globalising companies of our rich countries, we are seeing a dizzying variety of new practices in the workplace. As Foley notes in his forthcoming book on 'Strategic Learning', "As corporations and national economies compete for market share, it is increasingly recognised that what makes the difference is the quality of organisations human resources—its workers and managers""(forthcoming: 9). It follows that there is a dramatic need to engage workers and managers in the goals, vision and ambitions of the new enterprises if a given sector or company is to tap the larger reservoir of worker-manager knowledge advance in the global market. The attraction to the owners of the 21st century business of the various approaches from high performing teams, to learning organisations, to spirituality in the workplace or 360 training are increased performance and productivity; the bottom line. If the workforce can created more collective knowledge for company competitiveness, feel more involved in the destiny of the company and generate massive profits for the shareholders so much the better.

Responses to Globalization

All present understood that the free market was another name for God, but then again, when one got to thinking about it, the market, like God, didn't always answer everybody's prayers. Lewis Lapham, The Agony of Mammon (p 23)

Lewis Lapham is the Editor of Harper's Magazine, a liberal U.S. publication. He had an opportunity to take part, as a journalist, in the Davos World Economic Forum, the club of 1,100 corporate and world leaders who collectively drive the Global Market Utopia. His account of his experience has been written up in a book subtitled, "The Imperial Global Economy Explains Itself to The Membership in Davos, Switzerland". What is particularly insightful about this account of corridor conversations and witness to presentations by the most powerful of our world are the huge layers of uncertainty. The overwhelming topic of conversation, aside from remarks about the Monica Lewinsky affair which had just been revealed, was about the search for security on the one hand and the search for a moral grounding on the other.

On November 6, 2000, Business Week, an influential U.S. business magazine entitled "Global Capitalism: Can it be Made to Work Better?" The writers therein note that, "There is no point denying that multinationals have contributed to labour, environmental and human rights abuses". They quote John

Ruggie, the Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations as saying that, “The current system is unsustainable”. And in one of the most chilling admissions I have seen they report that, “The downside of global capitalism is the disruption of whole societies”

Eric Hobsbawm, one of the most respected western historians, in his seminal history of the 20th century notes that, “for the first time in two centuries, the world of the 1990s entirely lacked any international system or structure” (1994:559). He goes on to say that, “In short the century ended in a global disorder whose nature was unclear, and without an obvious mechanism for either ending it or keeping it under control”(1994:562). He closes out his work with a plea to look towards something new,

The forces generated by the techno-scientific economy are now great enough to destroy the environment, that is to say, the material foundations of life. The structures of human societies themselves including even some of the social foundations of the capitalist economy are on the point of being destroyed by the erosion of what we have inherited from the past. Our world risks both explosion and implosion. It must change. (584-85)

Jorge Nef, a global security political scientist, in a study published by the Canadian-based International Development Research Centre cautions us that,

...the seemingly secure societies of the North are increasingly vulnerable to events in the lesser secure and hence underdeveloped regions of our globe, in a manner that conventional international relations theory and development have failed to account for. (1997:13)

Nef continues adding that, “...In the midst of the current crisis, the established flow of information, ideas, science and worldviews is being shattered (94).

Benjamin Barber, a US based political scientist, has outlined his views in a fascinating book called Jihad vs. McWorld.

Jihad forges communities of blood rooted in exclusion and hatred...McWorld forges global markets rooted in consumption and profit, leaving to an untrustworthy, if not altogether factitious invisible hand issues of public interest and common good that once might have been nurtured by democratic citizenries

and their watchful governments

“Unless we can offer”, Barber continues, an alternative to the struggle between Jihad and McWorld, the epoch on whose threshold we stand is likely to be terminally post-democratic. (1995:7)

What about geographers? Gearoid O Tuthail, Andrew Herod and Susan Roberts of the US note in the introduction to their book, An Unruly World? Globalization, Governance and Geography, that “...One might be tempted to proclaim at centuries end the emergence of an unruly epoch of ungovernable, turbulent and disorderly global space.” (1998:1)

Lester R. Brown, the respected director of the World Watch Institute notes that, “In effect we are behaving as though we have no children, as though there will not be a next generation. (1998:19)

Herman Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., in their powerful plea for an economics which reflects the environmental and human realities of our planet, note that,

... At a deep level of our being we find it hard to suppress the cry of anguish, the scream of horror...the wild words required to express wild realities. We human beings are being led to a *dead* end.all too literally.... The global system will change during the next forty years, because it will be physically forced to change. But if humanity waits until it is physically compelled to change, its options will be few indeed. (1989:13)

Responses from the worlds of Adult Education and Training

Adult education and training are intimately linked to our daily lives, our work lives, our legislative and professional possibilities and obviously to the larger political economic frameworks of our times. Adult educator and trainers have a complex

approach to the changing world that we are facing. Faced with the dominance of the global market utopia, we might look at responses from the communities of adult education and training as *facilitating* the global market utopia, as *making the best of* global market implications or *transforming* relations of power. In fact our adult education and training policy frameworks quite often contain elements of all three educational responses.

Facilitating a Market Utopia

The British Secretary of State notes in his forward to the 1999 Green Paper on Learning to Succeed, that

The skill needs of the future will be different from those of today and it is clear that we will not keep pace with the modern economies of our competitors, if we are unable to match today's skills with the challenge of the developing information and communication age of tomorrow. As labour markets change, we must develop a new approach to skills and to enabling people, and businesses, to succeed. (Secretary of State, 1999:2)

Indeed there has been a dramatic growth in adult education participation in the past 10-15 years. According to Belanger and Federighi, the percentage of the adult population participating in some form of adult learning activities in 1994-1995 in the industrialised nations range from 14 per cent in Poland to 53 per cent in Sweden with Australia and Canada at 39 per cent and 38 per cent respectively. (2000:6) The vast majority of this provision is for labour market learning in areas of new information technologies, restructuring of larger enterprises and training related to lower end employment opportunities. National adult education policies in Australia, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Slovenia, Bulgaria, India, Ireland and Venezuela have emphasized this important new requirement for global survival.

The provision of vocational education is of course also the area where the private sector itself has moved into with the most vigour. Adult learning is not only needed for the global market, but in many ways has become part of the global market itself. Adult learning has been variously estimated to represent a huge potential global market, if it could be fully privatised, of upward of \$90 Billion (find ref) Prior to 2001,

in the province of Ontario in Canada, private universities had not been legal. As a result however of a new openness in the current government there are now some 60 proposals in the Ministry of Education seeking endorsement from private for-profit universities waiting to move into the field.

Making the Best of the Market

Paul Belanger and Paolo Federighi's recent transnational study of adult learning policies, Unlocking People's Creative Forces, makes perhaps the most eloquent case for an adult education framework which responds to both the economic as well as the individual and collective demand for adult learning. Written in the spirit of the 1997 Hamburg Declaration, of which Belanger himself was the architect, this book makes the case for a broad vision of adult learning which meets a variety of needs,

In order to survive and improve their lives, adult men and women on every continent are striving to develop the means to enhance their capacity to act and the understand the ways of the world. Adult learning also has strategic importance for economic actors today. Risk management strategies, economic policy, environmental and health policies all invariably rely on continually raising people's competencies and skills. Similarly, traditional and new types of popular movements and national liberation projects call for strengthening and spreading the capacity for initiative so that people can deal with the challenges facing them, bring about change and take an active part in economic and social development (2000:2).

One of the most creative approaches to taking up the global market challenge from an adult learning and organisational change perspective that I have come across, is the recent work done by the Australian adult educator, Griff Foley. Better known for his work on the teaching and learning processes and for his widely respected writings on radical or social movement learning. Foley has in the past several years entered fully into the world of workplace, learning and change. In a soon-to-be published book on what he calls 'Strategic Learning', Foley outlines a vision for an approach to organisational learning that he feels is both strategic and emancipatory,

A 'strategic learning' approach rejects the attempt to recast adult education and learning simply as an instrument for improving performance and productivity. It

sees learning as complex (formal and informal, constructive and destructive, contested and contextual. It assumes that critical and emancipatory learning is possible and necessary. It asserts that a first step to their realisation is an honest investigation of what people are actually learning and teaching each other in different sites –workplaces, families, communities, the mass media, social movements. (Forthcoming: 20)

Foley also calls for a new foundation of workplace learning. He considers an appropriate analytic framework for workplace learning to include: the nature of and reasons for the long-running global economic crisis; the character and logic of the capitalist political economy; the character and logic of work in capitalism; the experiential learning of people in changing workplaces, the unconscious dimension of workplace learning; and gender relations in workplaces. (63)

Resisting and transforming

It may be argued that more adults learned about the nature of global market structures and the problems generated by them in the several days of the Seattle demonstrations before the WTO meetings than from any adult education conference yet organized. There is a dramatic increase in social movement learning linked directly to the anti-globalisation struggles. Young people, trade unionists, activists from the majority world came together in Seattle, as they had in lesser numbers in other cities before and as they have since then in Prague, Washington D.C. and Windsor, Ontario, Canada. A new global civil society is a reality. The same computer networks, which support global flow of capital, are beginning to support a more active flow of ideas for resisting and transforming the global market frameworks. I would urge those interested to log onto the global web-sites of the ICFTU (www.icftu.org) for a rich array of educational materials and ideas for strategic thinking about all aspects of globalisation and its transformation. You will find language for policy documents and collective bargaining, which go beyond the adaptation to global markets. Similarly, LabourStart, a project of the Labour NewsWire Global Network (www.labourstart.org) is a sophisticated educational and information service for trade union educators and others interested in a labour perspective on the changing workplace.

The world of adult education networks itself is undergoing substantial changes. The

International Council for Adult Education, a global network of some 700 local and national NGOs interested in adult learning, is organising a World Assembly of Adult Education in Jamaica, August 9-13 calling for global advocacy towards adult learning for individual and collective transformation in the age of globalisation. One of the most effective regional groups affiliated with the ICAE is the Asia and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE). Their web site (www.aspbae.org) is another vital resources for a transformative vision of adult education.

The Right to a New Utopia

The most powerful instruments to transform the world that we have are our own minds. The 1985 UNESCO Right to Learn Declaration spoke, among other things, of the right to imagine. We have the right to a New Utopian vision, a vision which responds to the collective needs of the majority of persons in the world, not simply the few. We need to grasp the power of the Utopic vision for ourselves. The global market utopia is held in place by coercion and force, but it is most firmly supported because we share at least a part of the dream, which this global utopia speaks to, but does not deliver. In part we want to believe that by following the strictures of the global market that we will find our way to a more secure world.

Linda McQuaig, a Canadian journalist, in her recent book, The Cult of Impotence: Selling the Myth of Powerlessness in the Global Economy, notes that,

We have become convinced that we are collectively powerless in the face of international financial markets. And with the widespread acceptance of this view the rich have proceeded to create a world in which the rights of capital have been given precedence over and protection against interference from the electorate. (1998:283)

She argues that in the case of Canada, we have been ‘sold’ a myth of powerlessness because it serves the interests of the current ruling alliances, not because we in fact do not have any power as citizens. I believe that her arguments hold true for many parts of the world. We have both the ideas and the means of implementing these ideas if only our gaze could begin to be focused on new directions.

It is a time to claim back the power of the Utopian vision. In the claiming back of the power of a vision of the world we want, as opposed to the world we do not want, adult learning has an important role to play. In surveys in Canada, it has been found that adults already engage in, on average, eight hours of autonomous informal learning on their own. The individual and social demand for learning is a transformative force of the greatest power. The adult learning and training world is further rich with networks, web-sites, newsletters, conferences and other structures of communications which already exist to support the social demands for adult learning. We have established approaches which research has proven to be effective in supporting adult learning in a variety of settings. It is time for the resources and capabilities of the adult learning communities to support the search for New Utopian visions. New Utopian visions are found in local community gardens, in community shared agricultural schemes, in individual and family choices to live more simple lives, in the large and still growing movement for 'green economic development', for social economies of varying kinds and in the literally millions of creative ideas which women and men are engaged in as ways to survive in a world which they do not like, yet know not how to change. It is time for us to claim the right to a new utopia in our workplaces. Adult education and training can support the release of our creativity and imagination. We have the right, as the late Paulo Freire says, to become agents in our own history.

For those of you who doubt the power of citizens working together, consider the fascinating account in the Economist's publication The World in 2001,

The anti-capitalists have been winning the battle of ideas...despite having no ideas worthy of the name. In 2001, their influence on governments and in boardrooms is going to increase.

Equally worrying is the influence that they are having with big western companies which nowadays feel obligated to bow down before bogus nostrums of 'corporate responsibility' (Crook, 2000:15)

And in another article in the same issue,

Activists have already seized the initiative on global trade. They succeeded in scuttling both the OECD's Multilateral Agreement on Investment in 1998 and the launch of the WTO's new global trade talks a year later... This means that at the very best *trade liberalisation is stalled* (emphasis added) (Wooldridge, 2000:96)

In the recently published Which World: Scenarios for the 21st Century Alan Hammond of the World Watch Institute reports on a research project which extrapolates current global trends in three different scenarios. This research suggests that roughly speaking the contemporary context provides evidence for what he calls Market World, Fortress World and Transformed World.

In Market World, we see the extension of the global free trade agenda, what I call the global market Utopia. It is however a vision, which still contains nearly all prevailing economic and political, powers and influence. Fortress World arises in the scenario, which sees market-led forces failing to redress social disparities eventually spreading stagnation and fragmentation. Resources are shifted rapidly to security issues to contain growing violence and conflict. In Transformed World, also drawn from existing trends and beginnings of new global civil society movements, we see a society with transformed values and cultural norms in which power is more widely shared and in which new social coalitions work from the grass roots up to shape what governments do. The market still exists, but it is balanced by other needs. In reality of course the future, as the present, will contain aspects of all three scenarios, but in which proportion, in which combination and for whom?

Ulrich Beck explains it this way; "There is no lack of ideas for changing society. Today (just as in earlier revolutions) many contemporaries carry plans for changing the world around with them in their breast pocket or their heart".

Gandhi, according to Vandana Shiva, elaborated the concept of Swadeshi, an economic self-reliance, which was based on the conviction that "people possess both materially and morally what they need to evolve and design their society and economy and free themselves of oppressive structures".

Indigenous knowledges, long suppressed, offer ideas for the future as well. From a recently

completed book by Dei, Hall and Goldin-Rosenberg,

We need to understand and move beyond the often genocidal effects of decades of colonialism and maldevelopment practices... We need to call for locally defined models of sustainability which will prevail the lived realities of local peoples with all their social, cultural, political, spiritual, moral and ecological goals and aspirations.

Samir Amin, the veteran majority world political economist notes that, "...a humanistic response to the challenge of globalisation inaugurated by capitalist expansion may be idealistic but it is not utopian: on the contrary, it is the only realistic project possible" (1997:10)

In closing I am reminded of the late Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, who had so much faith in adult learning. He set a goal for us in 1976 at the first World Assembly of Adult Education when he noted that the first goal of adult education was, to convince people of the possibility of change. All other goals can come if we believe that change is possible.

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