

Canada's Thinker-activists and Critics of Globalization

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Resisting the Post-National: Canadian Critiques of the Geo/Cultural/Politics of Globalization

The unpleasant neologism of “Geo/Cultural/Politics” is intended as one marker of a sequence of unmaskings I would like to offer here—and as a compressed way of saying that globalization, though represented by its advocates in discourses strongly flavoured with claims both of economic rationality and of historical inevitability, is in actuality a political project designed to enhance, at the expense of everyone else, the geopolitical power of social elites associated with trans-national corporate interests;¹ that it does so through an economics of piracy sustained by barely-concealed threats of violence on the part of state powers controlled by those same interests;² and that this project is both associated with and to a significant degree propagated by particular forms of cultural representation and socio-cultural reproduction, and also dedicated to the destruction of competing forms of representation and social reproduction.³ But perhaps the best apology for this neologism, this act of compression, might be to suggest that the phenomenon itself is uglier than any language I can use in describing and analyzing it.

Although I will be principally discussing the contributions of a number of contemporary English-Canadian public intellectuals and activists—let’s compress again, and call them ‘thinker-activists’—to emergent discourses of resistance to globalization, I do not mean to suggest that the fact of their being Canadian has provided them with privileged insights into the matter. Nor do I want to imply that the forms of resistance to the condition of globalized post-nationalism (which is also to say neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism) that they have advocated and participated in have necessarily taken a recognizably nationalist form.

Let me add, parenthetically, that when I conflate neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism I am not forgetting that the former term refers to a political economy and ideology of pseudo-democratic corporatism whose penetration of national economies and devastation of social infrastructures is facilitated by international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF and trade agreements modeled on the U.S.-Canadian FTA and the subsequent NAFTA, while the latter term refers to a harder-edged ideology with Leo Straussian-monetarist roots which has increasingly cast aside any pretence of working through quasi-legal instrumentalities in favour of a geopolitics of naked aggression. The two are different—but only as the left and right wings of the same bloody bird.

Canadian anti-globalizers

While Canadians as such have no privileged access to an understanding of globalization,

a number of Canadian thinker-activists have made signal contributions to the anti-globalization movement. Maude Barlow, for example, who has been a significant presence at meetings of the World Social Forum, is the founder of a nationalist public-interest movement, The Council of Canadians, that has more than 100,000 members. She played a key role in the late 1990s in exposing the secret negotiations towards a proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), and has been an important voice in the international struggle against corporate appropriations of world water resources, and in mobilizations of Canadian resistance to corporatist continental integration (see Barlow and Clarke 1997 and 2002, and Barlow). Linda McQuaig's witty, exhaustively researched, and deservedly best-selling books have included defenses of a publicly owned social infrastructure, demolitions of the globalizers' anti-democratic 'there-is-no-alternative' ideology, and, most recently, in *It's the Crude, Dude*, an incisive analysis of the contemporary geopolitics of oil depletion and imperial aggression (see McQuaig 1991, 1995, 1998, 2001 and 2004). Naomi Klein's brilliant book *No Logo*, which offers a spirited account of the economics and politics of trans-national 'branding,' outsourcing and *maquiladora* or sweat-shop production, and of current struggles to expose and demystify this system, has enjoyed a wide international success. Klein's subsequent work has included a series of lucid political essays, which she identifies as "dispatches from the front lines of the globalization debate"; the writing and co-producing of a film, *The Take*, which documents worker-occupied and managed factories in Argentina; and, most recently, *No War*, an edited collection which includes her own essay "Baghdad Year Zero," a report on the corporate looting of Iraq being attempted by the war criminals of the Bush administration (see Klein 2000, 2002 and 2005, and Lewis and Klein).

Any short list of leading English-Canadian critics of globalization should include at least another six or eight names: Himani Bannerji, Stephen Clarkson, Daniel Drache, James Laxer, David McNally, Sherene Razack, John Ralston Saul, and Mel Watkins. Not bad for a start—and I haven't yet got around to mentioning the two thinkers whose writings against globalization will be the principal subject of this paper: economist Michel Chossudovsky, and philosopher John McMurtry.

One can speculate about the immediate socio-historical contexts that have fed this work by Canadian public intellectuals. Nearly sixty years ago the distinguished Canadian economic historian Harold Innis remarked that "Oscar Wilde wrote an essay on the decay of lying but I am not sure that it would bear reading in this country. We are all too much concerned with the arts of *suppressio veri, suggestio falsi*" (Innis 386). But concerned in what sense? People who have had to endure what Innis elsewhere called "the Siamese twin relationship between Canada and the United States—a very small twin and a very large one, to be exact" (Innis 238), have interested themselves in a variety of ways in suppression of the truth and the insinuation of falsehoods. While a majority of Canadian politicians, media executives and journalists (dare we say academics as well?) appear to have become direct practitioners of these dubious arts, an honourable minority have developed an interest in falsehood and deception that is, instead, critical and interrogative.

It may be that a high but not wholly suffocating level of obfuscation in one's surroundings is a stimulus to strong critical thinking. The not unrelated facts that Canadians enjoy the benefits of socialized medicine denied to our American neighbours, and that the destruction of our public medicare system has for at least the past fifteen years been a principal if unacknowledged goal of Canadian and American neoliberals and neoconservatives alike, may have helped to orient that critical thinking toward the

discourses and infrastructures that further, or disable, social justice.

And perhaps it has helped to have periodic pokes in the eye from that very large and sometimes openly unfriendly Siamese twin of ours. Recent such pokes, prompted by Canada's lack of enthusiasm for the "War on Terror,"⁴ have included the spectacle of right-wing U.S. media pundits like the dreary Ann Coulter amusing themselves with threats of invasion against a northern neighbour already labeled "Soviet Canuckistan" by their colleague Patrick Buchanan (see Carr, Coulter), and—more materially—the Bush administration's announcement that despite repeated rejections of its position on Canadian softwood lumber imports by international trade tribunals, including the NAFTA adjudication panel, it will continue to collect punitive tariffs of twenty percent—while Canada can whistle for the more than five billion dollars of punitive tariffs already collected, which by most interpretations of trade law should long since have been reimbursed.

There is of course an ethical as well as a commercial dimension to the intermittent political and economic bullying which these episodes exemplify. For out of fear that if Canada showed insufficient zeal in the hunt for potential Islamist terrorists the United States might delay or obstruct commercial traffic across what used to be celebrated as the longest undefended border in the world, the Canadian government has shamefully participated in a U.S.-organized campaign of arbitrary arrest and torture—most notoriously in the case of Canadian citizen Maher Arar, who while returning from a vacation in Tunisia was arrested in New York by the FBI and then "renditioned," with the full connivance and participation of the RCMP, to the torture-chambers of Syria (see Walkom). Arar, need it be said, was in no way involved with terrorist activities.

I turn now to thinker-activists whom I regard as two of the pre-eminent Canadian critics of globalization: Michel Chossudovsky and John McMurtry. At this point a brief declaration of interest may be in order. John McMurtry has been for many years an admired colleague of mine at the University of Guelph, where he taught until his retirement last year; and Michel Chossudovsky has published a number of my articles, including a series of essays and bibliographical studies on the subject of the stolen U.S. presidential election of 2004, at the website of his Centre for Research on Globalization.⁵

Michel Chossudovsky

Googling Michel Chossudovsky is a sobering experience: there are several scores of thousands of references to his work on the Internet. During the 1970s, his major publications as an economist were a series of research papers on socialist and neoliberal economic policies and their consequences in Chile before and after the 1973 coup, and on capital accumulation, agriculture, and health and medical care throughout Latin America (Chossudovsky 1973, 1977a and b, 1979). In 1986 he published a book on economic policies in post-Mao Zedong China, and he has more recently analyzed the disturbing expansion, even after the formal end of South African apartheid in 1994, of apartheid's characteristic economic structures into other sub-Saharan countries (Chossudovsky 1986, 1997a).

But the books for which Michel Chossudovsky is best known are more recent. The first edition of *The Globalization of Poverty* was published in 1997 (a revised and expanded edition appeared in 2003 as *The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*). *War and Globalisation: The Truth Behind September 11* appeared in 2002. *America's 'War on Terrorism'*, published in 2005 as a second edition of *War and Globalisation*, is actually a substantially new book, more than two hundred pages longer and containing eleven new

chapters.

In these books, which are arguably foundational texts for any adequate understanding of contemporary history, and also in many scores of articles published in scholarly journals and at the website of the Centre for Research on Globalization, Chossudovsky has performed two indispensable tasks.

First, he has provided in *The Globalization of Poverty* an appropriately global analysis, formulated with exemplary lucidity, of the worldwide devastation caused by the repeated application in state after state, under the harsh ministrations of the IMF and the World Bank, of the “deadly economic prescriptions” (Chossudovsky 2002: xxii) whose initial applications in Chile and Argentina during the 1970s he had been able to study at first hand.

The large patterns made manifest in *The Globalization of Poverty* can, to be sure, be learned about in varying degrees from other sources—among them James Petras’s and Henry Veltmeyer’s important book *Globalization Unmasked*, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz’s *Globalization and its Discontents*, and, for an insider’s account which makes it very clear that the noxious effects of ‘Washington-Consensus’ economics are not accidental, John Perkins’ riveting *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. But nowhere else, to the best of my knowledge, has such a clearly articulated overview been made available.

The book is based on extensive field research. Significantly, as Chossudovsky indicates in the preface to the second edition, this research was initiated during the 1980s “in Rwanda which, despite high levels of poverty, had achieved self-sufficiency in food production.” But that soon changed: “From the early 1990s, Rwanda had been destroyed as a functioning national economy; its once vibrant agricultural system was destabilized. The IMF had demanded the ‘opening up’ of the domestic market to the dumping of US and European grain surpluses. The objective was to ‘encourage Rwandan farmers to be more competitive’” (Chossudovsky 2003: xxii-xxiii). As Chossudovsky makes clear, the genocidal ethnic massacres which occurred in Rwanda in 1994 were not simply the result of a colonial legacy of imposed “socio-ethnic divisions”; they were also, more directly, a consequence of what he calls an IMF-imposed “economic genocide” (105, 103).

Chossudovsky conducted further field research in many other countries as well, including Brazil, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Russia. In all of them he observed “the same pattern of economic manipulation and interference by the Washington-based institutions,” and similarly disastrous consequences: widespread starvation in India, “local-level famines” in Vietnam, “abysmal poverty” throughout “vast areas of the former Soviet Union”—and in Yugoslavia, as in Rwanda, the further catastrophes of massacres and war. In Yugoslavia too, the socio-political fracturing that led to civil war had prior economic causes stemming from the re-colonizing and asset-stripping of the country under the ‘Washington-Consensus’ international regime: “Devised by World Bank economists, a ‘bankruptcy program’ had been set in motion. In 1989-90, some 1100 industrial firms were wiped out and more than 614,000 industrial workers were laid off. And that was only the beginning of a much deeper economic fracturing of the Yugoslav Federation” (Chossudovsky 2003: xxiii).

Chossudovsky’s detailed analyses of the manner in which the IMF imposes loan ‘conditionalities’ on victim countries, and of the dismal consequences that have ensued in one country after another, produce a forceful recognition of the world-wide structural violence of globalization. Of course, the violence encoded in such documents as the ‘Letters

of Intent' imposed upon debtor nations by the IMF has on many occasions been not merely structural, but also overt, and inflicted (when methods such as regime change through the creation and massive financing of opposition movements have failed) by means of coups d'état, attacks by American- or European-financed mercenary armies, and direct military interventions by imperial powers.

But in the preface to the second edition, written at the time of the American and British invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Chossudovsky suggests that a modulation in the previous patterns, involving in particular a quantum leap in the level of systemic violence, has recently occurred. He writes that "War and globalization go hand in hand." That much we might have deduced from his case studies of Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Yugoslavia (including NATO's American-led 'humanitarian' attack on Yugoslavia in 1999). But he at once adds: "Supported by America's war machine, a new deadly phase of corporate-led globalization has unfolded" (Chossudovsky 2003: xxiv). This new phase is the subject of *War and Globalisation*, and of *America's 'War on Terrorism'*—which brings me to the second of what I have called the "indispensable tasks" performed by Chossudovsky's writings.

The events of September 11, 2001 have been generally recognized as constituting a moment of major historical discontinuity. Before 9/11 George W. Bush was widely thought of as a hapless noodle, a temporary 'president' (his title widely mocked by the use of inverted commas) whose 'election' in 2000, decided by a judicial coup d'état (see Lazare), would no doubt be reversed the next time around. Effective power was clearly in the hands of Vice-President Dick Cheney, while the hand-puppet Chief Executive seemed even to his own administration good for little more than long vacations at his Crawford ranch and visits to primary schools where he could parade his dyslexia while making propaganda for fraudulent "No Child Left Behind" educational reforms.⁶ The administration's handling of the economy (tax-breaks for the rich, lies and unemployment for the rest) was increasingly unpopular, and its shamelessly unilateralist foreign policy embarrassed even those Americans who had tolerated slightly less blatant forms of the same attitudes under Ronald Reagan and George Bush père.

After 9/11, in contrast, Bush was able to redefine himself as a war leader whose rhetoric the sycophantic choristers of the corporate media were not ashamed to describe as Churchillian. Even as he proposed a "War on Terror"—an abstract noun, if you please—a war that would be of planetary scope and indeterminate duration, his approval ratings rose to unprecedented levels.

But it is not because of any mere shift in the opinion polls that 9/11 constitutes a moment of historical discontinuity. In the wake of that event, Congress was stampeded into approving the so-called Patriot Act, which together with related legislation had the effect, as Gore Vidal remarks, of "eliminating in one great erasure the Bill of Rights" (Vidal 166).⁷ And after the rapid conquest of Afghanistan the Bush administration made clear its appetite for further murderous dust-ups—with Iraq, Iran, and North Korea (the idiotically named "Axis of Evil")—to be followed, it would seem, by assaults on Syria, Venezuela, Cuba and others. It began to be apparent, even to the dimmest of onlookers, that an attack on the United States credited to non-state terrorists was being used to proleptically legitimize an already planned sequence of attacks on states which—unless one subscribed to the convenient fantasies of Dick Cheney and his acolytes—had no detectable links to the perpetrators of the 9/11 atrocities. The United States was at one and the same time embarking on a foreign policy of unconstrained aggressiveness and shedding much of the legal-constitutional

infrastructure that had made it definable as a democracy.

Michel Chossudovsky's contribution to an understanding of this important historical transition has been made possible by his calm indifference to the punishments orthodoxy reserves for those courageous enough to undertake a radical challenge of its axioms—among them denunciation as a 'conspiracy theorist,' as a wearer of tinfoil hats, as a person whose arguments cannot possibly merit serious attention. In the face of occasional bursts of flak (sometimes including charges of a much nastier kind),⁸ he has continued undeterred to gather evidence from reliable sources, to make principled analyses of its implications, and to offer forthright statements of his conclusions.

He was thus able to observe in *War and Globalisation* that the war against Afghanistan had emerged out of previously declared geopolitical and energy-resource strategies and had been planned, long before 9/11, for October 2001; that Osama bin Laden had long-term connections with the CIA, which continued between 1998 and 2001 in the form of shared support for the Muslim-Albanian KLA in Kosovo and for its offshoot, the National Liberation Army (NLA) in Macedonia; that bin Laden actually received medical treatment in American and Pakistani hospitals in Dubai and Rawalpindi in July and September 2001; that the same system of Pakistani support for radical mujaheddin by means of which the U.S. ran the Afghan war against the U.S.S.R. in the 1980s had remained in place, so that in the summer of 2001 money for Mohammed Atta and his team of purported hijackers was provided by Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad, the head of Pakistan's secret service; and finally, that General Ahmad was in Washington on the morning of 9/11 for a breakfast meeting with Porter Goss and Bob Graham, the chairs, respectively, of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees.⁹

Chossudovsky concludes, with characteristic directness, that "'September 11' is the biggest fraud in American history," and "the 'war on terrorism' is a fabrication" (Chossudovsky 2002: 133, 137).

These conclusions are further substantiated by the additional chapters and updated research of *America's 'War on Terrorism'*, which include detailed analysis of some of the events of 9/11, and also of post-9/11 disinformation campaigns. It is not my intention here to summarize this work. I would simply observe that the critical task of exploring the possibility of the Bush administration's implication in the events of 9/11—a task which Chossudovsky undertook at once, with his first article on the subject appearing on September 12th, 2001—has been taken up by other researchers, among them Justin Raimondo, Michael C. Ruppert, Jim Marrs, and David Ray Griffin. As their work, and Chossudovsky's, makes clear, full government complicity in the events of 9/11 is no longer in doubt, at least for those who are willing to take the trouble of examining the very substantial body of evidence that is now available.

One must likewise conclude that the twin consequences of an imperial-geopolitical or resource-war aggressiveness aimed at completing the project of globalization, and of a devolution of American democracy in the direction of a militarized totalitarianism, were neither accidental nor unintended.

John McMurtry

Like Michel Chossudovsky, John McMurtry has been a leading Canadian critic both of the orthodox and accepted account of 9/11 (see, for example, McMurtry 2002b), and also of the

wars that event has been used to legitimize (McMurtry 2003, 2004). He has also in consequence been subjected to abuse in the corporate press, which he shrugs off with equal nonchalance.¹⁰ But as he has recently written, “As a philosopher, I am not interested in ‘conspiracy theories’, the favoured term to invalidate all questions about 9-11. I am interested in the deeper question of *the life-and-death principles of regulating value systems which connect across and explain social orders*. In the wider lens of investigation of the normative regime of a civilisation, the pattern of 9-11 decisions is linked to a larger historical pattern of policies and an increasingly pernicious value set” (McMurtry 2002a: xiv).

This wide-spectrum interest in social ethics has been evident throughout McMurtry’s writings, from his early study of *The Structure of Marx’s World-View* (1978), and a second book that emerged out of his anti-war activism during the 1980s, *Understanding War: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1989), to the forthcoming volume on *Philosophy and World Problems* that he is editing and co-writing as part of a series published by UNESCO. For reasons of space, I am going to limit myself here to comments on a single aspect of McMurtry’s thought: his concept of the “civil commons,” which is central to his conceptualizing of the value system of what he terms (in opposition to the piracies of globalized corporate capitalism) the “life economy.” The same concept is central also to his understanding of the possibilities of resistance and restoration. It is elaborated in the sequence of three major books upon which McMurtry’s international reputation as a philosopher chiefly rests: *Unequal Freedoms* (1998), *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism* (1999), and *Value Wars* (2002).

One key feature of McMurtry’s concept of the civil commons is its incorporation both of the natural life-ground that sustains human society, and also of the human institutions and the web of social and discursive interactions by which this natural life-ground is preserved and protected from over-use and despoilment.¹¹

In an analysis of the global economic and financial system that despite its higher level of abstraction is in many respects reminiscent of Chossudovsky’s book *The Globalization of Poverty*, McMurtry argues that in recent decades governments have been mutating “to become more and more dominantly coercive debt collectors on behalf of banks and foreign bond-holders from citizens who have received little or no benefit from the debts, and international trade agents and deal-makers for transnational corporations against the most basic interests of domestic workers and businesses, using the armed force of the state to enforce the society-stripping invasion” (McMurtry 1999: 219). What governments are collaborating in, he says, is a “stripping of *society’s shared life-ground*,” an attack on the civil commons, which he defines as “human agency in personal, collective or institutional form which protects and enables the access of all members of a community to basic life goods” (McMurtry 1999: 192, 204). This civil commons includes, at the same time, those aspects of our life-ground in nature which we can work to preserve through “conscious human acts and social constructions (for example, effective laws against environmental pollutants that destroy the ‘global commons’ of the atmosphere or oceans)” (McMurtry 1999: 205)—but which under unregulated market conditions are subject to what Garrett Hardin in a famous but politically naïve essay, first published in 1968, called “the tragedy of the commons.”

Hardin understood this tragedy of the commons as the inescapable consequence of any unconstrained application of a logic of marginal private advantage and communal disadvantage to a “commons” in nature (whether that be shared pasture-land, limited fresh water supplies, or fishing grounds).¹² McMurtry’s much more complex concept of the civil

commons contains within itself discursive and institutional forms of social agency by means of which human societies have striven—often with long-term success—to preserve and sustain the natural commons which support their lives. The concept and its associated practices thus, in McMurtry’s usefully historicized discussions of them, provide an answer to the question of resource management posed by Hardin’s very preliminary exploration of the logic of social ecology.

But the political economy of globalization poses a more urgent problem, since it constitutes a simultaneous attack upon both aspects of the civil commons—upon the structures of human agency which protect basic life goods and give us shared access to them, and also upon the underlying commons in nature on which human society depends.

Although McMurtry’s repeated references to social “stripping” or “strip-mining” are evidently metaphorical, the practices to which they refer are both real and ethically intolerable. He mentions in *Value Wars* the then-recent conversion of Joseph Stiglitz, former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chair of the U.S. President’s Advisory Committee on the Economy, to a position critical of the powers he had served—and he quotes tellingly from a ‘post-conversion’ interview with journalist Greg Palast in which Stiglitz provided what McMurtry calls an “inside anatomy of the death economy.”

In that interview, Stiglitz defined a four-stage process insisted upon by the World Bank, the IMF, and the U.S. Treasury, their majority stockholder, for every country within their power. In the first stage, countries are obliged to undertake “briberisation-privatisation,” in which publicly owned resources and industrial assets are sold off, with handsome commissions going to corrupt local elites. They must then endure “capital-market liberalisation,” or what Stiglitz called the “Hot Money Cycle,” in which, after a flight of deregulated speculative capital, host governments are forced by the IMF to raise interest rates to levels ruinous for local businesses. An ensuing stage of “market-based pricing” of the necessities of life “squeeze[s] the blood out of” poor countries until “social unrest is predictably sparked”; the resulting “IMF riots” lead both to military solutions and to further capital flight that permits foreign corporations to purchase remaining assets “such as mining concessions or ports” at “fire-sale prices.” In the fourth and final stage, the pauperized local economy is coerced by “financial blockade” into opening itself to unrestricted foreign imports (Palast interview with Stiglitz, quoted by McMurtry 2002a: 214).[13](#)

Described here in general terms, instantiated in painful detail throughout Michel Chossudovsky’s *The Globalization of Poverty*, and lucidly analyzed and theorized by John McMurtry in the books that have won him a reputation as one of the leading moral and social philosophers of our time, these processes amount to a direct attack on the civil commons of what used to be called the “developing countries.” What then can be said—focusing now on the domestic politics of so-called first-world countries—of the changes to existing social contracts that have been demanded by conservative or neoliberal governments in North America and across Western Europe since the beginning of the 1980s? The objects of their attack have included progressive labour codes, environmental regulations, state-owned corporations and utilities, welfare and public housing programs, civil rights entitlements, international law governing human rights, redistributive taxation of private income and corporate profits, laws restricting the movement of corporate capital, laws forbidding the formation of corporate media monopolies, and public investment in non-profit health care, in public non-commercial broadcasting and in education—with a particular hostility to the critical as opposed to instrumental functions of public higher education. The list amounts, I would suggest, to a good first approximation of the institutional embodiments

of the civil commons.

From diagnosis to resistance

I had it in mind, when I began this essay, to conclude with speculations over possible consequences of the American habit of bullying the neighbour in the attic. Most Canadians don't much mind the feeble sallies of wittols like Pat Buchanan or Ann Coulter—though more material factors like distaste for war and political-theocratic extremism, or resentment over the softwood lumber dispute, might well widen the existing gap between the two countries. Or perhaps, on the other hand, American economic pressures and political bullying will result in a further weakening of the Canadian civil commons and a closer integration of Canada into the geo/cultural/politics of the American Empire.

But as Michel Chossudovsky and John McMurtry would remind us, the stakes are higher than considerations such as these might suggest. Behind the glitter and the propaganda, globalization was always about structural violence, about the further enrichment of those who already own a wholly disproportionate share of this world's wealth, and the further immiseration of the dispossessed and powerless. Now we know it is also bound up with other kinds of violence as well—the calm violence with which the horrifying events of September 11, 2001 were planned, and the more urgently murderous violence that has disseminated torture chambers of a new American gulag around much of the globe, and has sown the cities of Iraq with cluster-bomb fragments, white phosphorus, and the poison dust of depleted uranium.

Yet at this point the deeper meaning of the civil commons, as embodying a whole complex of human discourses and human impulses that impel us toward choices which affirm life values, and hence as embodying also an unplumbed reservoir of resistance to the glaring injustices of globalization and war, comes into play. For a dawning understanding of the truly global and systemic nature of the problems that face us cannot help but be accompanied by the complementary thought that every local movement of resistance in defence of one or another threatened element of the civil commons is also a moment of awakening, and a portal into an equally global human solidarity.

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NOTES

1 Among the many studies one might cite in support of this opinion, I would note Mander and Goldsmith, Rosenberg, Hertz, Wood, George, and Buckman.

2 See Perkins, Stiglitz, Ziegler 2002 and 2005, Petras and Golinger

3 The institutions involved with social reproduction are pre-eminently our schools and universities. Important studies of the impact of globalization on education include Barlow and Robertson, Soley, Readings, Slaughter and Leslie, Nelson and Watt, Tudiver, Turk, Johnson et al., and Noble. See also Kozol, Robertson, Giroux, and Keefer 1996.

4 Canada's refusal to join the "Coalition of the Willing" in the invasion of Iraq was not especially a sign of virtue, or of courage: Canada took part in the assault on Afghanistan, and has contributed substantially to the subsequent occupation; it sent naval vessels to the Persian Gulf to assist with the invasion of Iraq; and it has participated in the American-led overthrow of the Aristide government and the subsequent occupation of Haiti.

5 One of these, Keefer 2005a, is of some relevance in the present context.

6 One can of course be both dyslexic and a genius—witness Albert Einstein and the philosopher Gillian Rose—but Bush is incurious, profoundly ignorant, and unethical as well as dyslexic. As Mark Crispin Miller has argued, the selling of such a man to the American electorate by the Republican Party and the corporate media poses a problem of systemic disorder rather than of individual incapacity: "It is as if the U.S. body politic were itself afflicted with a corporate version of dyslexia" (Miller 3).

7 When Attorney General John Ashcroft criticized past restrictions on the FBI as confining it to operating "with outdated means," Lewis Lapham remarked that "As modified by the context and subject to the circumstances, the phrase 'outdated means' can be taken to refer to any paragraph in every article of the Constitution" (Lapham 82-83).

8 The most recent such episode has been a campaign of defamation conducted by the *Ottawa Citizen* and B'nai Brith Canada in August 2005 following the latter's discovery that anonymous anti-semites had inserted their noxious drivel into a discussion forum hosted by Chossudovsky's website. For details, see Keefer 2005b. Indecent in terms both of his own lifelong commitments and the fact that members of his immediate family died at Auschwitz,

the slanders directed against Chossudovsky were of the kind analyzed by Finkelstein, chs. 1-3.

9 Goss, a Republican and former CIA agent, has since been made director of the CIA. Graham, who co-chaired the Joint Inquiry of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees into the 9/11 attacks, subsequently wrote that “the White House was directing the cover-up” of 9/11, and was doing so “for reasons other than national security” (Graham 166, quoted by Griffin 2005: 68).

10 In the preface to his most recent book McMurtry notes that before it went to press, his explanation “of the problem from core sections of it was passionately vilified in selected snippets by two columnists of Canada’s national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, by Fox Television, and by the *Wall Street Journal*, with subsequent posting on the *New York Times Abuzz* website” (McMurtry 2002a: xvi-xvii).

11 For detailed expositions of the meaning of the civil commons and its rootedness in communal discursive practice, see McMurtry 1998: 368-95, 1999: 190-254, and 2002: 117-18.

12 Hardin’s point, taking the example of shared pasture-land, is that the marginal private benefit obtained by each cattle-owner who increases her herd by one cow will be greater than her share of the communal deficit caused by over-grazing; it will therefore always be in every cattle-owner’s private interest to contribute to destroying the common land by overgrazing it. Not having done any historical research, Hardin was unaware that societies like medieval England which practised common-land grazing actually had quite elaborate systems of customary law (a nascent civil commons, in effect) designed to prevent that outcome.

13 Words in quotation marks in this paragraph are Stiglitz’s own.

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