

LABOR, THE STATE, AND CLASS STRUGGLE

by ELLEN MEIKSINS WOOD

After a long period of sustained attack by governments of various stripes, a steady deterioration of working and living standards, and declines in membership and militancy, there are encouraging signs that organized labor is moving again. This may come as a surprise to many, not least on the left, who have long since written off the labor movement as an oppositional force; and it may begin to challenge some of the most widespread assumptions about the nature and direction of contemporary capitalism, assumptions often shared by activists and intellectuals on the left as well as the right.

Although it is, of course, too early to make big claims about this trend, it does seem to be a good moment to take a close look not only at these new signs of activism but also at the nature of labor today and at the environment in which the labor movement now has to navigate. It is a good moment to challenge some of the assumptions about labor that have become the common sense of our historical moment—assumptions about various social, economic and technological changes that supposedly make labor organization and class politics impossible and/or irrelevant in today's "global" economy.

With this special issue, we hope to open a discussion, inside and outside the pages of *MR*, about the conditions and prospects of the labor movement. What I want to do in this introduction is to situate that discussion in the context of

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some more general considerations about the structural conditions affecting class struggle today. I want to consider, in very broad terms, the ways in which today's "global" and "flexible" capitalism affects the prospects of working class *politics*, the kind of politics that takes class struggle beyond the workplace to the centers of class and state power.

Questions Facing the Labor Movement

When the editors of this special issue wrote to potential contributors, we suggested that articles might be distributed among four broad themes:

1. a survey of the new activism: e.g., the French and Canadian protest strikes; recent apparently progressive trends in the AFL-CIO (and the South Korean general strike which broke out soon after we'd written our letter).
2. analysis of the structure of the working class: the changing composition of the working class, what has changed and what hasn't in the age of "flexible" capitalism—racial and gender divisions, occupational structures, new patterns of work (e.g., part-time and contractual jobs), new patterns of unemployment and underemployment, etc.
3. The political economy of labor, how it is situated in today's economy: the myths and realities of globalization, the real extent of internationalized production; the real extent and effects of new technologies; the extent and effects of capital mobility.
4. organizational and political prospects: e.g., what are the organizational implications of racial and gender division? What limits do current economic conditions impose on organized labor and what new possibilities do they open up? Does "global" capitalism demand international organization, and/or does it make national and local struggles more important than ever?

In relation to each of these questions, we wanted to look closely and critically at conventional wisdom. We wanted to see just how much the trends that everybody seems to take for granted are or are not supported by the evidence. Of course, we've only been able to scratch the surface, but we hope we've at least succeeded in opening up questions about the conventional wisdom and in generating further discussion. A critical

engagement with some of the dominant assumptions about labor in the age of “globalization” and “flexibility” has both political and theoretical implications and should be no less useful to academics than to labor activists.

With all this in mind, in March of this year *Monthly Review* organized a roundtable for labor activists. The object was to provide an occasion and a space for people on the left in the labor movement to discuss issues of common interest, at this critical historical moment. We saw our own role as simply facilitators and observers, and we were more than happy just to listen and to learn. The meeting was heartening for more than one reason. There seemed to be a general sense that, for all the difficulties facing labor, which no one was inclined to underestimate, there was both new hope and new energy in the movement, and a new foundation on which to build.

My purpose here is not to summarize the discussion, but it might be useful to give a sense of what the participants thought it important to talk about. The meeting was chaired by Bill Fletcher, Jr., Education Director of the AFL-CIO (a significant fact in itself: try to imagine someone in this position even a few years ago entering into dialogue with *Monthly Review!*), and he circulated a list of questions that might serve as a basis for discussion, which neatly coincided with the agenda we had set for this special issue. I’ll quote the main questions here:

* Many of us entered into the labor movement around the time of the 1973-74 recession—the deepest recession since the Depression. Around that time organized labor represented about 25 percent of the non-agricultural working class. Let’s divide this question.

A. How have changes in capitalism altered the terrain in terms of the labor movement.

B. What are some of the environmental (economically speaking) changes which you have seen?

C. How has the Labor Left changed over this period?

* What is commonly described as globalization has led many people, including many on the Left, to conclude that there is little which can be done *within* national borders; that globalization is inevitable; and that the only field of operation is international. How would you respond to this?

* Over the last several years, there have been numerous articles and books concerning the impact of new technology, i.e. the so-called electronics revolution, on the working class. Many of these texts advance the notion that jobs are disappearing forever, and that we face a “jobless future”. Do you agree with this line of argument? What are the implications of this analysis for the labor movement? If you do not agree, how do you see the role of the new technology?

* Organized labor has, for much of its post—Second World War history, been pegged as a “special interest”. It has been reluctant to align itself with community-based organizations and struggles. Do you see indications of this changing? What are the examples? What more should organized labor be doing?

* How do you assess the forces on the labor Left? What role, if any, do forces on the labor Left have in the building or reconstruction of a viable nation-wide Left in the United States?

* In relation to foreign labor movements: the material basis and necessity for international working class solidarity is clearer than it has ever been. What does this mean for us? How do we handle the question of nationalism as we attempt to build links?

If there is one single theme underlying all these questions, it is surely “globalization.” The new economic conditions, the new technologies, the new constraints which are, according to most conventional wisdom and expert opinion, setting the terms of struggle for labor have all been lumped together under that rubric. Policies of “competitiveness” and the deregulation of labor markets are all pursued in the name of “globalization.” Even the *fragmentation* of capitalism associated with “flexible specialization” and “segmented” markets—which is supposed to be reflected in the fragmentation of the working class—is just another manifestation of globalization and its new competitive conditions. So “globalization” sums up most of the questions that people have raised about the prospects of labor in the era of “flexible” capitalism.

The conventional conception of globalization is not, of course, universally accepted. Both in *MR* and elsewhere, people have, for instance, expressed doubts about how much production has really been internationalized, about how mobile industrial capital really is, about the very existence of

“multinational” corporations.¹ People have pointed out that the vast majority of production still goes on in nationally based companies in single locales. They have argued that there is no such thing as a “multinational” corporation, there are only *transnational* corporations with a national base.

Critics of conventional ideas of globalization have also pointed out that foreign direct investment has been overwhelmingly concentrated in advanced capitalist countries, with capital moving from one such country to another. There are, of course, differences among the big capitalist economies, with some more exposed than others to international competitive pressures. The United States, for example, is sheltered from some forms of competition because a relatively small proportion of its economy is devoted to manufacturing; and the proportion of the U.S. labor force employed in manufacturing is even smaller: as other contributors point out in this issue, more than 70 percent of all employment in the United States is in the service sector, much of it in industries that cannot simply be shifted to other economies with a cheap and unorganized labor force.

But whatever the proportion of manufacturing industry within the U.S. economy (or in other advanced capitalist countries), it is still—and is likely to remain—a disproportionately large share of production in the world as a whole. In this sector, competition has certainly intensified, but that competition typically takes place among the advanced capitalist countries themselves. The United States in particular has been profoundly affected by competition from Japan and Germany. At the same time, the preferred solution has not been simply to export industry to third world countries. Manufacturing industries are much less mobile than conventions about globalization suggest—not least because large-scale and long-term capital investments are hard to abandon. Competitive strategies in this situation are no more likely to take the form of moving capital elsewhere than reducing labor costs at home.

At the very least, then, it is difficult to formulate any simple propositions about the competition between low-wage and higher-wage economies, or about the dangers of capital

flight in response to working class organization and struggle. And more generally, there is no simple correlation between the politics or ideology of “globalization” and the actual exposure of advanced capitalist economies to international competition, especially competition from low-wage economies.

Above all, critics of the conventional wisdom have insisted that capitalism’s expansionary drive is neither the product of some inevitable natural law, nor a recent technological innovation of the “information age.” It is a historically specific characteristic of capitalism, which has been part of the system since its beginning. In the process of expansion, capitalism *has* become more universal, extending its reach, its imperatives of accumulation and competition, to every corner of the globe and penetrating ever deeper into all human practices and the natural environment. The point, though, is that, while the intensification of competition has certainly changed the conditions of profitability, the pressure to enhance “flexibility” and “competitiveness”—and especially neo-liberal attacks on social provision—are not the automatic result of some inevitable process, as so many conceptions of “globalization” seem to suggest. They are the product of deliberate policy choices in the interests of capital, which can be challenged in theory and practice. It simply isn’t true that There Is No Alternative.²

The articles in this issue generally proceed from a critical view of conventional wisdom, but none of them pretend that nothing has happened. On the contrary, they explore the implications for labor which follow from the developments that actually have taken place, which we can continue to call “globalization” as long as we jettison the misleading baggage that tends to accompany that term. All of the articles here, in one way or another, demonstrate that in today’s conditions class struggle is not only a viable option but a necessary one—maybe in some respects more, not less, because of globalization.

Some of the articles explore the conditions in which today’s class struggles will have to take place. Others tell the story of recent struggles in Mexico, Korea, France, and Canada, struggles that have been directly aimed at the economic

and political practices associated with globalization. Still others talk about the possibilities that are opening up in the United States. All of them either put in question some widespread assumptions about current conditions or show how new conditions have opened new avenues for the labor movement and new arenas of struggle.

One question that repeatedly surfaced at the *MR* labor roundtable was why the cooperative model of labor relations was so persistent in the labor movement when it had proved itself so ineffective, while class struggle unionism was clearly more successful both in attracting new members and in achieving labor's goals. The articles here certainly underline the importance of that question and reinforce the premise on which it is based. I hope—and trust—that people will come away from reading this issue with a renewed belief in the possibilities of class struggle unionism. But I also hope that they will extend the question from class unionism to class *politics*. And that's what I'd like to do here: I want to devote the rest of this introduction to making some suggestions about the ways in which globalization, far from making class politics irrelevant, may be laying a foundation for its renewal.

Labor, Class, and State in Global Capitalism

Although there may be changes on the way, the U.S. labor movement has never really had a political organization of its own, whether a strong socialist party, a social democratic one, or a British-style labor party; and the Democratic Party has even less to offer the labor movement now than it did in the past. But the American case today seems less unusual than it once did, as the most well established working class parties—communist, socialist, social democratic, and “labourist”—especially in Europe have effectively cut themselves off from their class roots. European communist and socialist parties, for instance, have generally retreated from the politics and language of class struggle, while the recent election in Britain brought to power a “new” Labour Party—or at least a party leadership—bent on cutting its historic ties with the trade union movement, leaving Britain, at least for the moment,

with something close to the U.S. model of a one-party state—or, as Gore Vidal recently put it, one party with two right wings.

It is possible that more victories for ostensibly left parties, even of this ambiguous kind, will open up new political prospects. But for the moment, many people seem to take it for granted that the disappearance of working class politics is only natural, that the political terrain on which working class parties, whether revolutionary or electoral, traditionally operated simply no longer exists. Even those who don't accept that there is no alternative, or that globalization is inevitable, are likely to say that the terrain of struggle has irrevocably shifted.

Probably the most important assumption about the political implications of globalization have to do with its effects on the state. We are repeatedly told that globalization has made the nation-state irrelevant. For some, this means that nothing can be done at all. For others, it means that struggle has to move immediately to the international plane. In either case, a working class politics in any recognizable sense seems to be ruled out.

That, then, is the assumption I want to challenge here—not the assumption that there is such a thing as “globalization” but rather that “globalization” cuts the ground from under class politics. I want to argue that globalization has made class politics—a politics directed at the state, and at class power concentrated in the state—more rather than less important, more rather than less possible.

Marxists used to emphasize the ways in which the growth of capitalism encourages the development of class consciousness and class organization. The socialization of production and the homogenization of work, the national, supra-national, even global interdependence of its constituent parts—all this was supposed to create the conditions for working class consciousness and organization on a mass scale, and even for international solidarity. But developments in the twentieth century have increasingly, and some would say fatally, undermined that conviction.

The failure of the working class to fulfill the expectations of traditional Marxism is typically cited by left intellectuals as

the main reason for abandoning socialism, or at least looking for alternative agencies. In recent decades, “Western Marxism,” then post-Marxism and postmodernism, have, one after the other, assigned historical agency (if they believe in history or agency at all) to intellectuals, to students, to “new social movements”—to anyone but the working class. Today, the labor movement has all but disappeared from the most fashionable types of leftist theory and politics. And “globalization” seems to have struck the final blow.

Most people who talk about globalization, for instance, are likely to say that in the age of global capitalism, the working class, if it exists at all, is more fragmented than ever before. And if they are on the left, they are likely to say that there is no alternative, that the best we can do is liberate a little more space in the interstices of capitalism, by means of many particular and separate struggles—the kind of struggles that sometimes go under the name of identity politics.

Now there are many reasons for this tendency to reject class politics in favor of political fragmentation and the politics of identity. But surely one major reason has to do with the assumption that the more *global* capitalism becomes, the more global the *struggle* against would have to be. After all, the argument goes, isn’t it true that globalization has shifted power away from the nation-state to transnational institutions and forces? And doesn’t this obviously mean that any struggle against capitalism would have to operate on that transnational level?

So since most people—reasonably enough—have trouble believing in that degree of internationalism, and in the very possibility of organizing on that level, they naturally conclude that the game is up. Capitalism is here for good. But more than that, there is no longer any point in trying to construct a mass political movement, an inclusive and wide-ranging political force of the kind that old working class parties aspired to be. Class as a political force, in other words, has disappeared together with socialism as a political objective. If we can’t organize on a global level, all we can do is go to the other extreme. All we can do, apparently, is turn inward, toward our own very local and particular oppressions.

There do still exist socialists who will insist that we must shift our attention to the international arena, that the socialist struggle can still go on but that we can only confront capitalist globalization by means of a *socialist* globalization. Some people talk about an “international civil society” as the new arena of struggle, or about “global citizenship” as the basis of a new solidarity. But I can’t help thinking that people who talk in these terms are just whistling in the dark, that they don’t really believe in it—at least as an anti-capitalist strategy. When someone tells me that the international arena is the only one for socialists, I interpret them to be saying, no less surely than the advocates of identity politics, that the struggle against capitalism is effectively over.

My own conclusion is a different one, because I start from different premises. Let me say first of all that I have always had reservations about the direct relationship between the growth of capitalism and the unity of the working class. About sixteen years ago, in an article called “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” I talked about the centrifugal force of capitalism, the ways in which, contrary to conventional Marxist wisdom, the very structure of production and exploitation in a fully developed capitalism tends to *fragment* class struggle and to *domesticate* it, to turn class struggle inward, to make it very local and particularistic.³ Capitalism certainly has homogenizing effects, and the integration of the capitalist economy certainly provides a material foundation for working class solidarity beyond the walls of the individual enterprise and even across national frontiers. But the more immediate effect of capitalism is to enclose class conflict within individual units of production, to decentralize and localize class struggle. This is not, it must be emphasized, a failure of working class consciousness. It is a response to a material reality, to the way the social world is really organized by capitalism.

This also means, I suggested, that in capitalism political issues are in a sense “privatized.” The conflicts over authority and domination, which in pre-capitalist societies would be directly aimed at the jurisdictional or political powers of lords

and states, in capitalism have shifted to the individual capitalist enterprise. Although capital certainly depends on the power of the state to sustain the system of class power and to maintain social order, it is not in the state but in the process of production, and in its hierarchical organization, that capital exerts its power over workers most directly.

I also thought this had something to do with the fact that modern revolutions have tended to take place where capitalism was *less*, rather than more, developed. Where, for example, the state itself is a primary exploiter—where, say, the state exploits peasants by means of taxation—economic and political struggles are hard to separate, and in cases like that, the state can readily become a focus of mass struggles. It is, after all, a much more visible and centralized class enemy than capital by itself could ever be. When people confront capital directly, it is generally only in the form of individual, separate capitals, or individual employers. So even proletarian revolutions have tended to occur where working class conflicts with capital have merged with other, pre-capitalist struggles, notably peasant struggles against landlords and exploitative states.

But while I was arguing that capitalism has a tendency to fragment and to privatize struggle, it also seemed to me that there now existed some new countervailing tendencies: the increasing international integration of the capitalist market was shifting the problems of capitalist accumulation from the individual enterprise to the macroeconomic sphere, and capital was being forced to rely more and more on the state to create the right conditions for accumulation. So I suggested that the state's growing complicity in capital's anti-social purposes might mean that the state would increasingly become a *prime target of resistance in advanced capitalist countries* and might begin to counteract some of the centrifugal effects of capitalism, its tendency to fragment and domesticate class struggle.

Now I had never heard of globalization back then, and I didn't know that people would soon be taking it for granted that the international integration of the capitalist market would weaken the nation-state and shift the focus of capitalist

power away from the state. Lately, when globalization is on everyone's lips, I have found myself arguing against the popular assumption that globalization is making the nation-state increasingly irrelevant. I have been arguing that, whatever functions the state may be losing, it's gaining new ones as the main conduit between capital and the global market. Now I want to suggest that this development may be starting to have the consequences for class struggle that, back in 1981, I thought might be a prospect for the future.

We can debate about how much "globalization" has actually taken place, about what has and what hasn't been truly internationalized. But one thing is clear: in the global market, capital *needs* the state. It needs the state to maintain the conditions of accumulation, to preserve labor discipline, to enhance the mobility of capital while suppressing the mobility of labor. Behind every transnational corporation is a national base, which depends on its local state to sustain its viability and on other states to give it access to other markets and other labor forces. In a way, the whole point of "globalization" is that competition is not just—or even mainly—between individual firms but between whole national economies. And as a consequence, the nation-state has acquired new functions as an instrument of competition.

If anything, the nation-state is the *main agent* of globalization. U.S. capital, in its quest for "competitiveness," demands a state that will keep social costs to a minimum, while keeping in check the social conflict and disorder generated by the absence of social provision. In the European Union, which is supposed to be the model of *transnational* organization, each European state is the principal agent, for instance, in the creation of conditions for monetary union. Each state is the main agent forcing on its citizens the austerities and hardships needed to comply with the stringent requirements of the single currency, and each state is the main instrument for containing the conflicts engendered by these policies, the main agent for maintaining order and labor discipline. It is not inconceivable that the strongly national impulses in various European countries might end up halting integration. But

even so, it is more than likely that these nation-states will, in the foreseeable future, continue to play a central role as capital's channel into the global market, as the creators of the right environment for capital accumulation, and as capital's main line of defence against internal disorder. And, of course, in keeping with the contradictory logic of capitalism, the same states that act as the agents of capitalist integration, designed to promote the competitiveness of European capital in the global economy, are also the principal agents of competition *within* Europe, among its individual and separate national economies.

The state in various countries plays other roles too: in particular, again, it keeps labor immobilized while capital moves across national boundaries, or in less developed capitalisms, it may act as a transmission belt for other, more powerful capitalist states. In every case, the state is, and for the foreseeable future is likely to remain, central to capitalism, in one form or another. It is, of course, possible that the state will change its form and that the traditional nation-state will gradually give way, on the one hand, to more narrowly local states and, on the other, to larger, regional political authorities. But the state in whatever form will continue to be crucial; and, I suspect, for a long time to come, the old nation-state will continue to play its dominant role.

So what has been the effect of the state's new functions? What have been the consequences for class struggle? Has it proved to be true, as I suggested might happen, that the new functions of the state in a "globalized," "flexible" capitalism are making it a target of class struggle and a new focus of working class unity? It's still too early to judge, but at the very least we can take note of a spate of mass protests and street demonstrations in various places: France, Germany, Canada, South Korea, Poland, Argentina, Mexico, etc.—some of which are discussed in this issue. I don't want to make too much of them or their likely effects. But it's worth considering their common denominator.

No doubt most people would accept that it has something to do with globalization. Even if we have our doubts about

certain aspects of "globalization," let's just consider those aspects we can all agree on: the restructuring of capitalism taking place in every advanced capitalist country and, as a major part of this restructuring, the efforts to eliminate various kinds of social provision in the interests of "competitiveness." This is exactly the kind of complicity between the state and capital I was talking about: not just the retreat of the state from its ameliorative functions but also its increasingly active role in restructuring the economy, in the interests of capital and to the detriment of everyone else. The actions of the state have driven people into the streets, in opposition to state policies, in countries as diverse as Canada and South Korea.

Recently, too, there was what appeared to be a very different kind of mass demonstration, a kind of multinational workers' protest in France, by Renault workers from various countries against the downsizing of one Renault plant near Brussels. On the face of it, this was not a protest against the state but a multinational labor conflict with transnational capital. But even here, the motivating force of what the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, called the first "Euro-demo" was not just the actions of a common, transnational employer but the role played by each of the relevant European states—France, Belgium, Spain, etc.—in restructuring capital, in creating the conditions for monetary union, in manipulating subsidies to industry. Even here, in this example of working class solidarity across national boundaries, the unifying principle was not just exploitation by a transnational corporation but also the actions of particular nation-states in sustaining the conditions of capital accumulation. In this case of working class internationalism, protest was directed at exactly the same kinds of national policies which have elsewhere driven very specifically domestic protests against national governments. For instance, at about the same time as the Renault protest, German miners demonstrated against their government in Bonn, which was withdrawing state subsidies to coal mines; so in both the French and German cases, government subsidies to industry were a central issue. Again, these specifically European pressures are just a particular example of the more general restructuring of

which the American or South Korean state, no less than the German, the French, or the Spanish, is the principal agent.

In this issue, Sam Gindin suggests that globalization has actually created new opportunities for struggle. With “national and international economic restructuring comes a higher degree of integration of components and services, specialization, lean inventories”, and this makes corporations more vulnerable to certain kinds of local, regional, and national struggles. What I am saying here is that precisely this kind of integration has made the state in many ways more important to capital than ever. In this and other ways, the symbiosis between capital and the state is in many ways closer than ever; and that is making each individual state a potential focus of conflict and class struggle, not less but more than has been true before, in advanced capitalist economies.

So now is hardly the time for the left to be abandoning this political terrain, in favor of fragmented politics at one extreme, or a completely abstract internationalism at the other. If the state is the principal agent of globalization, by the same token the state, especially in advanced capitalist countries, still has the most powerful weapons for blocking globalization. I’ve said this elsewhere, but I might as well say it again: if the state is the channel through which capital moves in the globalized economy, then it’s equally the means by which an anti-capitalist force could sever capital’s lifeline.⁴ Old forms of “Keynesian” intervention may be even less effective now than they were before, but this simply means that political action can no longer simply take the form of intervening in the capitalist economy. It’s now more a question of detaching material life from the logic of capitalism. And in the short term, this means that political action can’t just be directed at offering capital incentives to do socially productive things, or at compensating for the ravages of capital by means of “safety nets.” Politics must be increasingly about using state power to control the movements of capital and to bring the allocation of capital and the disposition of economic surpluses increasingly within the reach of democratic accountability, in accord-

ance with a social logic different from the logic of capitalist competition and profitability.⁵

Conclusion

One of the main problems in organizing anti-capitalist struggles has always been that capital presents no single, visible target. And the formal separation of “economic” and “political” spheres which is characteristic of capitalism—where exploitation takes place by means of an apparently “free” exchange between juridical “equals,” in a contract between capital and labor, and where the relationship between them is mediated by an impersonal “market”—has created what looks, on the surface, like a “neutral” state, which doesn’t visibly intervene in the daily confrontations between capital and labor. But as the neo-liberal state adopts the policies of “flexibility,” “competitiveness,” and “globalization,” the power of capital in an important sense becomes more concentrated in the state, and its collusion with capital becomes increasingly transparent.

This is one major reason why we need to be so careful about how we use the term “globalization.” We have to guard against treating the trends that go under that name as if they were natural, inevitable processes, instead of historically specific *capitalist* processes, the capitalist exploitation of human beings and natural resources, aided and abetted by a direct collaboration between the state and capital. In fact, I’m tempted to say that the concept of globalization today plays such a prominent role in capitalist ideology precisely because powerful ideological weapons are now needed to disguise and mystify this increasingly direct and obvious collusion.

If the state can now more than ever serve as a target in an anti-capitalist struggle, it can also, as the focus of local and national class struggles, be a unifying force both within the working class, against its internal fragmentation, and also between the labor movement and its allies in the community. At the same time, when just about every state is following the same destructive logic, domestic struggles against that common logic can also be the basis—in fact, the strongest basis—

of a new internationalism. This internationalism would be founded not on some unrealistic and abstract notion of an “international civil society” or “global citizenship,” nor on the illusion that we can make things better by increasing the left’s representation in transnational organizations of capital like the IMF, but rather on mutual support among various local and national movements in their respective struggles against their own domestic capitalists and states, and on the proliferation of such national struggles throughout the world.

This does not mean that there is no place for common, transnational struggles, or that the labor movement should neglect transnational organizations where it can make a difference—like the EU. But cooperative struggles of this kind ultimately depend on a strong and well-organized domestic labor movement. So if there is a motto that sums up this kind of internationalism, it might be this: “Workers of all countries unite—but unity begins at home.”

At any rate, the moral of the story is that, at the very moment when many people on the left are joining neo-liberals in conceding the inevitability of globalization and the growing irrelevance of the state, and at the very moment when traditional working class parties have disappeared or effectively cut their class ties, political organization of the working class may have become more important and potentially effective than ever.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Greg Albo, “The World Economy, Market Imperatives, and Alternatives”, *Monthly Review* vol. 48, no.7; Doug Henwood, “Post what?” *Monthly Review* vol. 48, no. 4; Harry Magdoff, “Globalization to What End?”, *Monthly Review* pamphlet, 1992; L. Panitch, “Globalisation and the State,” in R. Miliband and L. Panitch, eds., *Socialist Register 1994: Between Globalism and Nationalism* (London: Merlin, 1994); Bill Tabb, “Globalization is an Issue, The Power of Capital is the Issue,” *Monthly Review* vol. 49, no. 2.
2. For a critique of the view that there is no alternative, see Albo, “The World Economy.”
3. That article, published in 1981 in *New Left Review*, has more recently appeared in my book, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 19-48.
4. I make this point in “Globalization and Epochal Shifts: An Exchange”, *Monthly Review* vol. 48, no. 9.
5. On these themes, see Albo, “The World Economy.”