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 WTO News: The Road FROM Seattle - Post-Seattle Analysis December 14, 1999

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WTO NEWS: THE ROAD FROM SEATTLE

In the week since the WTO Ministerial meeting in Seattle, there has been a lot of interest expressed in keeping news and information circulating. WTO News will continue to track WTO, NGO, and civil society activities and planning. This issue contains various analyses and press releases on what transpired in Seattle and what lies ahead.

If you haven't yet checked out the news and information source on the World Trade Organization on the web -- do so now!
<http://www.wtowatch.org> has archived press conferences, speeches, and other activities during the week of the Ministerial meeting in Seattle.

If you are no longer interested in receiving WTO News, please follow the unsubscribe directions in the footer of this email.

UNCTAD MEETING IN BANGKOK, FEBRUARY 2000

From Focus on the Global South, <mailto:admin@focusweb.org>

WONDERING WHAT TO DO AFTER SEATTLE?
 WHY NOT COME TO BANGKOK?

Everyone who wants to build on the gains of Seattle should be coming to

Bangkok 12-19 February 2000 for the UNCTAD X (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, tenth quadrennial conference).

This is the first international meeting of trade ministers for the new millennium, and promises to be a major event in shaping the 'terms of trade' for the next century.

Civil society events are being planned. Please get in contact with Focus on the Global South:

If you have ideas
If you want to be involved
If you want to organise an event
If you want to keep informed about what's happening

Send an email to Nicola Bullard, n.bullard@focusweb.org

IN THE MEANTIME...

All organisations should get accredited, even if you are not sure if you will be in Bangkok. The UN NGO Liaison Service has the details and they can be found on the UNCTAD X website <http://www.unctad.org>

Organisations who already have UNCTAD consultative status need not apply.

For more information, contact:
Susan Clarke at UNCTAD
<mailto:susan.clarke@unctad.org> or 41 22 907 5718
or the UNCTAD website <http://www.unctad.org>

REPORT ON NGO FOOD AND AGRICULTURE DAY IN SEATTLE

Food & Agriculture Day took center stage yesterday in the citizens' summit during the WTO in Seattle. It will take time for detailed reports to be written but, after days of chaos in the streets, for the family farmers and their supporters the sun finally broke through and it felt like significant progress was made.

Farmers from more than 30 countries participated in a day-long series of press briefings, panel discussions and workshops. One of the highlights was a Noon rally to support small farmers that attracted 5,000 people to the Pike Place Market. In addition to several hundred farmers from around the country and the world, the crowd included a broad spectrum of representatives from environmental, labor, and human rights organizations.

None of the violence that shook the city the previous two days marred Food & Agriculture Day.

The kickoff event was a Farmer Breakfast at the United Methodist Church in downtown Seattle. The breakfast, hosted by the Vashon Island Growers Association, featured an abundance of organically grown foods produced by local farmers.

Following a series of press briefings, panel discussions and the Noon

rally, there were workshops in and near the Market on the topics that included Globalization & Food Safety, Food Security in a Global Economy, Farm Worker Issues, and Genetic Engineering.

Food & Agriculture Day included farmers from England, Belgium, Norway, Finland, Japan, Korea, India, The Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, Senegal, Ghana, Uruguay, Mexico, Brazil, and Peru. One of the most noted was Jose Bov,, a French farmer who's become a leader in efforts to stop the globalization of genetically engineered foods and the destruction of local agricultural communities.

Participants in Food & Agriculture Day included representatives of the National Family Farm Coalition, the French Farmer's Union, the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, the Japanese Independent Farmers Union, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Food First, and both Seattle and Washington Tilth.

As I mentioned, it will take time for people engaged in the heart of the discussions to write detailed reports on the outcomes. If you have access to the web, the best place to start on getting authoritative information and for tracking future developments is the site for the nonprofit Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy:

<http://www.wtowatch.org>

Several people commented that yesterday felt like a major turning point in the decades-long campaign to have the voices of small farmers and their supporters heard in global trade debates.

I'm sorry that the surreal scenes of chaos on Seattle streets obscured the substantive work of grassroots groups from around the world. The numerous organizations represented in Seattle are returning home with renewed hope and strengthened connections that are likely to bear fruit in the weeks and months ahead.

Mark Musick
Seattle's Pike Place Market

UPDATE FROM PUBLIC CITIZEN ON SEATTLE

From: "Margrete Strand-Rangnes" <mailto:mstrand@citizen.org>

There was no "New Round" for the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. Precisely a year after the MAI talks collapsed at the OECD, the WTO threw in the towel and admitted that their attempt to launch a new round of expanded negotiations had failed.

Like the MAI, the WTO could not survive public scrutiny. The broad international coalition consisting of labor unions, environmental groups, faith based community, consumer organizations and activists once again proved to be more powerful than any corporate push to expand the scope of the WTO or other free-trade agreements.

Ever since Seattle was announced the host city for the Ministerial, people have been mobilizing for this moment. A international sign-on

letter demanding a "Turn-a-Round" of the WTO now has 1500 groups from 89 countries signed on to it (for an updated version go to www.onelist.com or www.tradewatch.org), there has been several days of action against the New Round and also on specific issues like opposing the Global Free Logging Agreement. All over the world the negotiators and politicians have been confronted with a strong demand for a "NO NEW ROUND - TURNAROUND", and the WTO - once just an obscure acronym - has become a household name for people around the world.

At the Ministerial in Seattle, the dominant countries in the WTO (U.S., EU, Japan and Canada), once again tried to make the decisions, without including developing countries. In typical, undemocratic WTO-manner - through closed sessions with only selected countries invited - they tried to force through their "consensus". This blatant arrogance as well as the unprecedented opposition from civil society, were key reasons for the collapse of the negotiations.

Our fight against the WTO continues. We have now entered the "Turn-a-Round" Phase of our campaign. The negotiators and bureaucrats will return to Geneva where they will try to find a way to continue and expand the scope of the WTO. Our job is to both continue to build the momentum against these failed agreements, as well as outlining what a forward-looking trade- and investment policy must look like. We look forward to continuing the fight with you!

Visit Public Citizen's website at <http://www.tradewatch.org>

FOREST UPDATE POST-SEATTLE

TO: Forest Activists
FROM: Antonia Juhasz and Pat Rasmussen, American Lands Alliance
DATE: December 9, 1999

What Happened In Seattle? We Won!

Thanks to your efforts, the Global Free Logging Agreement has been defeated, for now, at the World Trade Organization.

The world's trade ministers left Seattle last week without signing any new agreements. They did not even agree on an agenda for their planned new Round of trade negotiations that was to be kicked-off in Seattle.

In other words, they did not sign the Global Free Logging Agreement nor agree on anything that will impact forests in any way. We Won!

According to Mike Moore, Director General of the WTO, Trade Ministers will begin meeting "soon" in Geneva to try to write an agenda for the next Round of negotiations. However, no date has been set for meeting in Geneva nor is there any indication that the Ministers will be able to work out the difficulties that emerged in Seattle when they meet again in Geneva.

It is important to note that the U.S. government never wavered in its commitment to signing the GFLA in Seattle. Up until the bitter end they were conditioning their acceptance of a new Round of negotiations on

having the GFLA signed in Seattle. The U.S. government's obstinance on this and other issues is ultimately what helped kill the negotiations altogether. The developing countries saw -- thanks to the protesters in the streets, NGO activities "in side" the negotiations and media reports from across the nation -- that the U.S. did not have the political support at home to stand behind these threats. The developing nations were emboldened by the opposition of developed country citizens and others to stand firm and oppose the Seattle negotiations.

The Wall Street Journal commented that one reason why the forest products agreement was not signed was because of the thousands of pro-forest protesters in Seattle. Pro-forest protesters even made the cover of the New York Times on Tuesday, November 30 with banners that read "Protect Our Forests, Clear-cut the WTO" (made by David Jennings and Chris Vondrasek of Seattle) and "Free Rodolfo Montiel."

We all deserve to be congratulated on a job well done!

However, our work is not done. The Clinton Administration has yet to be convinced to remove forests from the chopping block at the WTO. The Administration needs to cease its support for the Global Free Logging Agreement, it must state that it will not negotiate agreements at the WTO that threaten to treat vital forest protection measures as illegal trade barriers, it must agree to reform WTO rules to protect our forests against invasions from invasive species, the Administration must state that it will not support investment negotiations at the WTO nor negotiations that limit our ability to label genetically engineered trees, food and seeds. We must make sure that the Administration knows that we are still watching and will continue to watch as negotiations move from Seattle to Geneva.

Please call the White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair, George Frampton at (202)456-6224 and Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, Frank Loy at (202)647-6240 and demand that the U.S. government work to protect forests at the WTO as negotiations move from Seattle to Geneva.

For more information, please contact Antonia Juhasz at <mailto:antonia@americanlands.org> or (202) 547-9230. You can also visit our web page at <http://www.americanlands.org> (go to "information" and "global trade.")

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR HARD WORK!

THE HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SEATTLE

by Vandana Shiva

The failure of the W.T.O Ministerial meeting in Seattle was a historic watershed, in more than one way. Firstly, it has demonstrated that globalisation is not an inevitable phenomena which must be accepted at all costs but a political project which can be responded to politically.

50,000 citizens from all walks of life and all parts of the world were responding politically when they protested peacefully on the streets of

Seattle for four days to ensure that there would be no new round of trade negotiations for accelerating and expanding the process of globalisation.

Trade Ministers from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean were responding politically when they refused to join hands to provide support to a "contrived" consensus since they had been excluded from the negotiations being undertaken in the "green room" process behind closed doors. As long as the conditions of transparency, openness and participation were not ensured, developing countries would not be party to a consensus. This is a new context and will make bulldozing of decisions difficult in future trade negotiations.

The rebellion on the streets and the rebellion within the W.T.O. negotiations has started a new democracy movement - with citizens from across the world and the governments of the South refusing to be bullied and excluded from decisions in which they have a rightful share.

Seattle had been chosen by the U.S to host the Third Ministerial conference because it is the home of Boeing and Microsoft, and symbolises the corporate power which W.T.O rules are designed to protect and expand.

Yet the corporations were staying in the background, and proponents of free-trade and W.T.O were going out of their way to say that W.T.O was a "member driven" institution controlled by governments who made democratic decisions. The refusal of Third World Governments to rubber-stamp decisions from which they had been excluded has brought into the open and confirmed the non-transparent and anti-democratic processes by which W.T.O rules have been imposed on the Third World and has confirmed the claims of the critics.

W.T.O has earned itself names such as World Tyranny Organisation because it enforces tyrannical anti-people, anti-nature decisions to enable corporations to steal the world's harvests through secretive, undemocratic structures and processes. The W.T.O institutionalises forced trade not free trade, and beyond a point, coercion and the rule of force cannot continue.

The W.T.O tyranny was apparent in Seattle both on the streets and inside the Washington State Convention centre where the negotiations were taking place. Non violent protestors including young people and old women, labour activists and environmental activists and even local residents were brutally beaten up, sprayed with tear gas, and arrested in hundreds. The intolerance of democratic dissent, which is a hallmark of dictatorship, was unleashed in full force in Seattle. While the trees and stores were lit up for Christmas festivity, the streets were barricaded and blocked by the police, turning the city into a war zone.

The media has referred to the protestors as "power mongers" and "special interest" groups. Globalisers, such as Scott Miller of the U.S. Alliance for Trade Expansion said that the protestors were acting out of fear and ignorance.

The thousands of youth, farmers, workers and environmentalists who marched the streets of Seattle in peace and solidarity were not acting out of ignorance and fear, they were outraged because they know how undemocratic the W.T.O is, how destructive its social and ecological impacts are, and how the rules of the W.T.O are driven by the objectives of establishing corporate control over every dimension of

our lives - our food, our health, our environment, our work and our future.

When labour joins hands with environmentalists, when farmers from the North and farmers from the South make a common commitment to say "no" to genetically engineered crops, they are not acting in their special interests. They are defending the common interests and common rights of all people, everywhere. The divide and rule policy, which has attempted to put consumers against farmers, the North against the South, labour against environmentalists had failed.

In their diversity, citizens were united across sectors and regions.

While the broad based citizens campaigns stopped a new Millennium Round of W.T.O from being launched in Seattle, they did launch their own millennium round of democratisation of the global economy.

The real Millennium Round for the W.T.O is the beginning of a new democratic debate about the future of the earth and the future of it's people. The centralized, undemocratic rules and structures of the W.T.O that are establishing global corporate rule based on monopolies and monocultures need to give way to an earth democracy supported by decentralisation and diversity. The rights of all species and the rights of all people must come before the rights of corporations to make limitless profits through limitless destruction. Free trade is not leading to freedom. It is leading to slavery. Diverse life forms are being enslaved through patents on life, farmers are being enslaved into high-tech slavery, and countries are being enslaved into debt and dependence and destruction of their domestic economies.

We want a new millennium based on economic democracy not economic totalitarianism. The future is possible for humans and other species only if the principles of competition, organised greed, commodification of all life, monocultures, monopolies and centralised global corporate control of our daily lives enshrined in the W.T.O are replaced by the principles of protection of people and nature, the obligation of giving and sharing diversity, and the decentralisation and self-organisation enshrined in our diverse cultures and national constitutions.

A new threshold was crossed in Seattle - a watershed towards the creation of a global citizen-based and citizen-driven democratic order. The future of the World Trade Organisation will be shaped far more by what happened on the streets of Seattle and in the non-governmental (NGO) organisation events than by what happened in the Washington State Convention Centre.

The rules set by the secretive World Trade Organisation violate principles of human rights and ecological survival. They violate rules of justice and sustainability. They are rules of warfare against the people and the planet. Changing these rules is the most important democratic and human rights struggle of our times. It is a matter of survival.

Citizens went to Seattle with the slogan "No new round, turnaround". They have been successful in blocking a new round. The next challenge is to turn the rules of globalisation and free trade around, and make trade subservient to higher values of the protection of the earth and peoples livelihoods.

The citizens' Seattle round of the democratisation of the food system

synthesised common concerns of people from across the world to ensure that the way we produce, distribute, process and consume food is sustainable and equitable. In the Third World and the industrialised world, common principles have started to emerge from peoples practises to ensure safe and healthy food supply. These principles enable us to shift to nature-centred and people-centred food systems.

1. Diversity rather than monocultures to ensure higher output per acre.
2. Decentralisation and localisation in place of centralisation and globalisation.
3. Ecological processes instead of industrial processes of farming.
4. Food rights and food security rather than free-trade as the basis of distribution.
5. Democratic control rather than corporate control of the food system.
6. Patent-free and genetic engineering free farming to ensure the respect and protection of all species and the integrity of ecosystems and cultures. This involves excluding life forms from TRIPS and Biosafety from W.T.O rules of free trade.
7. Cultural diversity in place of the global monoculture of fast foods and industrial food chains.
8. Small farms and small farmers in place of corporate farms and absentee land owners. This involves protection of existing small farms and land reforms to redistribute land.
9. Fair trade, not free trade, to ensure farmers and producers get a fair return. Trade as a means rather than end, with global trade subservient to values of ecological sustainability, health and social justice.

Against all odds, millions of people from across the world have been putting these principles into practice. The post Seattle challenge is to change the global trade rules and national food and agricultural policies so that these practices can be nurtured and spread and ecological agriculture, which protects small farms and peasant livelihoods, and produces safe food, is not marginalised and criminalised. The time has come to reclaim the stolen harvest and celebrate the growing and giving of good food as the highest gift and the most revolutionary act.

THE ECONOMIST: THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORDER

The Economist
December 11th - 17th 1999

Citizens groups: The non-governmental order Will NGOs democratise, or merely disrupt, global governance?

AS POLITICIANS pore over the disarray in Seattle, they might look to citizens groups for advice. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that descended on Seattle were a model of everything the trade negotiators were not. They were well organised. They built unusual coalitions (environmentalists and labour groups, for instance, bridged old gulfs to jeer the WTO together). They had a clear agenda to derail the talks. And they were masterly users of the media.

The battle of Seattle is only the latest and most visible in a string of recent NGO victories. The watershed was the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, when the NGOs roused enough public pressure to push through agreements on controlling greenhouse gases. In 1994, protesters dominated the World Bank's anniversary meeting with a "Fifty Years is Enough" campaign, and forced a rethink of the Bank's goals and methods. In 1998, an ad hoc coalition of consumer-rights activists and environmentalists helped to sink the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), a draft treaty to harmonise rules on foreign investment under the aegis of the OECD. In the past couple of years another global coalition of NGOs, Jubilee 2000, has pushed successfully for a dramatic reduction in the debts of the poorest countries.

The NGO agenda is not confined to economic issues. One of the biggest successes of the 1990s was the campaign to outlaw landmines, where hundreds of NGOs, in concert with the Canadian government, pushed through a ban in a year. Nor is it confined to government agendas. Nike has been targeted for poor labour conditions in its overseas factories, Nestl, for the sale of powdered baby milk in poor countries, Monsanto for genetically modified food. In a case in 1995 that particularly shocked business, Royal Dutch/Shell, although it was technically in the right, was prevented by Greenpeace, the most media-savvy of all NGOs, from disposing of its Brent Spar oil rig in the North Sea.

In short, citizens' groups are increasingly powerful at the corporate, national and international level. How they have become so, and what this means, are questions that urgently need to be addressed. Are citizens' groups, as many of their supporters claim, the first steps towards an "international civil society" (whatever that might be)? Or do they represent a dangerous shift of power to unelected and unaccountable special-interest groups?

Power in numbers Over the past decade, NGOs and their memberships have grown hugely (see chart). Although organisations like these have existed for generations (in the early 1800s, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society played a powerful part in abolishing slavery laws), the social and economic shifts of this decade have given them new life. The end of communism, the spread of democracy in poor countries, technological change and economic integration, globalisation, in short have created fertile soil for the rise of NGOs. Globalisation itself has exacerbated a host of worries: over the environment, labour rights, human rights, consumer rights and so on. Democratisation and technological progress have revolutionised the way in which citizens can unite to express their disquiet.

It is, by definition, hard to estimate the growth of groups that could theoretically include everything from the tiniest neighbourhood association to huge international relief agencies, such as CARE, with annual budgets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. One conservative yardstick of international NGOs (that is, groups with operations in more than one country) is the Yearbook of International Organisations. This puts the number of international NGOs at more than 26,000 today,

up from 6,000 in 1990.

Far more groups exist within national borders. A recent article in World Watch, the bi-monthly magazine of the World Watch Institute (itself an NGO), suggested that the United States alone has about 2m NGOs, 70% of which are less than 30 years old. India has about 1m grass-roots groups, while another estimate suggests that more than 100,000 sprang up in Eastern Europe between 1988 and 1995. Membership growth has been impressive across many groups, but particularly the environmental ones. The Worldwide Fund for Nature, for instance, now has around 5m members, up from 570,000 in 1985. The Sierra Club now boasts 572,000 members, up from 181,000 in 1980.

Citizens' groups play roles that go far beyond political activism. Many are important deliverers of services, especially in developing countries. As a group, NGOs now deliver more aid than the whole United Nations system. Some of the biggest NGOs, such as CARE or M,decins Sans Frontiřres, are primarily aid providers. Others, such as Oxfam, are both aid providers and campaigners. Others still, such as Greenpeace, stick to campaigning. And it is here that technological change is having its biggest impact.

When groups could communicate only by telephone, fax or mail, it was prohibitively expensive to share information or build links between different organisations. Now information can be dispersed quickly, and to great effect, online. The MAI was already in trouble when a draft of the text, posted on the Internet by an NGO, allowed hundreds of hostile watchdog groups to mobilise against it. Similarly, the Seattle trade summit was disrupted by dozens of websites which alerted everyone (except, it seems, the Seattle police), to the protests that were planned.

New coalitions can be built online. Much of the pre-Seattle coalition building between environmental and citizens' groups, for instance, was done by e-mail. About 1,500 NGOs signed an anti-WTO protest declaration set up online by Public Citizen, a consumer-rights group. That, acknowledges Mike Dolan, a leading organiser of the protest, would have been impossible without e-mail. More important, the Internet allows new partnerships between groups in rich and poor countries. Armed with compromising evidence of local labour practices or environmental degradation from southern NGOs, for example, activists in developed countries can attack corporations much more effectively.

This phenomenon amorphous groups of NGOs, linked online, descending on a target has been dubbed an "NGO swarm" in a RAND study by David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla. And such groups are awful for governments to deal with. An NGO swarm, say the RAND researchers, has no central leadership or command structure; it is multi-headed, impossible to decapitate. And it can sting a victim to death.

Less dramatic, but just as important, is the rise of NGOs that are dubbed by Sylvia Ostry, a trade expert from the University of Toronto, as "technical" groups. These specialise in providing highly sophisticated analysis and information, and they can be crucial to the working of some treaties. In 1997, for instance, the verification system for the Chemical Weapons Treaty was devised by the world's chemical-manufacturing associations. In the campaign to cut third-world debt, a handful of NGOs, including Oxfam, have become as expert in the minutiae of debt-reduction procedures as the bureaucrats at the IMF and World Bank. Increasingly, they have been co-opted into making policy.

At the WTO, these technical NGOs (staffed overwhelmingly with lawyers) have concentrated on training and providing information on the arcana of trade law to delegates from poor countries.

Enemies or allies?

If the power of NGOs has increased in a globalised world, who has lost out? A popular view is that national governments have. In an article in Foreign Affairs in 1997, Jessica Mathews, the head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote that "the steady concentration of power in the hands of states that began in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, is over, at least for a while." Certainly national governments no longer have a monopoly of information, or an unequalled reach, compared to corporations and civil society. But the real losers in this power shift are international organisations.

Inter-governmental institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the UN agencies or the WTO have an enormous weakness in an age of NGOs: they lack political leverage. No parliamentarian is going to face direct pressure from the IMF or the WTO; but every policymaker faces pressure from citizens' groups with special interests. Add to this the poor public image that these technocratic, faceless bureaucracies have developed, and it is hardly surprising that they are popular targets for NGO "swarms". The WTO is only the latest to suffer.

Less obvious is whether NGO attacks will democratise, or merely disable, these organisations. At first sight, Seattle suggests a pessimistic conclusion: inter-governmental outfits will become paralysed in the face of concerted opposition. History, however, suggests a different outcome. Take the case of the World Bank. The Fifty Years is Enough campaign of 1994 was a prototype of Seattle (complete with activists invading the meeting halls). Now the NGOs are surprisingly quiet about the World Bank. The reason is that the Bank has made a huge effort to co-opt them.

James Wolfensohn, the Bank's boss, has made "dialogue" with NGOs a central component of the institution's work. More than 70 NGO specialists work in the Bank's field offices. More than half of World Bank projects last year involved NGOs. Mr Wolfensohn has built alliances with everyone, from religious groups to environmentalists. His efforts have diluted the strength of "mobilisation networks" and increased the relative power of technical NGOs (for it is mostly these that the Bank has co-opted). From environmental policy to debt relief, NGOs are at the centre of World Bank policy. Often they determine it. The new World Bank is more transparent, but it is also more beholden to a new set of special interests.

The WTO will not evolve in the same way. As a forum where governments set rules that bind rich as well as poor countries, it is inherently more controversial. Nor does it disburse money for projects, making it harder to co-opt NGOs. But it could still try to weaken the broad coalition that attacked it in Seattle by reaching out to mainstream and technical NGOs. Some will celebrate this as the advent of the age when huge institutions will heed the voice of Everyman. Others will complain that self-appointed advocates have gained too much influence. What is certain is that a new kind of actor is claiming, loudly, a seat at the table.

A SEATTLE PRIMER: HOW NOT TO HOLD WTO TALKS

By Robert G. Kaiser and John Burgess
Washington Post Staff Writers
Sunday, December 12, 1999; Page A40

Late on the final afternoon of the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle, with hope for an agreement slipping away, chief American trade negotiator Charlene Barshefsky asked her Canadian counterpart, Pierre Pettigrew, to take the chair so she could call the White House. As he agreed to run the meeting, Pettigrew recalled later, a colleague said: "Well, you may be like the orchestra conductor on board the Titanic."

Just eight days before, Barshefsky had made a bold prediction: The Seattle talks would succeed in launching a new round of negotiations to further open global commerce, despite signs of disagreement in the preparatory rounds. "You see, everyone knows that failure is not an option."

But hours after that Titanic quip, an exhausted Barshefsky had to announce that failure in Seattle was a reality. A tumultuous week of protests and tear gas on the streets and all-night negotiations and recriminations at the conference had produced nothing.

The outcome in Seattle was quickly dubbed a fiasco, a debacle, a disaster for free trade * or a stunning victory by the activists who had come to Seattle to frustrate the negotiations. A week later American and foreign officials involved in the negotiations who were interviewed for this article agreed on two explanations for the failure: inadequate planning, and irresolvable political conflict.

The conflicts showed up in Seattle as a kind of systemic overload. As Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger, President Clinton's national security adviser, put it, the meeting was a case of "too many plugs and too few outlets" * an overload that the WTO just couldn't handle.

The planning failure was most often blamed on the Clinton administration. "There was a colossal failure to reduce the number of decisions the ministers had to make to a manageable number" before Seattle, said Calman Cohen, director of a business coalition called the Emergency Committee for American Trade. He and others said the gathering of trade ministers should have been postponed until the number of outstanding issues could be reduced.

Secretary of Commerce William Daley seemed to agree, saying in an interview last week that he was pessimistic from the beginning. "The fact that nothing was pre-cooked . . . was quite a signal," he said, referring to the absence of agreements among the key players, especially at a pre-Seattle negotiation in Geneva that had broken down in failure.

Barshefsky, fresh from the Nov. 15 triumph of talks on China's entry into the WTO, had dismissed the breakdown in Geneva: "I'm not in the least bit concerned."

Colleagues say that confidence is typical of Barshefsky, who has a reputation as a first-class trade lawyer and hard-nosed negotiator, but

not as an accomplished politician. And according to numerous participants, politics played a critical role in Seattle.

Many foreign delegates cited American politics, particularly Clinton's decision to embrace the addition of labor and environmental standards to world trade rules. "I think President Clinton was playing to his domestic constituency," said Costa Rica's foreign trade minister, Samuel Guzowski.

But other nations had political concerns of their own. The European Union and Japan, for example, had to be seen as protecting their farmers from U.S. demands to eliminate agricultural subsidies. In fact, EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy disappeared for six hours during the crucial last day's discussions, only to return and signal that there could be no deal on agriculture, according to Barshefsky.

A look back at the debacle in Seattle and the events leading to it shows how many strands of history, economics, politics and public opinion converged to create an impasse that caused such embarrassment for Seattle and the Clinton administration.

The mood was still hopeful when trade ministers from 20 nations gathered in late October in Lausanne, Switzerland, on the shores of Lake Geneva, to plan for Seattle. Gathered in a wood-paneled room of the luxurious Beau-Rivage Palace hotel, they used words such as "flexibility" to describe their approach. But at the end of the meeting, in the words of Sergio Marchi, Canada's ambassador to the WTO, "the flexibility . . . never really arrived."

Some American officials, particularly in the Commerce Department, had shied away from the idea of launching a big new round of trade liberalization negotiations, but the European Union insisted that this was necessary.

The Europeans wanted big negotiations on many issues in hopes of being able to trade concessions on agriculture (the European Union's policy of propping up farmers and agricultural exports is an anathema to free traders) for benefits they could trumpet to sell an overall deal to member governments. The Europeans eventually persuaded the United States to go along.

Though Barshefsky insisted in an interview that numerous understandings had been reached among the participating countries over the past year and a half, other delegations saw it differently. Hidehiro Konno, a senior Japanese trade official, recalled, for instance, "There was no consensus even on the concept of a new round." Yet WTO rules require that all agreements be reached by consensus.

The easy trade issues have already been resolved. Tariffs are already low, world trade is booming, once-closed markets are open. The remaining barriers are often subtle and deeply rooted in local politics.

The Japanese and Europeans, for example, elaborately protect their farmers, in part by denying access to foreign agricultural products. (The United States also gives extensive support to farmers, but rarely with trade restrictions.) The United States protects vulnerable industries, particularly textiles, with politically popular laws designed to prevent foreigners from undercutting American producers in the U.S. market.

After Lausanne the unresolved issues moved back to WTO headquarters in Geneva, where lower-level experts tried to make progress. They failed, and though Barshefsky dismissed this breakdown as insignificant, Lamy, the European trade commissioner, was concerned: "I fear the atmosphere might be such that we will not get to the starting blocks. . . . We might not leave Seattle with a new round."

The Japanese said last week that they thought the early signals were ominous. "It was very odd," said Konno. "The first moment we started to think of the possibility of disaster was very early, when we found out that there was no quad meeting planned by the United States." The "quad" * the United States, Japan, the European Union and Canada * had a history of plotting strategy in advance for big trade meetings, Konno said. Konno expressed surprise that a quad meeting wasn't held just before the talks were scheduled to begin. U.S. officials said other nations had scheduling conflicts.

Another complication was the leadership of the WTO. Michael Moore of New Zealand had been installed as director general in September; his key aides didn't take their places until later in the fall. Moore's selection followed months of haggling that largely paralyzed the organization, according to many officials. The United States played a heavy-handed role in Moore's selection that angered some other countries.

A more telling warning of what was in store in Seattle was probably the 200 passages enclosed in brackets in the draft 32-page text the WTO staff had prepared for the meeting in Lausanne. The brackets indicated language that had not been agreed to.

The first interested parties to reach Seattle were not delegates to the WTO, but the organizers of the protests that became the visible symbol of Seattle. Michael Dolan, coordinator of many of the protesters, set up shop early this year in an office on Fourth Street.

Dolan's operation grew out of a movement born seven years earlier, in Munich at the July 1992 meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized nations. There, a group of international activists including Dolan's boss, Lori Wallach, a trade lawyer, launched an effort to bring "sunshine" to the secretive process of negotiating international trade agreements. Wallach and Dolan work for Public Citizen, a self-described consumer lobby founded by Ralph Nader.

In an interview Wallach described a patient effort to build activist organizations in 40 countries, all motivated by the desire to show public opinion and governments that the global economic order was eroding nations' sovereignty and their citizens' freedoms. The idea was to encourage citizens to hold their trade negotiators accountable in a new way.

To do so, the groups looked for "Achilles' heels," Wallach said, sensitive issues that would create controversy and thus reduce the chances for agreement in new trade talks. For example, the European Union, she said, had such a weak spot on the issue of genetically modified foodstuffs, products that the Americans wanted the WTO to bless, but that European public opinion fervently opposed.

Wallach, Dolan and their allies promised to bring tens of thousands of protesters to Seattle. That prospect had prompted the city to make

plans for what would happen outside the WTO, preparations that proved inadequate.

Seattle's political leaders, led by Mayor Paul Schell, had decided to welcome the protesters and encourage vigorous debate on world trade. (Clinton welcomed them also.) The city wasn't opposed to the protesters' plans to disrupt the city by, for example, chaining themselves together peacefully.

According to Sgt. J.D. Miller, a 15-year veteran of the Seattle police force, many members of the force knew they weren't ready. "We knew we would be in trouble" during the WTO meeting, he said in an interview last week. "There was very little doubt, because the intelligence about who was coming, and what they had the potential to do, was well known. It's embarrassing."

But Sgt. Miller said several police officers openly voiced suspicion that those "peaceful" protests could be a distraction. Before the protest, he said that a number of officers had discussed the warnings on several World Wide Web sites linked to self-proclaimed anarchists who also planned to disrupt Seattle that Tuesday would be a kind of D-Day of demonstrations. "The phrase people here kept seeing among those groups on the Internet was, 'Save it for Tuesday.'"

The Seattle police and the mayor's office had conferred beforehand with the FBI and the Secret Service, discussing what were called tabletop scenarios * various contingencies that might arise, and responses to them.

But when the discussion got to possible rioting, according to Thomas J. Pickard, deputy director of the FBI, "they said things like, 'It'll never get to that stage.'"

Delegates who stepped out of their hotels Tuesday morning, the first day of the conference, with freshly issued ID badges around their necks, soon found out otherwise. By 8:30 a.m., throngs of chanting demonstrators had taken control of the streets of downtown Seattle. With arms linked, they formed tight human chains to block all entrances to the convention center where the meeting would take place.

Downtown's usual din of traffic was banished, replaced by the beating of protesters' drums and a lone trombone's wail, by chants and '60s rock tunes at peak volumes. Riot police marched in tight phalanxes, slapping their nightsticks against the sides of their boots. The sound was like massed jackboots on pavement.

Most protesters left property alone. But a cadre of young people, many dressed in black and wearing ski masks or bandanas to hide their faces, had clearly come prepared to commit mayhem. They hurled trash cans through windows and spray-painted militant slogans on marble storefronts. A Starbucks coffee shop fell victim to their vandalism, as did a jewelry store, a park gate and a McDonald's restaurant.

Though more than 20,000 union members marched peacefully in Seattle that day, the world would see and remember the sporadic violence and the clouds of tear gas. By the end of the day, the mayor had declared an emergency, asked the governor to call up the National Guard, and imposed a curfew on downtown.

For Clinton, the Seattle meeting was potentially a big moment. Some had spoken of naming a new round of trade talks the "Clinton Round," and the United States had actively sought to host the Seattle meeting. The president addressed the gathering on Wednesday.

But the speech was overshadowed by an interview he gave to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer en route to Seattle. In it Clinton said he "ultimately" would support sanctions against countries that violate labor standards, which he wanted the WTO to add to its rules.

The interview became a sensation. "Nobody believed their eyes" when they read Clinton's comments, said Anabel Gonzalez, Costa Rica's vice minister of foreign trade. Many developing countries seized on the comments as evidence that the United States planned to impose new protectionist measures in the guise of labor standards that were actually designed to keep the poorer countries poor.

In the early hours of Friday, the Europeans and Americans briefly seemed to find common ground on the thorny agriculture subsidy issue. At 4:30 that morning, recalled Gene Sperling, director of the National Economic Council and a Seattle negotiator, "you really . . . had goose bumps. This is going to come together! This is going to happen! This is great!"

Lamy was negotiating for the Europeans at that hour. He had to report back to the trade ministers of the EU countries on the progress that had given Sperling goose bumps.

The EU commissioner disappeared for more than six hours, an absence that shocked the Americans, but also helped convince them that they would not succeed in Seattle. They concluded that Lamy had been overridden by the ministers, and the deal would not be reached.

"By 2 or 3 p.m. [Friday] I could see it wasn't going to happen," Barshefsky recounted. "People's positions were hardening. Lamy had left a functionary in his place, who just made Geneva-type speeches. I thought: We need to cut it off before countries say 'I will never do A, B, C . . .' We don't want anyone saying 'never.'*"

Moore, the new director-general of the WTO, was not convinced. At first he wanted to push ahead and try to get a final agreement. But after consulting with several envoys from key countries, he decided Barshefsky was right.

At 10:30 p.m. Barshefsky formally announced that the conference would end without a result. "Governments," she said, "were just not willing to take the leap."

The United States had gone into the Seattle meetings without a thorough game plan, hoping, in Sperling's words, "that under the pressure and headlights of a global trade talk, that countries would make the necessary concessions to come to an agreement." This time, it didn't work.

Berger, Clinton's national security adviser, summarized the reasons he saw for the breakdown: The major trading blocs didn't want to compromise on the big issues; the trade ministers don't know how to

deal with labor and environmental issues, although, he insisted, they will eventually have to be incorporated into the global system; the protests on the street altered the mood of the meeting and reduced the time available for negotiations.

Like other Americans and foreign delegates, he doubted the demonstrations forced the outcome. Wallach of Public Citizen saw it differently. In her view the new public involvement did make the difference, because public opinion in many countries had stiffened the resolve of their delegates to Seattle not to make compromises for the sake of an easy consensus.

Berger and other officials said they welcomed the participation of the interest groups that have become engaged in trade issues. "Democratization is a good word for it," Berger said. But it would mean further complication of trade negotiations in the future, he agreed.

In this as in other international forums, the overwhelming power of the United States seems to be a complicating factor. American officials point out how the huge trade deficit generated by America's open economy, which imports far more goods than it exports goods and services, has helped stabilize Asia and the world after the 1997 Asian economic crisis. But critical foreign countries, particularly less developed ones, freely accuse the United States of plotting new forms of protectionism.

Given all the complexities, Berger said in his White House office Thursday evening, sipping a huge glass of Diet Coke, "there probably was not as much attention focused on whether to go forward with this round as there should have been."

Berger acknowledged that Seattle was a serious setback. He said he didn't know how bad the damage would prove to be.

Barshefsky saw a silver lining: Breakdowns in earlier trade negotiations, like those with China in April, have been followed "with stronger agreements," she said.

Berger and Sperling defended the administration's efforts to broaden the trade agenda to cover concerns about the environment and labor standards, and rejected the criticisms * commonly made by governments from Tokyo to Brasilia * that U.S. domestic politics provoked those efforts and helped scuttle Seattle.

"You take on something big that has a risk element * that makes the achievement all the more significant," Sperling said, acknowledging that this time the achievement didn't materialize.

"If you don't fail sometimes," Berger said, "your sights aren't high enough."

Staff writers Doug Struck in Tokyo; Stephen Buckley in Rio de Janeiro; Serge Kovaleski in San Jose, Costa Rica; Anne Swardson in Paris; Pamela Constable in New Delhi; Steven Pearlstein in Toronto; Lorraine Adams; Charles Babington; Rene Sanchez; and special correspondent Khiota Thierren in Seattle contributed to this report.

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LA JORNADA (MEXICAN NEWSPAPER) ARTICLES ON SEATTLE

US Prefers Free Trade to Free Expression

La Jornada

December 2, 1999

by Jim Cason and David Brooks

* Hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested and have filled detention facilities.

* Delegates from Europe question whether the police protect those who pay their wages or only businessmen.

Seattle, December, 1. The US government today decided that protecting free trade is more important than defending the freedom of expression and dispatched police and the National Guard to the streets of downtown Seattle to arrest hundreds of demonstrators protesting against the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The second day of WTO working sessions passed off without incident in the hotels and convention centers, but only after the police, backed by military units of the National Guard, cordoned off a 50-block "no-protest zone". The presence of various contingents of security forces on all the streets of the city center was convincing.

It was a scenario that for many was reminiscent of the 1960s protests, with numerous downtown storefront windows placed by large sections of plywood. Early in the morning, each police officer was equipped with a pepper gas canister, and boxes of rubber bullets and tear gas were being delivered for the enforcement of the state of emergency.

President Bill Clinton arrived at dawn to a city under siege and NBC reported that his trip had nearly been cancelled because Secret Service agents feared that public order could not be assured in Seattle. Apparently they changed their minds when the state of emergency was declared.

This morning, tactical units of riot police, with the support of the National Guard, used pepper and tear gas to disperse small groups of protesters who were attempting to gather. The police have arrested so many people during the day, more than 450, that it was announced that facilities for processing the detainees were full to the rafters.

Even after those arrests, activists continued marching in the streets in small groups, constantly testing the resolve of the police and denouncing what they claimed was the infringement of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. "We are committing no crime", yelled a demonstrator to a police officer just before being arrested. "You are breaking the law by repressing my freedom of expression."

These confrontations continued throughout the day and at nightfall the bang of tear gas canisters could be heard, and smelled, in an attempt to disperse any gathering activists. Clouds of gas were even blowing close to the hotel where President Clinton was staying. "Finding a balance

between allowing the demonstrators to express themselves and allowing the WTO to go ahead is difficult", Seattle mayor Paul Schell stated this evening. He announced that a state of emergency, with a curfew, would be implemented this evening, but he stressed that its scope would be limited.

A cocktail reception planned for the WTO delegates this evening was cancelled when fear about security on the streets worsened. The Seattle police captain underscored in an interview today with La Jornada that the city is not trying to deny free expression, but that it had to maintain public order and prevent acts of violence.

Christmas carols were heard in front of a store totally shielded by plywood and, with 25 days to go before Christmas, the famous toy store FAO Schwarz, the Barnes & Nobel bookstore, the McDonalds, the many Starbucks and the GAP, among others, were all closed. There was practically nobody on the streets downtown, except WTO delegates, journalists, policemen and demonstrators who, surprisingly, managed to continue grouping together inside the no-protest zone. Some non-violent activists organized themselves in brigades to clean the streets, washing graffiti from the walls to show that although they were against the WTO, they were also against vandalism.

The non-violent demonstrators maintained that they had succeeded. "Yesterday we scored an unconditional victory because we closed down the WTO", declared John Sellers, a spokesman for the Ruckus Society. "Thousands of people took part and threw their bodies into the machinery of business structures." Another protest organizer, Kevin Danaher of Global Exchange, condemned police action and suggested that the authorities provoked a violent confrontation in order to justify the imposition of the state of emergency.

Today the police force asked neighboring municipalities for additional manpower and equipment to help restore order and, also today, La Jornada gave an account of undercover police units infiltrating groups of demonstrators in order to identify the leaders and arrest them. The police confiscated anything that they said was a "weapon", such as sticks used to carry placards, blankets, radio transmitters and gas masks, civilian use of which is now banned.

Those tactics made it possible for WTO delegates to meet and travel along some downtown streets, but some community leaders questioned whether the police were protecting the citizens who pay their wages or were defending only business leaders and official WTO delegates. "This is the closest thing we have ever seen to a police state in Seattle," said one local news commentator.

Translated by Bruce McCann

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The Chaos Was Well Planned

La Jornada
by Jim Cason and David Brooks
December 3, 1999

* Their achievement was that the most important thing became what was

happening in the streets, not in the WTO

* The next protest will be against the misconduct of the police, residents warn.

Seattle, December 2. The "chaos" in Seattle, as reported by the mass media, in reality was well planned and organized.

It was the authorities, the Twos and the politicians' worst nightmare. All the planning accomplished its objective: create chaos for the promoters of the "new economic order" based on free enterprise and free markets. Some of the organizers, like John Sellers, of the Ruckus Society, and Kevin Danaher, of Global Exchange, say that they planned for months, developing strategies, studying the layout of the WTO meeting, the streets, the buildings, and the hotels. For six months, artists created masks and enormous puppets, and activists trained in civil disobedience, how to create human chains, avoid provocations, climb buildings, and put up signs to advertise the events.

The result: During eight hours last Tuesday the activists controlled all access to the site of the WTO meeting, and the next three days they forced the authorities to maintain an unprecedented presence in the streets of the city.

Of course, a very small group chose to use this opportunity to commit acts of vandalism and turn upside-down the tranquility Seattle is famous for. The so-called "anarchists" (the last word one would expect the authorities and the media to be using in 1999 is anarchists, as in "there are reports that the anarchists might come out in the streets tonight") received a lot of attention, but most notable was the extraordinary organization by diverse groups that for hours carried out coordinated acts of non-violent civil disobedience. There was also the battle of public relations, and the protestors were able to achieve ensure that the news from Seattle was about what was occurring in the streets, not what the representatives of 135 governments, and the business people were debating. All this, with the exception of the acts of vandalism, was precisely the plan: create an organized "chaos."

The results of this plan continued to be manifested today, for the third consecutive day. "We are in a state of emergency" declared Mayor Paul Schell, on announcing that a limited state of emergency would be maintained through Friday. The police and units of the national guard, in anti-riot gear, continue deployed throughout downtown, to impede or at the minimum, control, all protests within a fifty-block zone around the Convention Center, where the WTO is meeting.

I Support Small Farms

Some five thousand protestors assembled today in support of small farms and to demand agricultural policies that offer a greater defense of small farms both here and in other countries. About two thousand activists, mostly students, split off from the rally and began to march through the streets of downtown.

Giant puppets danced while trumpets, drums, and maracas kept the beat of this march against the "tyranny of corporations" while marchers shouted a chorus of "Hell no with the WTO." A wall of police stood at alert, others on horseback or in armored vehicles were also on alert. A woman stopped in front of the blue and green wall of officers with a banner: "Welcome to the New World Order".

Some thousand people arrived at the county jail and shouted in unison: "Free them", referring to some of the 500 protestors being held there. They walked along, dancing, singing "this is what democracy looks like", and chanting "this is a non-violent protest". The reaction of the police during the last 36 hours was another cause for protest: freedom of expression and police repression.

The actions of the police, which carried out 500 arrests, provoked multiple complaints of police abuse, were widely criticized by human rights and civil rights groups.

They Sue the City Government

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the government of Seattle for imposing a prohibition on protests, and a member of the city council acknowledged having witnessed the use of excessive force by the police. In various incidents occurring yesterday, local residents that were not part of the protests were victims of tear gas and pepper spray shot by police. "The next protest march won't have anything to do with the WTO. It will be Against police misconduct," declared one resident. Police Chief Norm Stamper insisted that his officers had acted with restraint, but said that all accusations against police would have to be fully investigated.

Today for the first time in three days, some business downtown opened their doors, the restaurants began to fill up, and residents began to circulate through this part of the city with a certain calm. Nevertheless, many windows are still boarded up, and a great number of Starbucks coffeehouses continued closed. Christmas music, city holiday decorations, and commercial slogans that proclaim a feeling of "peace in the world" try to compete for attention with the units of riot police, patrol officers, gas masks, weapons, and other tools for guaranteeing "security".

The plan worked in Seattle. Instead of what was expected to be another routine world meeting, with cocktails, dinners, debates using terms only understood by experts, and a celebration of commerce amongst the five thousand invited world trade officials, the event was everything but that. It was chaos for the official organizers of the WTO meeting. That was the objective.

Translated by Cliff Olin

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL, PRESS RELEASE ON SEATTLE

MEDIA RELEASE Dec 3

WTO TALKS COLLAPSE

Environmentalists Achieve Their Goal of No New Round Developing Countries Stand Their Ground

The ambitious trade plans of the US, EU, Japan, and Canada were beaten back by dynamic inside and outside pressure in Seattle. Opposition from

civil society and developing countries stopped WTO talks.

Environmental, labor, and agriculture forces dealt a fatal blow to the headlong pursuit of the global free trade agenda, although much work remains to be done. Developing countries were shut out of the process, not given critical negotiating documents and excluded from key meetings. Their furious response meant that talks had to be postponed to future meetings in Geneva.

Here are the details:

- 1) Investment negotiations blocked. The EU wanted to launch new WTO investment negotiations which could have stopped countries from controlling inward investment and regulating use of resources by foreign investors. One year after the demise of the MAI - to the day - the WTO talks follow suit.
- 2) Forests spared for now. World forests were spared a US-sponsored deal to eliminate all tariffs in wood products, which would have boosted logging in biodiversity hotspots and could have stopped timber labelling and certification programmes.
- 3) Biotech banished. The US and Canada wanted a working group to accelerate trade in biotechnology and genetically engineered foods. Their ambitious plans were thwarted.

The WTO will never be the same again. Friends of the Earth International vows to continue the fight to dump the old trade agenda and develop a new, sustainable, equitable, fully democratic and locally-focussed trade system. FOE plans an extensive campaign on trade in 2000 and will be present when the parties to the Biosafety Protocol meet in Montreal this coming January to fight for a strong agreement on trade and biotechnology.

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<http://www.foeeurope.org/trade/about.htm>

SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY: UNITY STATEMENT

Say NO to WTO! Unity Statement

UNITY STATEMENT
Seattle International People's Assembly:
SAY NO TO WTO!
November 28-29, 1999
Seattle, Washington, USA

We, participants to the Seattle International People's Assem