Present in the World Economy:
The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (1996-2007)
(10281 words)

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We do not face the world in a doctrinaire fashion, declaring, “Here is the truth, kneel here!”... We do not tell the world, “Cease your struggle, they are stupid; we want to give you the true watchword of the struggle.” We merely show the world how it actually struggles; and consciousness is something that the world must acquire even if it does not want to.

Karl Marx to Arnold Ruge, September 1843

In the two decades that have passed since the inception of what was then called the ‘new left internationalism’ of social movements (Waterman, 1992), through the rise of the variformed ‘movement of movements’ (Klein, 2002) against the neo-liberal ‘globalization project’ (McMichael, 2000), how social forces install themselves on the terrain of the world economy, and how they move through it, has been widely documented by researchers working on qualified objects at the periphery of established fields of inquiry: ‘multi-sited’ ethnographers (Marcus, 1995), ‘international’ and ‘transnational’ sociologists (Sklair, 2000, Evans, 2005, Beck, 1999, Castells, 1996) and anthropologists (Kearney, 1995, Kearney, 2004), ‘international’ political economists, ‘glocal’ (Köhler and Wissen, 2003, Roudometrof, 2005) and ‘post-national’ geographers (Herod, 1995, Herod, 2001a, Scholte, 1996, O'Brien, 1992), etc.

These literatures have unearthed a wealth of information on particular goings-on, and they have brought some much needed historical perspective to bear on the present juncture. But they have contributed surprisingly little to our understanding of how political subjects actually make themselves in the world economy, principally because they have looked at it as an abstract space far from experience, peopled by demi-god figures that have fallen ready-made from the heights of Bilderberg or Davos --whose hegemony we can only concede-- or by would-be counter-hegemonic heroes born in fleeting moments of global togetherness, in Seattle, Washington or Genoa. Far from the clammy world of Brechtian struggles where actually-existing human beings sometimes make themselves into flawed subjects of their own imperfect history, and indeed far from what the new literatures actually document, cosmopolitan icons appear to overdetermine our thinking about matters political.

To move beyond cosmopolitan revelries and think through how global subjects might actually be making themselves in the world economy, we must rise to the political without ever breaking the thread of situated experience. Travel, then, from locality to globality, while staying in materiality, and without ever loosing sight of what Anton Pannekoek would have called ‘real concrete organizations’ binding people together. Only then can we begin seeing what might be most substantial, and radical, about the global movement of the multitude: the putting into dialectical relation of two relatively
autonomous, spatially-specific, modes of struggle: a local ‘wars of position’ and a ‘war of movement’ taking place on the terrain of the world economy.

This article deals with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), arguably the most significant migrant workers’ organization to have been born in the United States since the founding of the National Farmworkers Association (later the United Farmworkers Association) in the early 1960’s. Founded a little more than a decade ago, the CIW started out campaigning to raise the income and better the living conditions of tomato pickers in Southwest Florida. Because their necessity for food, raiment and housing required it, they have taken what had been a positional struggle for autonomy beyond its place of birth, to Chicago, California, Ecuador, Columbia and elsewhere in the Americas.

The CIW’s first globalizing campaign was a boycott of Taco Bell and its parent company, Yum! Brands, the largest restaurant firm in the world. This ended in victory on March 8, 2005, when Yum! agreed to cooperate with the CIW to improve working conditions in the field and pay a penny a pound more for the Florida tomatoes it uses at its 6,500 Taco Bell restaurants --in effect doubling the wages of field hands working for its suppliers (Nieves, 2005a). After more than a decade of actions, CIW militants got the centavo mas they had organized for. This victory, UFW president Arturo Rodriguez called “… the most significant … since the successful grape boycott led by the UFW in the 1960s in the fields of California.”(Leary, 2005) p.11

Six months later, the CIW launched its McDonalds campaign. It ended April 9, 2007 with a settlement that installed a code of conduct to govern the picking fields which further entrenched the principle of workers’ participation and strengthened third-party monitoring (Wides-Munoz, 2007). Immediately after the McDonald’s announcement, the CIW declared that it was switching its focus to Burger King (Lydersen, 2007, Sellers, 2006).

In all their specificity, CIW actions present us with a concrete organizational experience from which we can think more generally about the political significance of what has been variously and vaguely termed ‘the new internationalism of social movements’, ‘the anti-globalization movement’, or ‘globalization from below’. It also tells us a little about how global subjects might actually be present at their own making on the terrain of the world economy.

**ACTIONS**

The unincorporated town of Immokalee is ‘a tiny farm town southwest of Lake Okeechobee’ in Southwest Florida, near the Everglades (Riley, 2002), fifty kilometres north-east of Collier county’s wealthy retirement enclave. It is home to the state’s largest farm workers community. Roughly half of the workers who are based there are Mexican, a further third are Guatemalan, another tenth Haitian. African-Americans, who fifty years ago made up the majority of agricultural workers, now make up the last tenth.

Until genetically-modified crops lengthened the growing season to the point where picking has now become an almost year-round activity, the majority of seasonal workers in Immokalee stayed for eight or nine months of the year, then either followed the
migrant stream north during summer months (through Georgia, the Carolinas, Maryland, Delaware up to New England), or settled out of it during the off-season and moved into such low-wage industries as nursery, construction and tourism. Now, pickers have in effect become year-round residents of Immokalee.

Workers in Immokalee start assembling at four or five in the morning in the ‘drab salmon light of the street lamps overlooking the lot of La Mexicana #5 market’ near South Third street (Bowe, 2007, Gurwitt, 2004b), to meet crew leaders’ buses and negotiate their day’s wage (Bacon, 2002). Seven contractors dominate the local labour market: Six L’s Packing Company, Pacific Tomato Growers, Nobles Farms, Nobles-Collier, Inc., B&D Farms, Red Star Farms and Manley Farms. Their production is almost entirely sold to brokers who, in turn, sell it to retailers and fast-food chains. Taco Bell, which uses tomatoes in Chalupas, Gorditas, 7-Layer Burritos and most other offerings, is one of the region’s single biggest buyers.4

In the early 1990’s, Immokalee crop-pickers started meeting with some regularity and urgency to discuss wages and working conditions. CIW lore has not fixed the exact moment when parking-lot huddles started turning to the founding of an organization, but it does put the number of those present at twelve -a number which compares favourably to the ‘nine intrepid volunteers’ who started the Diggers commune at St George’s Hill in 1649 (Brockway, 1980), to the nine ‘well-meaning, sober and industrious men’ present at the founding of the London Corresponding Society’ a century and a half later (Thompson, 1980 (1963)) and, perhaps more relevantly, to the dozens who took part in the first action of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra on the properties of Macali and Brihante in the municipio of Ronda Alta, Rio Grande do Sul, in September 1979 (Hallewell, 2000, Martin, 2001).5 The core grievance of Immokalee workers was picking wages, which had begun falling in the late 1970’s and stayed stagnant ever since.

In November 1995, the Proyecto de Trabajadores Agrícolas del Sureste de la Florida organized its first community-wide general strike, in protest of contractors’ efforts to bring wages down further. Four thousand workers participated in a five-day action that stopped ninety per cent of agricultural production in Immokalee. As well, six workers went on a thirty-day hunger strike that ended when growers backed down. In the following months, the Proyecto began its ‘Campaign for Dialogue and a Living Wage’, combining community-wide protests with popular education and the development of local leadership capacities.

In 1996, a field foreman struck an Immokalee day labourer who, as the CIW story goes, had stopped work to get a drink of fresh water. Rather than complain to the local police, the man took his case to the Proyecto, which immediately called an action. Six hundred people marched to the house of the contractor, chanting Golpear a uno de nosotros es golpear a todos – a blow to one of us is a blow to us all (Bell, 1995, Bowe, 2007). This action marked the official founding of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, as well as the beginning of its ‘Anti-Slavery Campaign’, which has targeted practices that were customary in the tomato fields and orange groves of the Florida East Coast agricultural industry: debt bondage, intimidation, beatings, pistol-whippings, etc. A year later, the CIW organized another community-wide strike and started the ‘Awareness + Commitment = Change’ campaign, that aimed for wage increases and for some form of
collective bargaining to replace early-morning individual negotiations (Bacon, 2002). Following that, CIW members waged another five-day hunger strike (Baker, 1998).

On December 12, 1999, the CIW organized another general strike, followed a few months later by a 230 miles ‘March for Dignity, Dialogue and a Living Wage’ from Ft. Myers to the Orlando offices of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association that drew several thousand workers and supporters (Benítez, 2003). At that time, the CIW called on Governor Jeb Bush to use his "office to help move industry leaders toward a more modern, more humane relationship with workers in Florida's tomato fields."

In 2001, the CIW organized the first ‘Taco Bell Truth Tour’, that took participants more than eight thousand miles from Southwest Florida to Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, California, through stops in seventeen cities, where workshops, conferences as well as sundry fund and consciousness raisers were held (Damewood and Evan Kornfeld, 2001). This was the event that launched the international boycott of Taco Bell, that has brought the Coalition in contact with boycott committee leaders, unions and students organizations campaigning against sweatshops exploitation throughout the world economy (Bacon, 2002, Bohorquez-Montoya, 2003, Payne, 2002, Ramirez, 2001, Krupat, 2002).

The second ‘Taco Bell Truth Tour’ took place between February 28 and March 16th 2002 (Bacon, 2002, Ventura and Knopp, 2002). Some ninety participants again travelled from Florida to Irvine and back, holding or participating in dozens of events (Fernandez, 2002). On March 11, Taco Bell executives met with coalition leaders at company headquarters, where two thousands people joined the core group of marchers (Fernandez, 2002).

In the fall of 2003, the Taco Bell campaign reached Ecuador, where the CIW’s flag was raised in Quito during protests organized on the occasion of the Free Trade Area of the Americas’ ministerial meeting, by Ecuadorian workers taking the Taco Bell boycott as a case study of workers’ resistance to neo-liberal integration on the continent (Fernandez, 2003). The CIW struggle also became a point of reference for the Guatemalan Federación de Trabajadores Independientes del Campo (Rodriguez P., 2002) as well as for Sinaltrainal workers in Columbia, involved in a bitterly fought unionizing drive at Coca-Cola plants. As Sinaltrainal’s Luis Adolfo Cardona put it, in distinctly North American terms:

‘We are following in the steps of the Black Civil Rights Movement and the heroic Montgomery Bus Boycott. We act in the tradition of the United Farm Workers whose Filipino and Mexican field workers called a nationwide grape boycott to protest low pay and deadly work conditions in the Southwest. Students across the U.S. are currently boycotting Taco Bell with a "Boot the Bell" campaign to support Immokalee tomato field workers in Florida. Likewise, Colombian workers will soon know that many in the U.S. are willing to make small sacrifices to support their right to assembly, right to free speech, and right to life, liberty, and happiness.’

A few months after protests in Quito, CIW principals lead the ‘Root Cause People's March against the FTAA’ during Miami’s FTAA ministerial summit. The Ecuadorian Centro de Medios Independientes (part of the Indymedia family) reported on ‘five days
of spooky action (at) Taco Bell … restaurants across the country to support the Immokalee workers boycott .”

The Third ‘Truth Tour’ was a quick affair, starting February 27th, 2004 with a rally at Yum! Brands headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, and ending March 5th at Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, with a rally and a show that featured, among others, Tom Morello (of Rage Against the Machine), Eric Schlosser (author of ‘Fast Food Nation’) and Boots Riley (Rolling Stone Magazine’s Hip Hop artist of the year). This event was followed in the fall by a ‘mini tour’ (October 15th to October 26th) that took participants through Oregon, Washington State and Idaho, ending with a rally at Boise State University’s new basketball arena - the Taco Bell Pavilion.

In May 2004, Yum! Brands tried to ease the pressure on Taco Bell by sending the Coalition an unsolicited check of $110,000, which it said represented an extra penny per pound for the tomatoes it bought in 2003. Calling the offer a ‘public relations move’ the Coalition returned the check and vowed to continue the boycott (Nieves, 2005b).

The last ‘Truth Tour’ of the Taco Bell phase of CIW mobilization started out from Immokalee on the 28th of February 2005 and was to end with a protest rally in Louisville on March 12th (Goetz, 2005b). But on the ninth day of the tour, Yum! Brand announced that it would begin paying a penny a pound more for Florida tomatoes used in Taco Bell restaurants and that it would work with the CIW to improve farmworkers’ wages and working conditions. The rally was moved from Yum! Headquarters to the hall of the Presbyterian Church, where the protest turned into a victory celebration (Goetz, 2005a, Campbell, 2005).

The first McDonald’s Truth tour left Immokalee on April 7, 2007 bound for McDonald’s headquarters in Chicago, to join solidarity and social justice groups participating in the fourth meeting of the Latin America Solidarity Coalition. Only two days into the tour, the CIW bus pulled into the Carter Center in Atlanta, GA. McDonald’s Bob Langert and the CIW’s Lucas Benítez announced that an agreement had been reached ‘… to work together to address wages and working conditions for the farmworkers who pick Florida tomatoes.’

Planned as a protest, the April 15 ‘Concert for Fair Food’ at the House of Blues was turned into a celebration, and the starting event a new phase of CIW campaigning: Speaking on stage before the appearance of headliner Tom Morello (formerly of Rage Against the Machine), Lucas Benitez, challenged Burger King to meet the standards of the McDonald’s agreement.

At the time of writing, the Burger King campaign was under way, with ‘National BK actions’ (May 11-12, 2007) taking place simultaneously in two dozen cities in the United States.

OUTCOMES

A decade of public struggles has earned the CIW numerous endorsements from a wide variety of individuals and organizations. In that period, Lucas Benítez, spokesperson of the Coalition since 1996, has also emerged as something of a symbolic figure in the United States; a Guevara, Chavez or Marcos-like poster boy of resistance.
‘The serious young man with the black buzz cut, silver-tipped front teeth and unassuming air (who has “… a junior high school education, a smattering of English and years of back-breaking experience in the fields of southwest Florida…”) is giving voice to those who languish silently on one of society’s lowest rungs -- itinerant workers hidden in rural trailer parks and paid 45 cents per 32-pound bucket for picking America’s fruits and vegetables…’

(Driscoll, 2000)\textsuperscript{15}

In November 1998, the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Conference honoured Benítez with the Cardinal Bernardin Award for New Leadership for his ‘leadership in efforts to eliminate poverty and injustice in contemporary society.’ In October 1999, Rolling Stone Magazine and Do Something --a New-York based non-profit ‘youth leadership organization’-- gave him its $110,000 Brick Award Grand Prize as ‘America's Best Young Community Leader’. A few months later, the National Organization of Women gave a ‘Women of Courage’ award to Julia Gabriel, a CIW principal from Guatemala who gained a measure of notoriety by testifying in a servitude court case which earned her former employers a fifteen years-sentence in federal prison.\textsuperscript{16} In 2003, Benítez received the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award. In December of that year, Florida’s Catholic Bishops adopted a resolution honouring the CIW. At the same time ‘Just Coffee’ added to its roster the \textit{Un Centavo Mas} coffee brand (named after the CIW’s demand for a one-cent-per-bucket raise): a ‘full-city roast’ blend, certified fair trade and organic. Every pound sold generates $3.00 for the Coalition.\textsuperscript{17} In July 2004, Lucas Benítez was named Mother Jones’ ‘Hell-raiser of the month’ (Gurwitt, 2004a). At the time of writing the final draft of this paper, Anti-Slavery International had just awarded the CIW its 2007 award.\textsuperscript{18}

As well as becoming a marker of integrity --not an entirely insignificant achievement in the age of branded everything-- the CIW has had a measurable impact on the daily life of Immokalee workers. After the first general strike in 1995, the bucket rate went up by almost a quarter, from thirty-five to forty-five cents --the first wage increase in more than twenty years.\textsuperscript{19} The 1997 strike --recognized (if not endorsed) by Florida Governor Jeb Bush, in a speech in Spanish (Renford, 2001)-- brought about a further wage increase of twenty-five percent for as many as four hundred area workers. The Taco Bell agreement of March 2005 --a breakthrough victory for the CIW-- brought pickers what amounted to a wage increase of between 50\% and 75\% (Coalition of Immokalee Workers, 2005, Nieves, 2005a). For its part, the McDonald’s agreement, which concerned many contractors untouched by the Taco Bell precedent, almost doubled workers’ income (Clark, 2007). By many accounts, violence in the fields --the throwing of buckets and the hitting-- has diminished, as has the arbitrary withholding of pay checks. Now, field bosses are much more reluctant to use differences of ethnicity and national origins to set workers up one against the other, drive down wages or increase work cadences (Damewood et al., 2001, Renford, 2001). In these terms, the CIW is a remarkably successful organization.

It has been successful as well in building networks and institutions. Between the first Truth Tour and the agreement with Taco Bell, over 300 US college and university
organized “Boot the Bell” campaigns (Nieves, 2005b, Nieves, 2005a); over twenty Taco Bell outlets were closed on US campuses, often as a result of actions organized in the characteristically carnivalesque spirit of the anti-globalization movement (Drainville, 2001). In another five campuses, all Taco Bell products were removed, and in a further five, Taco Bell franchises were prevented from opening altogether. In the months preceding the end of the boycott, as support for the CIW was building across the student population, the University of Notre Dame cancelled its athletic department’s $50,000 yearly sponsorship agreement with local Taco Bell restaurants following a campaign led by the Students-Farmworkers Alliance and the Progressive Students Alliance. A few months later, UCLA followed suit (Andreyeva, 2004, Sellers, 2006). Shorter, the McDonald’s campaign was less concerned with network building or grass-roots mobilization, but it did give birth to The Alliance for Fair Food, a network of human rights, religious, student, labour and grassroots organizations –that aims at federating struggles in the fast food sector.

Over the first decade of its existence, the CIW has also established itself as an organisation of record, with credibility and influence outside questions directly related to picking wages. In Florida, the CIW played an important role in the ad hoc coalition assembled to fight the H2A ‘Guestworker’s bill’, drafted in the wake of Reagan’s 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (Epenshade, 1995), that would have allowed agribusiness to bring in seasonal workers under visa contracts specific to individual employers and thus created a class of indentured workers the likes of which has not been seen --or rather validated by legislation-- since the days of slavery (Riley, 2002, Sergent, 2001, Seguin, 2000, Rothenberg, 2000). The CIW has also been called in to help document cases built by prosecutors of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice against multi-state slavery operations based in Florida. The best-known of these was against brothers Ramiro and Juan Ramos and their cousin Jose, who got convicted in June 2002 of conspiring to enslave several hundred worker on citrus farms near Lake Placid in Highlands County, Florida (Barton, 2002, Rondeaux, 2002). The three men drew prison sentences totalling thirty-four years and nine months, and they had to forfeit three million dollars. Importantly, K. Michael Moore, the federal judge presiding over sentencing, ‘criticized the citrus industry, calling the slavery convictions a sign of the larger problems in Florida’s second-largest industry’ and called the government to look into it as well’ (Oxfam America, 2002).

The CIW has also built, or helped build, local institutions that have gained a measure of relative autonomy from Immokalee markets and politics, both under labour contractors’ stranglehold. The coalition runs a cooperative store where dried staples like pasta, tortillas and toilet paper are sold at wholesale prices. It has also founded a community-based radio station, Radio Conciencia, that reaches thousands of workers in both Spanish and Haitian Creole (Sutcliffe, 2006), and it runs an ‘education and leadership program’ that produces participatory videos, street art and popular theatre, and organizes community festivals. Working alongside (more than with; an issue discussed below) other education agencies --most notably the Even Start Program that established an outlet in Immokalee in 1992 and has since become ‘a linchpin of social stability in the ever-changing Immokalee community’ (Dimidjan, 2001)-- the CIW also funds an annual scholarship program for the children of local workers and a ‘Latino cultural festival’ in
conjunction with an area Spanish-language radio station. The CIW has also taken on community issues such as police abuse or housing as an integral part of its work. The latter especially is crucial to the lives of a community where nearly half of the population --almost two-third in picking season-- lives below the poverty line and where growers provide little housing, of however poor quality, to workers (Bacon, 2002, Dimidjan, 2001, Riley, 2002).

For all its causal neatness, realpolitik reckoning of CIW actions and outcomes provide little more than a factual background for the analysis of its politics. What CIW’s campaigning shows us of what can be born in the course of locally-born and globally-situated struggles is at once more diffused, more radical, and perhaps more significant.

THE DIALECTICS OF EVERYDAY TRANSNATIONALISM

‘Transnationalism …’ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith wrote almost a decade ago, ‘… is clearly in the air’ (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). Since then, their worries that it becomes ‘an empty conceptual vessel’ have been dispelled by the work of anthropologist who have studied transnational imagination (Braziel and Mannur, 2003, Hall, 1990), passions (Savigliano, 1995), global ethnoscapes (Appadurai, 1991) and diasporan communities (Braziel and Mannur, 2003, Ong, 1993, Spivak, 2000), sociologists that have looked at how social force in global movement have met the high transaction costs of the global world. (Smith, 2002), how they articulated their strategies (Smith, 2002), framed their protests (Ayres, 2004), structured collective actions (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005), built common identities (Rupp and Taylor, 1999, Smith, 2002) and confronted differences (Chase-Dunn, 2005).

For all the conceptual rigour recent works have brought to the field of transnationalism, and for all the knowledge of particular experiences, they have contributed surprisingly little to answering political questions related to the formation of global political subjects: Do men and women make history in particular ways when they enter on the terrain of the world economy? Can they grow their own distinct sense of collectivity? Can actually-existing subjects, grounded in some kind of shared experience - -‘happening bodies of people’ to evoke E.P. Thompson—— make themselves in the world economy?

To think through questions subjectivity and consciousness in the world economy, we can begin by what becomes immediately obvious once questions of transnationality are brought into the picture. As do the vast majority of crop-pickers in the United States --seventy percent of whom are foreign-born-- Immokalee workers can be said to live in a ‘transnational third space’, a relatively autonomous, ‘fluidly-bounded’ (Smith, 1994b), field of social relations born of experiences of transience, de-rooting and re-rooting (Rouse, 1991), ‘where new … forms of political organization, mobilization and practice are coming into being (Smith, 1994c). What gives this world its integrity is not place per se --either that whence exiles and migrants originated or that where they landed-- but how migrants and exiles negotiate tensions between the here and there of their lives and invent, by hooks and crooks of will and necessities, ways of life and struggle that cross geographical, cultural and political borders (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). ‘Transnational
living’ is a process of invention, not a state of affairs but ‘an evolving condition contingent on the relationship between migrants’ resources and socio-cultural positioning, as well as the historical contexts in the specific localities where they live’ (Guarnizo, 2003).

CIW workers have no country. They live in a composite world: in the town of Immokalee of course, in Collier County and in the whole of the State of Florida. Through ‘Truth Tours’, the world of the CIW has also come to include Irvine, California, Chicago and every US city and university campus visited. By transnational extension and through the occasions and necessities international politics, because it drags other histories to Immokalee and follows what Debra Barndt called the ‘tomato trail’ (Barndt, 2002), and because it wants to exploit strategic opportunities offered by brand-name affiliation and by such events as the Quito or Miami FTAA ministerial meetings, the world of CIW workers also takes in Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, Columbia, Ecuador and the Caribbean (Bacon, 2002), as well as export-zone sweatshops in South East Asia and elsewhere in the world economy. In this fluidly-bounded context, Paolo Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of Oppression’ (used as a model in CIW’s ‘awareness raising schemes’ (Renford, 2001)) or lessons learned in struggles against dictatorship in Guatemala and death squads in Salvador (the relationship between political activism and community-building, the mistrust and fear of police and state authorities, critical experiences for the most recent wave of migrant to labour in Florida’s fields (Renford, 2001, Riley, 2002)) become as immediately relevant as knowledge of local or state politics, or of the consuming habits of university students (privileged consumers of Taco Bell’s offerings, who are, furthermore, roughly of the same age-group as Immokalee workers).  

Transnationalism is not a thing but a relationship and the CIW struggles as best as it can in a world that is not of its making, in ways that are in part shaped --and sometimes over-determined-- by events. That being recognized, political questions remain whole. What, if anything, can we say about the politics of what is being invented in the course of CIW’s struggle? What mode of struggle (to borrow from Engel’s introduction to Marx’s Class Struggle in France) is being defined here, what consciousness raised, what actually-existing subject --if any-- can be seen to be making itself, and to what effect?

These questions can of course not be reasoned through the slogans invented by the CIW. In the process of taking its struggle outside of the immediate context of its emergence --to Jed Bush’s office, across the United States to university campuses, anti-sweatshop activists, Taco Bell and McDonald’s headquarters, to Ecuador and Columbia-- the CIW has carved slogans (No soy tractor –‘I am not a tractor’-- read a sign carried during the 1999 general strike) that speak of other struggles against exploitation and alienation: Un centavo mas, for instance, recalls the ‘dockers’ tanner’ at the heart of the London dockworker’s strike of 1889 –a defining episode of 19th century internationalism (Drainville, 2004, Oram, 1964, Lovell, 1969). Evoking such a parallel would give us free reign to treat the Coalition as part of the broad history of working class internationalism and, should we wish to do so, to feel safe in adding yet another chapter to yet another well-documented but under-theorized anthology of popular movements that could, in the cosmopolitan fashion of the day, be entitled something like ‘popular movements in the world economy’, or ‘grass-roots internationalism’.  


Notwithstanding fashionable penchants for political theorizing-by-slogan, however, catchphrases do not tell us how the CIW has tried to make itself a subject of its own history or what it has invented in the course of its struggle. Nor do historical allusions. In defining itself, the CIW has tapped into the local political imagination, defining its actions as a ‘civil- rights’ and ‘anti-slavery’ campaign (Waddell, 2001), and its movement as a modern ‘underground railroad’ (Rondeaux, 2002). This, as journalist Mireidy Fernandez put it, has allowed the CIW to ‘put a face on farm workers’ and bring ‘to the heartland of America, home of the brave…’ issues of human rights and worker’s exploitation that had otherwise only been seen at a distance, from ‘Asia, Afghanistan and Iraq…’ 26 Undoubtedly, this has made for more effective campaigning but, again, words—even when read as signifiers and understood in all their discursive weightiness—do not tell us much about modes of struggles invented in particular historical circumstances. Nor, finally, can questions raised be reasoned by looking at what Rosa Luxemburg would have called the ‘external form’ of the movement. To write of the CIW as part of a centerless global ‘network’ à la Manuel Castells (Castells, 1996), as a ‘hub-and spoke’ thing (Klein, 2002), or, borrowing a term much in fashion amongst anti-globalization activists, as an ‘affinity group’ among others, is to miss something crucial. ‘Networks’ as Zigmunt Bauman emphasized ‘suggests moments of ‘being in touch’ interspersed with periods of free roaming. In networks, connections are entered on demand and can be broken at will’ (Bauman, 2003). Affinity grouping too, suggests a kind of conjunctural bonding-by-choice that gives structuring importance to strategic opportunism. Inscribed in the process of transnational living, CIW transnationalism is more substantial, more quotidian and more problematically-mediated than what is suggested by such thinking-by-metonymy. Had the CIW flag never been carried in Quito, had Coca-Cola workers in Columbia never entered into the picture, had the CIW never become a marker of fair trading or had its Taco Bell and McDonald’s campaigns not found resonance with anti-sweatshop activist that transnationalism would still be woven in the very fabric of its struggle.

Rather than read into slogans, allusions or forms, what we have to look at and theorize from is praxis itself: what the Coalition has done in relation to concrete historical circumstances, how it has specifically negotiated its rapport with other social forces, both in situ and on the broader terrain of the world economy. What, in other words, it has invented in the process of willing itself into existence.

Once more, it is useful to begin with the transnational literature, that again defines questions which are both relevant and under-theorized in their politics. In ethnic (Tölöyan, 1991) and trade (Cohen, 1971) diasporas—transnationalism’s exemplary communities—transnational processes of invention take shape over what Fernand Baudel would have called the longue durée, in which social and political processes slow down so much that history itself appears immobile (Braudel, 1969) and the politics of its making is nearly invisible. There, the meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacities of political subjects take centuries rather than decades to gell, a process that often appears beyond the reach of human agency, bound to shorter durations and more fixed to places.

With twentieth-century technology (phone, fax, electronic mail, video cameras, and cheaper airplane travel), newer transnational communities, by contrast, appear to invent
themselves so rapidly that what was hitherto hidden because folded in *longue durée* processes now risks being obfuscated by instantaneity.

'Town leaders can hold group discussions via phone, the Internet, and video, or hop a plane for an important meeting. This enables them, as Nina Glick Schiller (1992) has pointed out "through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations [to] create social fields that cross national boundaries ... and bring two societies into a single fold." Thus, to Haitians in New York, "Haiti" exists also outside the island. To the people of Ticuani, Mexico, the migrants from their town now living in New York are the "always present absent ones."

(Smith, 1994)27

Set in a plurisitical world, guided by lessons garnered from a variety of national struggles and circumstances, attentive to the possibilities of new technologies (the CIW web-site is a model of the genre), folded in the necessities and opportunities of actually-existing struggles, cadenced by the rhythms of picking (CIW workers, Lucas Benítez included, remain active in the field), the transnational inventiveness of the CIW has a pace and reasons of its own, distinct from both the long unfolding of historic diasporas and the instantaneous gelling of cyber-avatars.28

Crucial here is the relationship between the CIW’s campaigning and its community-building efforts at the local level: how the CIW has generalized local issues, how this has activated transnationality (transforming a kind of latent transnationality *en soi* into transnationality *pour soi*) and how, in turn, this has charged locality with politics. There is a spatial dialectics at work in this process that might be key to answering political questions. Unpacking it is necessary to see what lessons can be learned from the first decade in the history of the Coalition for Immokalee Workers.

*De facto* transnational because it involves workers living transnational lives and because agricultural production in Immokalee is inscribed in a global commodity chain, the CIW struggle first gelled as a local fight over wages, working and living conditions. In that first moment of the dialectic, ways of life and struggle that had been learned in other contexts were, to put it crudely, ‘imported’ to Immokalee and brought to bear on local issues. ‘No one but migrant workers would have thought of setting up autonomous organizations or taking on Taco Bell … Coalition members have a different way of communicating political issues… a different relationship to community’.29 To take matters out of the hypothetical and into the historical: not one group of workers previously active in Florida’s field --not the African-American who had worked the fields prior to the arrival of migrant workers, nor the predominantly Mexican workers of the previous generation (Riley, 2002)-- had ever worked with such concern as has the CIW to build and defend autonomous positions at the local level. The nod to positional autonomism, and thus to Gramsci, is deliberate. From the onset, the CIW has been engaged in what can only be thought of as a war of position, with the ambition of establishing relatively autonomous institutions and of laying siege to the constitutive structures of Immokalee. In doing so, the Coalition obviously reached beyond what it could grasp: ‘the war of position …’, as Gramsci emphasized, ‘… demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people’ the CIW obviously could mobilize, let alone
organize in any sustainable manner. But that accommodationist reasonableness would have so obviously counselled more compromises for efficiency’s sake (working in partnership with local authorities and all relevant interlocutors from state agencies and the business community to address the housing issue for instance) should not keep us from noticing that the CIW’s struggle was broadly positional from the moment of its inception, and that it remains so to this day. In terms of its reading of the situation it found itself in, and of its means of transforming it, the CIW may well have been misguided or over-ambitious, but its praxis —what Gramsci would have called its ‘spontaneous invention’ born of ‘combinations of a given situation of material production with the fortuitous agglomeration within it of disparate social elements’ (Hoare and Smith, 1998)— should be recognized for what it was.

What the CIW took on ‘truth tours’ to Irvine and Chicago and in actions beyond -- and what was picked up by everyone from Bruce Springsteen and Mary Robinson to US campus activists, and in Columbia, Ecuador and elsewhere—, was not a struggle for autonomous position, but a campaign for human rights, worker’s respect and living wages, for un centavo mas, against slavery in the field, sweatshop labour and Taco Bell. This is the ‘spin’ the CIW gave its out-of-position campaigns in order, as Lucas Benítez put it, ‘to get the maximum numbers of allies from as many different sectors as possible.” (Leary, 2005) 14.

The distinction between in situ and in movement phases of the struggles is critical here: a positional struggle was brought beyond the immediate context of its emergence and transformed into a campaign defined by strategic concerns over gathering support, visibility and endorsements, and building networks and affinity-grouping. To defend its position, the Coalition borrowed pregnant references from previous episodes of struggles, it ‘piggy-backed on the ready-made infrastructure supplied by global corporations’ (Klein, 2001), and, in the course of spinning its story, defined what Jane Jacobs (writing in the context of inter-neighbourhood politics) would have called ‘hop-and-skip’ issues (Jacobs, 1993 (1961)). This, it did well enough to earn wide-ranging endorsements and to define the terms of a working relationship with different organizations working with distinct constituencies.

Again, we should not get en fettered in realpolitik or definitional considerations. Whether or not CIW appeals to human rights or references to slavery and sweatshop labour were judged, warranted or historically ‘correct’, is not essential. What is important here is not so much the issues themselves but how the Coalition’s tactical choices have transformed its praxis: from its positional struggle in Immokalee, it has extracted issues that, for better or worst, have guided alliance-making and affinity grouping. What is taking place here is strategic mapping, a particular ‘geographical strategy’ (Herod, 2001b) born of the specific constraints and opportunities of the terrain of the world economy. In the most literal sense of the term, the necessities of its campaigning have made the CIW venture unto a broader terrain of struggle, to find its place in it, recognize groups to engage with and draw support from.

Had it happened during the heydays of the post war world order, when social movement internationalism was contained and structured from above by the dynamics of inter-state relations and by ‘old’ (corporatist, state-centered, nationally-based) labor internationalism (Munck, 2000, Waterman, 2001), that the Coalition’s struggle would
have likely been carried unto the terrain of the world economy only at the price of having first been integrated into the programmatic concerns of an established institution (Drainville, 2004, Drainville, 1995). It is unlikely, of course, that such a cold-war creature as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions --that was little more than the cold-war sum of nationally-centered parts (Waterman and Wills, 2001)-- would have taken on the case of un-unionized migrant workers, and difficult to even imagine that the World Confederation of Trade Unions, standing on the other side of the cold-war divide, would have operated in Florida, but perhaps the CIW would have constituted itself --as did the UFW-- as a proper union with proper international affiliation, and thus secured some kind of representation, perhaps by lobbying the International Labour Office, but in any case, the CIW would have never been able to move as it is doing now across the terrain of the world economy, following tactical imperatives and solicitation rather than programmed routes. At best, one can imagine occasional solidarity actions taking place (as they sometimes did for the UFW), but never a whole campaign finding its own way across the terrain of the world economy (Fujita Rony, 2000).

In the present context, the CIW, far from having its route planned by internationalist bodies, is following the chancier, more exploratory, route of tactical encounters. This, as I have argued elsewhere, is how social movements have answered efforts by the World Bank et al. to assemble a static and uncritical global civil society made up of NGO’s and other compliant partners: against a global ‘spatial fix’, social forces invent movement (Drainville, 1999 (1998), Drainville, 2004, Drainville, 2005). In of itself and regardless of particular outcomes, this has radical implications.

Global campaigning has not taken the CIW beyond Immokalee. Rather, it has transformed, and perhaps distorted, its relationship with locality. Here, we arrive at the second moment of the spatial dialectic. On the one hand, the recognition earned by global campaigning and the money awarded have given the CIW political and monetary means to improve the material conditions of Immokalee workers: bucket rates have been raised, violence in the field has diminished, etc.. The CIW has also gained credibility and resources to intervene in dossiers of slave labour and take on broader issues of housing and policing, and it has played a role in setting the foundations of a community-based negotiation process, something that is potentially critical in the context of Florida—a ‘right-to-work’ state where union organizing meets considerable legal and political challenges. The CIW now has 2,700 members and a staff of eight ‘who share the work knocking on doors around town—few laborers have telephones—to alert workers to upcoming actions (Gurwitt, 2004b). It also has the visibility and resources to organize what are, by Immokalee standards, the biggest, most extravagant, spectacles.

On the other hand, the CIW, its autonomism activated and radicalized by out-of-location campaigning, finds itself in danger of standing increasingly apart from such other community organizations as the Migrant Farmworkers Justice Project, the Farmworkers’ Association of Florida, Florida Rural Legal Services or Fresh Start. ‘These folks’, said Greg Shell (of the Migrant Justice Project) ‘… won’t cooperate … They’ve missed an opportunity for others to help them … But the coalition members insist their method -- grass-roots, inclusive -- is the more democratic and less bureaucratic way’ (Driscoll, 2000).
Florida-based workers’ organizations did support the “Boot the Bell” campaign and they have always welcomed CIW victories, but none in fact have worked with the CIW on the campaign themselves, nor indeed have they gotten closer to working with the Coalition on local community-building projects. In fact, what is happening is quite the opposite of community building: widely celebrated outside Immokalee after a decade of spectacular campaigning, the CIW stands increasingly apart in its place of birth, a riddle to other organizations:

Nosotros los apoyamos (CIW), pero no trabajamos con ellos… Realmente no sé que otras acciones ellos van a realizar, sí otros boicots o que otras acciones.\(^{38}\)

One especially revealing example is the relationship between the CIW and the Farmworkers’ Association of Florida. Both organizations share similar constituencies (the FAF’s membership of over 6,000 farm workers is drawn predominantly from Mexican, Haitian, Afro-American, Guatemalan and Salvadoran communities), fight for like improvements in farmworkers’ housing and working conditions, and both share broad, communitarian, ambitions (for the FAF: ‘to build a strong, multi-racial, economically viable, organization of farmworkers in Florida, empowering farmworkers to respond to and gain control over the social, political, economic and workplace issues that affect their lives’). But in the last decade they have grown increasingly apart in strategies and tactics (Leary, 2005), to the point where they now maintain only a nominal relationship (showing up together for press conferences, handing in the occasional petition together…). Increasingly confined to a legal-advocacy role (dealing with visas, work permits and like matters), the FAF --that counts both farmworkers and field bosses as members— does not participate in any CIW actions. CIW and FAF members do not attend each others’ meeting and the FAF even refused to endorse the Taco Bell boycott until it was all but over, and even then, did so only in non-specific, principled, fashion\(^{39}\). It was completely absent from the McDonald’s campaign and has not showed up thus far for the BK campaign.

Animated by what Gramsci would have called a distinct philosophy of praxis (‘sufficient into itself” in that it ‘contains in itself all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integrated conception of the world’), the Coalition finds that its campaign-born radicalness is in danger of standing as obstacles to effective politics and,
in the end, to building the kind of institutions that are necessary to structure and defend local positions (Hoare and Smith, 1998). In the near future, this might well mortgage the Coalition’s ability to play a mediating role and contribute to the development of what Jane Jacobs might have termed a ‘self-policing neighbourhood’. Already, we can see that ‘community bargaining’ in Immokalee has not progressed much (at their weekly meeting, coalition members still discuss labour-market conditions and they still try to gain a common sense of what wage they should ask for in early mornings negotiations, but not much more (Leary, 2005); membership has not grown in pace with the Coalition’s visibility, projects for community housing remain that, and the Coalition’s cooperative store still sells the same few basic products in the same locale it has occupied for a decade, still tended by volunteers and Coalition members.

How many frijoles will be sold next month, how many will show up for next week’s meeting, or carry their CIW card to the field, what will come of housing projects and community bargaining, will depend on the Coalition’s ability to reconcile its radicalized autonomism with the accommodationism of other community organizations. That the Coalition will be able to do this, and thus install itself in something that may look like a position of hegemonic leadership is far from obvious.

What is certain is that national and continental campaigning have not taken the struggle of Immokalee workers beyond locality, but have rather charged it with politics -- may be with more of it than it can bear.

The charging of local/positional struggles by global campaigning can be seen to operate elsewhere. To give but one example close to the CIW, it can also be seen to animate the student movement in the United States. Just as, forty years ago, the anti-war movement —understood by world-systems theorists as the first global anti-systemic movement (Arrighi et al., 1989, Arrighi et al., 1986, Wallerstein, 2002) --radicalized the student occupation movement in Paris, Prague, Berkeley and elsewhere, the ‘anti-globalization movement’ (in all its anti-corporate, anti-neo-liberal, No-Logo, anti-sweatshop variations) has fuelled student’s positional resistance to everything from the commodification of knowledge to attempts at imprisoning campus activists in ‘free-speech zones’ (Academe, 2002, Lesher, 2003). Further from Immokalee, an anthology-
full of local/positional struggles can be seen to have been charged by global campaigning, to varying effect. Understood in terms of issues raised, strength of coalitions assembled, compromises made and outcomes, or misunderstood as exclusively ‘global’ events, episodes thus gathered would look as the ‘multitude in movement’ ‘…overflowing, excessive and unknowable (Hardt, 2002). Seen in their dialectical linking of local/positional struggles and global movements, they would appear a more coherent lot.

CONCLUSION

To be sure, the quotidian and localized doings of the CIW would fall below the radar of those for whom the anti-globalization movement is a thing unto itself, dressed in riotous garbs for Seattle, Genoa or Rostock, and in parliamentary finest in Porto Alegre and Mumbai. Besides those events, a CIW bus going to Chicago, even if it is filled with migrant workers in struggle against multinational corporation, appears decidedly local. But looking into CIW’s doings allows us to raise a hypothesis about the dialectical linking of spatially-specific modes of struggle: Locally, where the earthworks of hegemony have been dug and solidified, active sorties would in most places amount to counter-productive adventurism, and thus, political struggles for new orders reasonably lean toward positional struggles. On the terrain of the world economy, where civil society has not gelled (in spite of neo-liberal attempts to define the terms of global civility), there is more freedom and opportunities for movement. That social forces taking to an increasingly globalized world develop similar ‘social instinct’ (born, for Gramsci, of ‘daily experiences illuminated by common sense’) and come to negotiate in like fashion the tensions between locality and globality does not run counter to intuitive thinking.

How widespread the dialectical linking of local/positional struggle and global movement is, what can be the strength of what it animates, and thus its possibilities to transform world order, are all matters of empirical inquiry. It may be that the dialectic seen at work in the CIW struggle is thinly spread, that it is everywhere short-lived and
that it always over-stretches local-positional struggles. It may also be that the hegemonic incorporation attempted by global governance will indeed succeed in over-determining all that social forces can invent. Or it may be that the dialectical linking of spatially-specific modes of struggles is widely spread throughout the world economy and that social forces need only to be reminded of what they themselves are inventing in the course of their struggles to gain a necessary consciousness of the possibilities offered by the present moment.
References
COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS (2005) Victory at Taco Bell. CIW.


3 The reference to the UFW is not gratuitous. Also composed of migrant workers and also led by a charismatic leader who came to personify the struggle, the UFW also grew in visibility when it called for a nationwide boycott of a well-known brand (‘Schenley, a well known liquor producer with a recognizable brand name and a non-unionized farm workforce’) that got widespread support from ‘… university students, urban unions, … churches groups…’ and from such public figures as Senator Robert Kennedy. Like the CIW’s ‘Truth Tour’, the UFW organized ‘a twenty-five-day long, 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento’… said to be ‘inspired by the Freedom March held in Alabama two years before…’ and it ‘… gained a favorable national media attention, particularly when growers responded by harassing pickers and threatening violent retaliation. Citations from ROTHENBERG, D. (2000) *With These Hands: The Hidden Work of Migrant Farmworkers Today*, Berkely, University of California Press.

4 Taco Bell buys 7% of Florida tomato production, or 10.9 million pounds of tomatoes a year. Thirteen of thirty-two items on the Taco Bell menu include tomatoes as a principal ingredient. http://www.tacobell.com.

5 In interview (July 7, 2004), Lucas Benítez could recall the names of seven of the twelve founders: Pedro López (Guatemala), Felipe Pascual (Guatemala), Greg Asbed, Laura Germino, Elvira (México), Ramiro Benítez (México). Lucas Benítez himself is from México.

6 The core group of marchers was roughly seventy strong, including coalition members, local supporters and representatives of workers' rights groups from Atlanta and Philadelphia. Two dozens community organizations and religious groups joined them at send-off. The largest crowd of supporters numbered in the thousands. Five thousand people signed the petition that was presented to Florida Governor Jeb Bush on March 17 PELTIER, M. (2000) *Coalition Workers Meet with Governor Over Petitions*. *Naples/Collier News*. Naples, Florida.

7 Amongst organizations and coalitions that have either been brought together by CIW actions or have offered support are: the United States Student Association (USSA), the Student Labor Action Project, the United Farm Workers, Jobs with Justice, the Students/Farmworkers Alliance, the *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan* (the largest *chicano* student organization in the US), the Campaign for Labor Right (that presents itself as ‘The Grassroots Mobilizing Department of the U.S. Anti-Sweatshop Movement’), the United Postal Workers of America (UPWA), the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Students for Peace Action (SPA), the Civic Media Center, the Mexican-American Student Association (MASA), the Institute for Hispanic and Latino Cultures, the Green Party, the Student Environmental Action Coalition, Students Transforming and Resisting Corporations, the Presbyterian Church USA, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the American Postal Workers’ Union, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, ACORN, the United Church of Christ, Pax Christi International, Global Exchange, the Mexico Solidarity Network, the National Council of Churches Bishop, Oxfam America,
the Alliance of Baptist Churches, the Episcopal Migrant Ministry, the Christian Church in Florida (Disciples of Christ), and the Radical Cheerleader (whose Auburn chapter occupied a local Taco Bell).

8 For details, see the Students/Farmworkers Alliance’s homepage: http://www.sfalliance.org/About/history.htm

9 Founded in 1892, Sinaltrainal regroups mostly workers from the Colombian food industry working for such transnational corporations as Coca Cola, Unilever, Freisland, Corn Products Corporation, Nabisco, Royal S.A., Kraft, etc. On September 9, 2003, FEMSA, Coca-Cola's largest Colombian bottler, locked out workers at eleven of sixteen bottling plants. Since then, twenty Sinaltrainal are said to have been killed in the struggle, and more than five hundred pressured into resigning. Sinaltrainal has taken its struggle to the international level, with ‘The Campaign To Stop Killer Coke’, details of which can be found at: http://www.sinaltrainal.org/huelga/huelga.html#30. In interview (July 7, 2004), Lucas Benítez emphasized the Coalition’s support for Coca-Cola workers in Columbia and Guatemala, mentioning that Coca-Cola products are forbidden in the Coalition’s cooperative store. Lucas also mentioned that Coalition members had toured villages in Guatemala to explain the struggle in Immokalee. No further details on these informal solidarity tours, that seemed to have taken place on the occasion of family visits, were available.


14 The CIW web site provides a long and growing list of public figures that have endorsed the struggle in Immokalee. Among individuals mentioned are: Julian Bond (NAACP Board Chairman), Jimmy Carter, Lawton Chiles (a former Florida Governor, who wrote a letter on January 2, 1998 asking workers and growers to establish a dialogue), Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Dolores Huerta (of the UFW), the Indigo Girls, Cardinal William H. Keeler (the Roman Catholic archbishop of Baltimore), Naomi Klein (of No Logo fame), David Korten (author of When Corporations Rule the World), Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), John J. Nevins (bishop of Venice in Florida), singer Bonnie Raitt, Mary Robinson (former UN Commissioner for Human Rights), Lynn Redgrave, Martin Sheen, Susan Sarandon, Eric Schlosser (author of Fast Food Nation), John Sweeney (AFL-CIO president), Ricky Martin, Utah Phillips, Jeff Bridges, and Cecil Martin, former fullback for the Philadelphia Eagles. Missing from the list is Bruce Springsteen: ‘The Boss’ gave CIW workers ten tickets to a local concert in March of 1997.
In a featured article devoted (in all senses of the word) to Lucas Benítez, Mother Jones’ Rob Gurwitt uses similarly hagiographic prose: ‘Benítez exudes the passion of an old-time labor agitator. He stands about five and a half feet tall, but his energy and earnest manner give him an authoritative presence. In his daily stint on CIW’s low-power radio station, he deepens his voice, speeds up his Spanish, and rolls his R’s for dramatic flair—“R-r-radio Conciencia!” he crows, as he reminds his listeners to take CIW’s phone number with them and watch out for charlatans as they head north following the harvest.’


At the same time, NOW also honored Laura Germino a community educator with Florida Rural Legal Services and Lucas Benítez ‘for their outstanding efforts in the fight against poverty and for workers’ rights.’ For more details of the Gabriel story, see OXFAM AMERICA (2004) Like Machines in the Fields: Workers without Rights in American Agriculture. http://www.oxfamamerica.org.

Other ‘Just Coffee’ offerings include *Grounds for democracy* (full-city roast, blend of café Timor and Chiapas; 4.00$ of every pound sold going to ‘Democracy Now’), *Ya Basta* (dark-roasted organic Zapatista Java from the Mut Vitz Coop in Chiapas), *Work for Peace* (‘A blend of Chiapas, Colombian, and East Timorese coffee, its rich taste and deep finish (that) will send you off nicely to spread the word of peace’, 1$ to the Madison Peace Coalition), *Café Timor* (medium roast fair trade organic, 3$ to the East Timor Action Network) and *Awakening* (medium roast, 3$ to the Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago). See http://www.justcoffee.net/justice.html.

Wage figures are approximate at best, due to reporting conditions, accounting inconsistencies and task specificity: a ‘… bucket of first-picked cherry tomatoes earns a picker $2.00; the later picking earns only $1.25. Plum tomatoes earn 75 cents per bucket and salad tomatoes only 40 cents. The pay varies depending on how numerous the tomatoes are on the vine, whether they are first picked, and how many buckets a picker fills in an hour.’


For instance: ‘In Auburn, Alabama, a Take Back the Streets action of the Southern Girls Conference took over a local Taco Bell. In Knoxville, Tennessee, a picket of a Taco Bell organized by Jobs with Justice and the UNITE textile union drew 40 people--prompting managers to call in the police. … Students and anti-sweatshop activists in Los Angeles began organizing pickets in the summer at a Taco Bell restaurant in East LA. Protesters showed up each week with tomato-shaped signs that read "Support Farm Workers" and "Boycott Taco Bell"--and a 10-foot banner featuring an angry Chihuahua dog, like the one featured in the company's commercials, declaring *Yo No Quiero Taco Bell*"

21 For details of the ‘Boot the Bell campaign, see the Students/Farmworkers Alliance’s homepage:

http://www.sfalliance.org/About/history.htm.

22 ‘During the past six years, there have been six federal prosecutions for slavery of farmworkers in Florida, five of them with the assistance of CIW’


23 In ‘A Profile of U.S. Farm Workers: Demographics, Household Composition, Income and Use of Services’, the Department of Labor describes the current U.S. farm workers’ population and trace trends since 1988, relying on data collected by the U.S. National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS).

24 The importance of age was underlined by the SFA’s Julia Perkins in interview (August 5, 2004).

25 Many such anthologies have been published in the last few years that are often as interesting for the stories they document as they are noteworthy for the poverty of their theorizing. See for instance:


MCNALLY, D. (2002) Another World is Possible: Globalization and anti-capitalism, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring,

NOTES FROM NOWHERE (Ed.) (2003) We are Everywhere, London, Verso,


27 In the same spirit, see also

SMITH, J. (1994a) Organizing Global Action. Peace Review, 6, 419-426,


and commitment to their homelands, as well as their investments and money remittances transform local traditional structures.


29 The first citation is from Mireidy Fernandez, interviewed July 12, 2002. The second is from Sylvia Perkins, interviewed July 7, 2004. In interview, Lucas Benítez also emphasized the distinctiveness of the CIW in terms of its relationship with community.


31 The reference to neighborhoods is not extraneous to world order. One of the defining document of neo-liberal world order is the 1995 Commission on Global Governance’s Report, subtitled Our Global Neighborhood, that seeks to define the terms of social comity in the world economy COMMISSION ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (1995) Our Global Neighbourhood, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

32 A few years after the CIW began its ‘living wage’ campaign, 75 such campaigns were under way on US campuses across the US. The most publicized took place at Harvard University, Swarthmore, Princeton, Wesleyan, University of Virginia, Johns Hopkins, Brown, Stanford, George Washington, Fairfield, where both student activists and their tuition-paying parents became involved. On ‘living wage campaigns’ as structuring issues in campus politics, see NEUMANN, R. (2001) Living Wage 101. Dissent, 59-62.


35 The exact membership of the Coalition is difficult to establish. Until recently, members did not pay for their cards, and –for obvious reasons of fear of police and immigration authorities-- no list was maintained. Now, John Bowe estimated the paying membership (10$/year) at roughly 3 000. BOWE, J. (2007) Nobodies: Modern american slave labor and the dark side of the new global economy, New York, Random House., page 24. Week in and week out, roughly one hundred members participate in gatherings. How resources are utilized is
also difficult to verify. When Lucas Benítez was awarded the $110,000 Brick Award Grand Prize, he announced that he planned to use the grant ‘to strengthen the Coalition, such as by adding and improving community programs’


In the absence of financial reports, this information could not be verified.

36 On January 22, 2007, the CIW’s ‘Year of the Worker’ was inaugurated by a concert that drew more than 3,000 people, by some accounts, the largest festive crowd gathered in Immokalee history.

37 Greg Shell is managing attorney for the Migrant Justice Project in Belle Glade. In interview, Lucas Benitez confirmed that relationship with other community groups in Immokalee was minimal, perhaps even thinner than that between the CIW and the Department of Labor:

Nosotros no trabajamos mucho con grupos de abogacía. Nosotros no necesitamos que alguien hable por nosotros, nosotros necesitamos nuestra propia voz. Para estos grupos de abogacía es difícil entender que los trabajadores de Immokalee seamos un poco diferentes. Nosotros trabajamos con ellos en momento en que nosotros los necesitamos y tomamos la decisión, no cuando ellos lo deciden.

Nosotros trabajamos mucho con el Departamento de Trabajo. Trabajamos con otras organizaciones comunitarias en otros estados.

In interview (April 21, 2005), Stephen D. Bartlett also emphasized the CIW’s distinctness and, to a point, separatedness:

Según mi entendimiento, ellos tienen un forma de trabajar muy diferente. La Coalición es una organización que lucha por reivindicaciones, de lucha laboral. La otra organización (FWAF) que busca como aliviar o mejorar las condiciones de los trabajadores, por ejemplo, programas de pesticidas. Ellos (FWAF) reciben dinero para hacer programas de pesticidas, los efectos dañinos. Son dos formas diferentes de trabajar.

38 Marc Grossman interviewed April 8, 2005.