
CHAPTER FIVE

THE RADICAL LIBERAL FRAME: IN SEARCH OF A JUST POLITICAL ECONOMY

“Being radical means getting to the root of the problem. It means abandoning your pre-conceptions and pre-judgements so that you can change your actions and know you’re doing the right thing.”⁴³⁴

1. INTRODUCTION

A cluster of high-profile non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been prominent protagonists in the current cycle of contention. Since the middle of the 1990s they have appealed to their supporters not simply to donate money or time to their various causes, but also to take part in political actions aimed at influencing governments and corporations. Predominantly focused on third-world development and the environment they have long indicated that power inequalities inherent in rapacious capitalism do unjustified harm to people and planet alike. It is primarily among these supporters and members that we find evidence for a third orientational frame within the movement of movements.

The overarching claim of this part of the thesis has been that there are three identifiable constellations of ideas which are intertwined in contemporary protest. They are comparable because of their orientations to critique of the international political economy. At the same time, there are substantial differences. Differences are not limited to content. The content and structure of idea elements within interpretative frames are mutually constitutive, as described in chapter one. At the centre of the RS frame are a number of theoretical insights, understood as certainly true, that inform interpretation of world history and individual experience. Understanding that frame therefore focused on the theoretical premises that proponents hold true. The DA frame is centred rather on a mode of action, and a series of key events in the developing understandings they inspire. Understanding the DA frame therefore required an analysis focused on action-oriented understanding. The RL frame is rather based on the understanding participants have of particular issues, one that is self-consciously built

⁴³⁴ ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

on sets of broadly agreed facts. To be sure, the way those facts are constructed and interpreted is inextricably linked to a particular morality. However, the facts are organised around identifiable issues; peace, development and environment being the most high-profile in the current cycle. Understanding the RL frame therefore requires a third angle, one oriented to particular issues rather than theoretical positions or types of action.

In explicating the current RL frame, in section two, I will describe positions on a number of themes which have all been the subject of debate and discussion among local campaign groups. In terms of critique these encompass privatisation, trade liberalization, and debt. In the portrayal of positive alternatives they include fair trade, co-operatives and human rights. Engaging with these debates demonstrates a number of more abstract concerns that can be understood as the heart of the RL frame. First, justice is understood in terms of power equality; the present political economy is criticised because structured power inequalities lead to human suffering, particularly in the poorest parts of the world. Second, a complex understanding of the interplay of knowledge and power is apparent and simplified within the frame as a strong position against any form of dogma. Neoliberalism and Marxist socialism alike are accused of taking dogmatic positions which are disconnected from empirical reality. Third, a particular attitude to change becomes apparent, that sees it as essential to engage constructively with institutionalised power-holders in order to make positive change. Finally, a strong tendency to argue in terms of democracy, combined with a growing scepticism about representative democracy indicates a deep tension within the frame. This will be considered in detail in the third part of section two, where I will argue that the RL frame forces its proponents into a position where representative democracy is both praised and critiqued, while simultaneously the outlines of a more participatory and 'bottom-up' version of democracy are being explored.

2. THE LONG VIEW: APPROACHES TO PEACE, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Naturally, the positions that have emerged in the current cycle of contention are informed by a process of learning within a number of spheres. I first consider, therefore, historical development of a form of political action that has merged an analytical, institutional mode of action with morally informed popular protest. It is predominantly the development and environment lobbies that have influenced the particular issue-sets that formed the focus of the emergence of the current cycle of contention. I will describe the processes of politicization and professionalization that have created from these lobbies a recognisable set of beliefs and mode of action. After

911, the focus of the current cycle of contention became the ‘war on terror’. In chapter seven a number of parallels between aspects of the current movement, and those campaigning for nuclear disarmament in the 1960s and 1980s. It is, therefore, the development of CND, running in parallel with the direct action groups described in chapter four, that I turn to first.

Lobbying for Peace

In 1958 the short-lived National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests (NCANWT) became the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) with the aim of convincing the British government to take up unilateral nuclear disarmament. While the DAC had been influential in spreading the notion of direct action in post-war Britain, “in its outlook, membership and methods, NCANWT remained within the sphere of legitimate political action”.⁴³⁵ CND continued this role, focusing on persuading politicians of the moral veracity of their case, and utilising the mass demonstration as one means to do so. By the early 1960s CND was capable of mobilising up to 100,000 participants on demonstrations in central London⁴³⁶ leading contemporary commentators to describe it as the “re-emergence of ideological politics in Great Britain.”⁴³⁷

To the extent that CND had an ideology it was, in its early instantiations, peculiarly focused on the British national-state. Henry Steck justified his ideological re-emergence claim in relation to a perceived desire to see sweeping change in both the domestic political alignment and foreign policy. Displaying some parallels with the most recent anti-war movements, the first wave of CND occurred at a time when a Tory opposition accepted the need for the welfare state and the Labour government was pushing for the production of new weapons, the defence of the remaining colonial lands and a closer relationship with the USA.⁴³⁸ Like the vast majority of British citizens, CND activists remained attached to the notion of Britain as a great power. However, rather than seeking ways to maintain the projection of military power, they saw the potential for Britain to be an example to the world by making a moral stand against the development of nuclear weapons.⁴³⁹ As such, their chief political ambition was that the British

⁴³⁵ Steck, H.J., 1965, “The Re-Emergence of Ideological Politics in Great Britain: The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament” in *Western Political Quarterly* 18 (1), p. 92.

⁴³⁶ Byrne, P., 1987, “The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: the Resilience of a Protest Group” in *Parliamentary Affairs* 40(4), p. 517.

⁴³⁷ Steck, “The Re-Emergence...”.

⁴³⁸ Steck, “The Re-Emergence...”.

⁴³⁹ Hinton, J., 1989, *Protests and Visions. Peace Politics in Twentieth Century Britain*, (Hutchinson Radius, London), p. 155.

government should unilaterally renounce its nuclear armaments: “Its simple cry – ‘Ban the Bomb’ – was moral and political in content, absolutist in tone, and, in consequence, productive of action.”⁴⁴⁰

In both its first and second waves of popularity – early 1960s and early 1980s – CND’s strategy was to win the Labour party to its cause, and through the Labour party, the government. Those attempts met a series of serious setbacks. Seen as the most prestigious politician on the left of labour, Nye Bevan, in 1957, described the unilateralist policy “as ‘an emotional spasm’ which would ‘send a British Foreign Secretary... naked into the conference chamber.’”⁴⁴¹ In 1960 the party leader, Hugh Gaitskell, declared that he would “fight, fight and fight again” to oppose unilateralism. Gaitskell won the argument, with the major trade unions reversing their nuclear policy after only a brief flirtation with unilateralism.⁴⁴² CND’s arguments briefly passed muster in the Labour party when its 1982 national conference accepted a policy of unilateral disarmament. But these were years of great internal dispute within the Labour party. The right of the party had hived off the Social Democratic Party in 1981, and the left of the party was divided by Trotskyist entryism. The policy failed the test of a general election in which, following the Falklands war, foreign policy was high on the agenda.⁴⁴³ Election defeats under, first, Michael Foot, then Neil Kinnock, led Labour to abandon the policy in the late 1980s.

While the possibility of winning unilateralism through political parties seemed remote, feelings around the issue ran particularly high. The decade of *détente* had eroded, increasing cold war fears and the salience of images of nuclear holocaust. At the same time the public had become increasingly aware of the ‘limited nuclear war’ scenarios being devised by US military game theorists; the possibilities of first strike capabilities were again being discussed, weakening the apparent deterrence effect of the doctrine of mutually assured destruction. Additionally, Margaret Thatcher’s government had come to power with a policy of expansion of Britain’s nuclear capacity and a ‘civil defence policy’ that required local councils to build nuclear bunkers from which the country could be governed in the event of nuclear strikes. The dreadful and implausible, government-produced pamphlet *Protect and Survive* did nothing to calm nuclear fears and inspired E.P. Thomson to write an influential riposte.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁰ Steck, “The Re-Emergence...”, pp. 102-3.

⁴⁴¹ Hinton, *Protests and Visions*, p. 158.

⁴⁴² Hinton, *Protests and Visions*, p. 163.

⁴⁴³ Byrne, “The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament...”, p. 526.

⁴⁴⁴ Hinton, *Protests and Visions*, pp. 182-5; Thompson, E.P. & Smith, D., 1980, *Protect and Survive*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth).

Hinton's description of CND "negotiating the frontiers of electoral politics" demonstrates the continuing attempt to use institutional political systems to achieve social change. When the attempt to influence the Labour party had failed some turned to the kinds of direct action described in chapter five. The larger part of CND, in connection with thinkers of the New Left, turned rather to standing independent candidates in parliamentary elections.⁴⁴⁵ While during both periods peace movements were associated with direct action (through the DAC in the first wave and the women of Greenham Common in the second) the membership of CND consistently considered "Educational work and big public events ... to be of more importance."⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, throughout both periods of activity CND regularly organised large demonstrations, sit downs and the annual march from Aldermaston to London. The direction of the latter march had been reversed from its early years, indicating the attempt to influence the government rather than those directly involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Despite Steck's claim to the ideological nature of CND it is difficult to identify an extensive set of political claims shared within the organisation. In fact, Frank Myers identifies four political elements: pacifism, liberal internationalism, international socialism and non-violent direct action. While the latter was never represented on the Executive Committee, the other three were and included influential and politically committed individuals. As a result, attempts to make detailed policy proposals were strained and Myers cites the central pacifist, Nicholas Walters as stating, "No one who thinks 'Ban the Bomb' is enough; but no two people seem to agree on anything more." Supporters were motivated by an "antipolitical and moralistic tone" that saw disarmament as an issue for nation-states' ethical decision-making rather than bargaining in an international sphere governed by principles of national interest.⁴⁴⁷ Examining CND's second phase, Byrne similarly argues, "CND is effectively a coalition of people with differing views on many issues who are prepared to unite around the single issue of British unilateral disarmament."⁴⁴⁸

While Myers attempted to explain the 'failure' of CND in relation to its coalitional nature, Byrne attempts to use the same data to explain its 'resilience'. More modestly, we might agree that the broad political commitments of the leadership resulted in a narrow set of political beliefs serving to motivate action. Lacking an ideological core by which to understand CND's supporters' beliefs, we must therefore return to the moral

⁴⁴⁵ Hinton, *Protests and Visions*, ch. 14.

⁴⁴⁶ Byrne, "The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament...", p. 520.

⁴⁴⁷ Myers, F.E., 1973, "Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement since World War II" in *Journal of Peace Research* 10(1-2), pp. 81, 83, 84.

⁴⁴⁸ Byrne, "The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament...", p. 518.

claim. This posits that public, political action may be taken in order to persuade elected politicians of a particular policy position. There is no necessarily implied critique of the democratic system, with CND supporters more likely than the general public to be involved in party politics.⁴⁴⁹ This ability to marry respect for liberal democracy with willingness to act ‘outside’ the system, as part of a mass movement, is a theme that runs throughout the radical liberal frame. Furthermore, as Myers’ description of liberal internationalism within CND is instructive,

“they were part of a British political tradition extending back to the 1840s when liberals associated free trade with internationalism and pacific foreign policies. This tradition ... has more or less consistently argued for the establishment of international institutions... This juridical and institutional orientation has normally been accompanied by reliance on expertise expressed in pamphlet, book, and lecture, as a tactic to persuade the public and decision-makers of the authority behind their arguments.”⁴⁵⁰

We will see that the radical liberal frame retains trust in the principle of democratic international institutions, while sharply criticising the actions of particular organisations. Their faith in technical expertise over ideological argument will be surfaced repeatedly in the current context, and will be seen as a lesson learned by important elements of the development and environment movements. CND serves, therefore, both as an important example of coalitional peace politics that will offer interesting reflective material for my case study of the movement against the Iraq war, and as a key instance of the use of popular protest to put moral pressure on elected politicians to act in a particular way.

Politicizing Development

The post-WWII period has also seen the rise of a number of development charities, based in the UK and operating overseas to deliver humanitarian relief to those suffering poverty. Oxfam began as the Oxford section of the National Famine Relief Committee in 1942, sending food and supplies to Nazi-occupied Greece. At the end of the war the group broadened its aims, and by the mid 1950s they were sending aid to India, Korea and Hong Kong, as well as many locations in Europe.⁴⁵¹ 1959 was declared by the UN as ‘World Refugee Year’ and Oxfam’s capacity for fund-raising increased. Christian Aid’s beginnings were also in response to refugee crises created by war, raising £1 million in 1949, their first year. Like Oxfam, they rapidly broadened their focus during the 1950s, aiming to work wherever deprivation was greatest. Doing their best to provide aid to

⁴⁴⁹ Byrne, “The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament...”, p.520.

⁴⁵⁰ Myers, “Dilemmas in the British...”, p. 82.

⁴⁵¹ Anon., 1963, “From Oxford to Chad” in *The Economist* 209(1), p. 37.

the need created by warfare, the charities remained apolitical in their first years. However, the histories of both organisations demonstrate a degree of politicization brought about by seeking the causes of poverty as well as relief for the victims.

The humanitarian work of both of these organisations quickly moved from the relief of immediate suffering towards the provision of longer-term development work through projects such as building wells and irrigation systems, providing training centres and medical assistance. Throughout, the principle has been to teach self-help, so that members of the local community have often been put in charge of the administration and planning of projects. At this point they apparently remained detached from political institutions and arguments. One commentator notes the advantage of their NGO-status: “An Oxfam field director can start organising local labour to build a brace of wells while the visiting dignitaries from the World Bank and the local politicians are still being photographed at the airport.”⁴⁵² By this time, Oxfam and Christian Aid had been joined by a number of other development organisations. War on Want, a more overtly political group was established in 1951, and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) was established in 1961. In 1969, Christian Aid, with a number of church groups, created the World Development Movement (WDM), a non-charitable, non-profit organisation oriented to research and campaigning on the issue of hunger. The organisation, now entirely independent, has gained a reputation for rigorous economic and political analyses and a high degree of internal democracy.

From the late 1960s there was a process of politicization, and as early as 1971 “there was a vigorous internal debate over whether Oxfam should divert a large part of its resources into out-and-out political propaganda.”⁴⁵³ The battle was won by those who wished to focus their resources on relief work, nevertheless, during the 1970s, “Oxfam started - within the bounds set by charity law - to campaign on behalf of the people it worked with overseas and to talk to decision-makers who shaped policy on relevant issues.”⁴⁵⁴ Christian Aid also quickly gained a political message. One former director is quoted as claiming that “Christian Aid is committed constantly to be seeking disturbing change – change that will give power to the powerless, that will set the cry for justice on the lips of those who have been trodden into the ground.” His successor argued, “We can not longer pretend that the social and economic structures of our civilization will enable the 600 million people who lack for food, shelter, water and clothing to meet

⁴⁵² Smith, A., 1974, “Oxfam Rethinks” in *New Society* 28(608), p. 497.

⁴⁵³ Smith, “Oxfam Rethinks”, p. 498.

⁴⁵⁴ Oxfam, undated, “A Short History of Oxfam” in *About Oxfam*, available at: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/about_us/history/index.htm; last accessed: 15/08/05.

their basic needs. If we take the Gospel seriously, we are obliged to engage in revolutionising those structures.”⁴⁵⁵

Christian Aid and Oxfam were jointly responsible for the setting up of *New Internationalist* in 1973, and supported it until 1981 when the UK Charities Commission advised them to stop because of the political nature of the monthly journal. The aims of the journal have always been to “focus attention on the unjust relationship between the rich and the poor worlds; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between nations if the basic needs of all are to be met.”⁴⁵⁶ Bernard Smith, who quotes this passage, is strongly critical of the politicization of charities, and describes the *New Internationalist* as having a “crudely anti-Western, anti-capitalist stance”.⁴⁵⁷ To be sure, with its co-operative structure *New Internationalist* is intended to present an alternative to profit-oriented capitalist enterprise and with its rotating editorial structure avoids centralising power. As such, its creation from within the centre of the British development charity sector represents the need identified by the charities to seek the causes of poverty, and to articulate these to a wider public. Doing so has never been a purely intellectual exercise; rather the issues covered by the *New Internationalist* have informed campaigners and activists for three decades.

One further noteworthy development of this time is the founding, in 1961, of Amnesty International. This followed an article published in *The Observer*, and subsequently reprinted across the globe, which highlighted the case of two Portuguese students imprisoned for seven years for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. The author, Peter Benenson, called for people to write letters in support of their case to their governments and to the prisoners. By 1962 Amnesty International groups had set up in twenty-four countries. Beginning as a truly international organisation and avoiding the restrictions of charitable status it served as an example of a non-partisan political organisation that could act across borders. Furthermore it utilised mass public opinion in the form of moral rather than political or economic pressure. The implication was that anybody could be involved in a form of lobbying that aimed not at influencing the actions of a constituency MP or local councillor, but foreign governments and international agencies. The concrete connection it made between the grassroots and the international sphere is one that has had continuing influence in the

⁴⁵⁵ The first quote is from a sermon by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Slack, 1977 and the second from Rev. Dr. Charles Elliott, 1978; quoted in Smith, B., 1986, “Christian Aid: The Politics of Charity” in *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 11(1), p. 73.

⁴⁵⁶ Quoted in Smith, “Christian Aid”, p. 74.

⁴⁵⁷ Smith, “Christian Aid”, p. 75.

present movement of movements. Amnesty International gained consultative status at the UN in 1964, allowing them to produce official UN documents, access UN buildings and observe and speak in a wide range of UN forums.⁴⁵⁸ It was some time later that the development agencies began to take the route of international lobbying with Oxfam UK gaining consultative status in 1973, the World Development Movement in 1976, and War on Want and Christian Aid not until the late 1990s.⁴⁵⁹

The rise of these various organisations represents the constellation of issues around which the current RL frame may be identified. At the grassroots they have always involved more than simple financial donations but have been constituted by networks of people committed to organising fundraising activities, and convincing others of the import of the issues on which they focus. Nevertheless, these organisations have gained a markedly different complexion today. This can be understood as encompassing two processes: radicalization and internationalisation. In relation to the first, throughout the 1970s and 1980s the development agencies developed far-reaching critiques of international political economy that has repeatedly found societies in the northern hemisphere guilty of exploitation of those in the south. At the more radical end of the development lobby, Chris Miller, a Programme Officer for War on Want, argued in 1983 that it was only through, “a campaign, aimed at a revolutionary redistribution of income, wealth and power that poverty can effectively be eliminated.”⁴⁶⁰ However, while War on Want are more inclined to argue in the language of struggle between capital and labour, their actions as a grant-making body are commensurate with those of the other development agencies described above.

One particular meeting serves as a representation of many of the political claims still seen among the NGO sector of the current cycle of contention. Meeting in Oxford in September 1987, representatives of 38 NGOs met with a number of UN agencies for a workshop on ‘Debt, Adjustment and the Needs of the Poor’. Their final statement brought politics and economics clearly together in an analysis that targeted policymakers in Northern countries and the international community as well as elites of the Third World for creating an economic crisis in the southern hemisphere. The most consistent element of the critique coming from this perspective is the targeting of inequality:

⁴⁵⁸ Amnesty International, 2001, “Forty Years of AI” available at: <http://web.amnesty.org/flash/40th/flashmovie.html>; last accessed: 18/08/05.

⁴⁵⁹ UN, undated, “Consultative Status with ECOSOC”, database available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>; last accessed: 15/08/05.

⁴⁶⁰ Miller, C., 1983, “Development aid in a political context - the experience of War on Want” in *Community Development Journal* 18(1), p. 49.

“It is clear that the crux of the development crisis rests on the unequal distribution of resources and economic power at both the international and national levels. This basic inequality is reinforced by outward-looking development models (dependence on primary commodity exports, foreign investment and foreign loans, over-dependence upon non-essential imports) that increasingly suck resources from the Third World.”

The policies they were criticising were precisely those attached by the IMF as conditionality to loan renegotiations; they argued that “the concept of conditionality must be replaced.” Poverty was understood to bring with it a number of other threats, including to the exploitation of women in particular, to the natural environment and it “threatens democracy where it exists or where it is being built, and leads to increasing repression and human rights abuses.” A final message from this significant publication is that democracy was at the heart of the solutions proposed by the NGOs. It was individuals and grassroots organisations that should implement new adjustment programs in order to “foster social justice and solidarity.” The scale of the institution-building challenge was not underestimated, recognising that it would generate reactions from “national and international elites which have monopolized power and decision-making”.⁴⁶¹ I will describe the impact of these ideas on campaign targets shortly, but this must be intertwined with the process of internationalisation within the UN system that brought the development lobby into close contact with the environmental movement.

Professionalizing Environmentalism

The global nature of the major environmental problems being identified in the 1960s and 1970s made the international political system an obvious field of action for campaigners motivated by these issues. Shifting patterns of international governance have created multiple new sites and processes in which NGOs have become increasingly involved. In the terms of social movement theory this may be described as the opening of political opportunity structures, which have been matched by the increasingly international and professional organisation of NGO lobby groups. It is through an examination of environmental movements that these processes are most clearly understood, which also allows for an examination of a third set of issues with which the RL frame can currently be seen as articulating.

In chapter five I referred to the *Ecologist* magazine’s *Blueprint for Survival* as presenting an anti-industrial critique that argued the benefits of decentralization and diversity in small scale human societies in direct opposition to the mass production

⁴⁶¹ UN/NGOs, 1987, “Appendix III: Final Statement of the UN/NGO Workshop on ‘Debt, Adjustment and the Needs of the Poor’” in *World Development* 15 (Supplement), pp. 256, 258.

society being blamed for environmental degradation.⁴⁶² The publication briefly gained a great deal of public attention partly because of the upcoming United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) to be held in Stockholm.⁴⁶³ While NGOs had had influence in the UN system since its inception, it was here, according to one thoroughgoing analysis, that a number of institutional innovations gave NGOs greater influence on policy-making in the international sphere. First, the daily conference newspaper, created by *The Ecologist*, which presented serious and detailed daily analysis as well as promoting the opinions of the NGO sector, has now become a feature relied upon by NGOs, governments and media alike. More than 250 NGOs were registered as observers and many more were involved in the unofficial, but supported, Environmental Forum which coincided with UNCHE. This second innovation was given some political weight when the conference Secretary-General Maurice Strong participated in an anti-whaling teach-in presented by the Hogg Farm Commune. A third innovation was the suggestion by Strong, in the planning of the conference, that governments take advantage of the expertise of NGOs by hiring NGO professionals for government delegations. In the event over 15% of government delegates were drawn from NGOs.⁴⁶⁴

Throughout the 1980s both the environmental and development NGOs grew in number and size. Greenpeace International is the most striking example of the simultaneous professionalization and internationalisation of an organisation. In the 1970s it had been a chaotic network of groups emerging wherever the Greenpeace flagship *Rainbow Warrior* would come into dock. The groups were entirely autonomous in their actions, which were often direct action in the sense outlined in chapter five. It wasn't until 1981, following an acrimonious court battle between Greenpeace Vancouver and Greenpeace San Francisco, that some international order was imposed by a charismatic leadership.⁴⁶⁵ From this point Greenpeace put in place a corporate international structure. The media savvy originators of Greenpeace (the small crew of their first voyage included three 'embedded' journalists) began

⁴⁶² Goldsmith, E. & Allen, R. (1972) *Blueprint for Survival*, first published as a special issue of *The Ecologist* 2(1). Available at: <http://www.theecologist.info/key27.html>; last accessed: 25/07/05.

⁴⁶³ Interestingly, it also relied heavily on the use of expertise in order to give weight to their claims. Thirty-four high profile scientists from a range of fields signed a statement at the beginning of the document on its first release, which undoubtedly had an influence on the seriousness with which it was considered in the mainstream media; Veldman, *Fantasy, The Bomb...*, pp. 233-4.

⁴⁶⁴ Willetts, P., 1996, "From Stockholm to Rio and beyond: the impact of the environmental movement on the United Nations consultative arrangements for NGOs" in *Review of International Studies* 22(1), pp. 67-70.

⁴⁶⁵ Brown, M. & May, J., 1991, *The Greenpeace Story*, (Dorling Kindersley, London), pp. 64-76.

increasingly to protect their image. Supporters donated money, but action became the task of professionally trained individuals. This is in stark contrast to the direct action network Earth First!, discussed in chapter four. While Greenpeace remains known for its spectacular ‘direct actions’ these are always primarily media events, aimed at influencing their targets through public pressure as well as serving as an excellent advertisement to bring in more revenue. For this reason, grassroots direct action networks have become increasingly critical of the organisation. Friends of the Earth (FoE) has managed a more subtle balancing act. Still firmly attached to its grassroots it encourages members to take part in the group’s decision making and to take (a limited range of) independent direct action. Simultaneously, FoE has been involved in international lobbying since the Stockholm conference, gaining UN consultative status in 1972.

The connections between development and environment were hinted at in the 1987 UN/NGO document discussed above, and were already being made by a few environmentalist writers in the 1970s.⁴⁶⁶ In 1989, CAFOD had begun the campaign ‘Renewing the Earth’ highlighting the connections between poverty and environmental degradation.⁴⁶⁷ Most influentially, the Brundtland Report explored the connections between poverty and environment and described the concept of ‘sustainable development’. The resultant creation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) cemented relations between the two lobbies. ‘Sustainable development’ rapidly gained wide recognition, with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development becoming an independently funded and acting NGO after its statutory period was served. But in the UNCED preparatory process it became apparent that governments of developing countries were wary that it may provide either an excuse for rich governments to impose restrictions on their nascent industries or a distraction from the human suffering at home. Popularly known as the Rio Earth Summit, 650 NGOs had consultative status at the inter-governmental conference, and many more were involved in the associated NGO forum. Many of the same mechanisms were in place in 1992 as in the 1972 conference; the real difference was that “the NGOs were well organized right from the beginning of the preparatory process. Moreover, by mid-1990 they were far ahead of the governments in bridging the North-South political divide, both by NGOs from North and South working together and by environmental and development NGOs working together.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ For instance, Goldsmith & Allen, *Blueprint for Survival*.

⁴⁶⁷ CAFOD, undated, *The Story of CAFOD*, available at: http://www.cafod.org.uk/about_cafod/history/timeline; last accessed: 15/08/05.

⁴⁶⁸ Willetts, “From Stockholm to Rio...”, pp. 76-77, quotation from p. 73.

It is from this point that the development NGOs increased their political campaign and lobbying work. While Oxfam had long maintained an international reputation, it wasn't until the mid-90s that it became Oxfam International, when it brought together a number of internationally active NGOs based in different countries. The organisation began to focus more globally on its lobbying work, setting up its first advocacy office in Washington in order to gain better access to the international financial institutions based there. Perhaps its most obviously political campaign beforehand had been 'Hungry for Change' in the mid-1980s, aiming at convincing the British government to lead the way in increasing aid. In the mid-1990s its 'Campaign for Basic Human Rights' demonstrated an increasing willingness to use the language of international politics. Oxfam supporters and staff have been among those protesting against IFIs, and involved in workshops and forums around the events. For Christian Aid the 1990s "was a decade of campaigning for real change, with the World Bank and the IMF being challenged to make policies to help, rather than harm, poor countries."⁴⁶⁹ A clear demonstration of this is their 1994 campaign, which asked "Who Runs the World?" targeting the IFIs that have since been singled out by the broader anti-globalization movement. WDM's brief led them, in the mid 1990s, to campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) being negotiated by the OECD nations. In a coalition with a number of NGOs the organisation applied significant pressure, taking a team of well-briefed legal and economic experts to meet the OECD negotiators. By 1998 WDM describe, "a world-wide movement ... [that] had extended beyond the 'usual suspects' to include trade unions; churches; local government; academics; women's groups; artists, writers and members of the cultural community; farmers; a significant number of parliamentarians; political parties; and a growing number of small business associations and ethical businesses." WDM lobbied at every level, as well as directly meeting the OECD negotiators they had also persuaded a number of UK local councils to pass resolutions opposing the agreement. First France, then the UK pulled out of the negotiations, describing MAI as unreformable.⁴⁷⁰

The collection of influential 'moments' described above clearly indicate a process in which both environmental and development NGOs have simultaneously gained far-reaching and radical critiques of the international political economy while becoming deeply enmeshed in the United Nations system. The latter was generally enabled

⁴⁶⁹ Arthey, J., undated, "Christian Aid 1970 – Present", published as part of *Christian Aid's 60th Anniversary*, available at: http://www.surefish.co.uk/ca60/ca_history_1970_present.htm; last accessed: 15/08/05.

⁴⁷⁰ WDM, 1998, "Rights and Responsibilities: Lessons from the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)" available at: <http://www.wdm.org.uk/campaigns/cambriefs/wto/MAI.htm>; last accessed: 16/08/05.

because the organisations displayed particular merits that governments were seen to lack. They appeared to be highly responsive, representative organisations with a level of detailed, international expertise in their chosen fields that broader government departments found difficult to mimic.⁴⁷¹ They were also proving themselves capable of mobilising the general public. During this period the big NGOs were also planning the Jubilee 2000 campaign which attempted to persuade northern governments to adopt a policy of debt ‘forgiveness’. As early as 1994 there was a suggestion that there was “discreet encouragement from the inner courts of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.” Nevertheless, the role of popular protest was always recognised, “The appalling current picture of world poverty could be transformed by a combination of strong popular demand, particularly in OECD countries, for the remission of third-world debt and fundamental questioning of some economic principles on which the *status quo* is founded.”⁴⁷² The final clause from that quotation demonstrates that while attempting to find ways of reforming international governance, members of the NGO community have a radical perspective on political economy. That particular author was calling for altruism to displace self-interest at the heart of economics. It also spelled out the need for popular protest, and the climax of the campaign came when a claimed 70,000 protesters joined hands around the venue for a G8 meeting which took place in Birmingham in 1998.⁴⁷³ This event brought the campaigns initiated by the development lobby firmly within the emerging anti-globalization movement. They were similarly involved at the Seattle WTO ministerial the following year, and followed the summit hopping protests around the globe. Oxfam’s own history notes, “The Seattle riots forced the public to wake up to the blatant injustices of international trade, increasing support for Oxfam’s trade lobbying, and the subsequent campaign to Make Trade Fair.” While the use of the word ‘riot’ often suggests a distance between author and protagonists, it was the police, rather than protesters that Oxfam condemned for violence.⁴⁷⁴ Even of the most violent demonstrations, in 2001, CAFOD boast, “supporters travel to G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy to call on the world’s richest nations to ‘Drop the Debt.’ CAFOD hosts [a] virtual newsroom on the web edited by three young reporters.”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ Streeten, P., 1997, “Non-Governmental Organisations and Development” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 556, pp. 193-210.

⁴⁷² Peters, B., 1994, “Jubilee 2000” in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32(4), pp. 699-700.

⁴⁷³ CAFOD, *The Story of CAFOD*.

⁴⁷⁴ Oxfam, “A Short History of Oxfam”.

⁴⁷⁵ CAFOD, *The Story of CAFOD*.

Summary

The preceding sections demonstrate the development of a particular approach to social change that attempts to interact with power structures rather than to diametrically confront or to subvert them. This approach contains two aspects that provide the beginnings of an understanding of the current RL frame and also sets it apart from the DA and RS frames. The first is the commitment to mainstream institutions where they are evaluated as democratic and therefore potentially progressive. This becomes most obvious in the continuing debates between the RL frame and the RS and DA frames, of which I will say more in section 3. The second aspect is what I will describe as the pragmatic attitude. In the contemporary context RL proponents point out the need to engage the powerful in the locations of power in order for meaningful change to be achievable. This can be seen to flow directly from understandings within the development lobby that “accepts the existing system of global accumulation as a fact. It does not propose to turn away from it and shut the door... Broadly speaking, the objective of an alternative development is to humanize a system that has shut out [the Third World]... Its central objective is their inclusion in a restructured system that does not make them redundant. It is a moot point whether capitalism so transformed can still be called capitalism.”⁴⁷⁶

The ideational bases of peace, development and environmental organisations have a disparate appearance because they appear focused around specific, analytically separable issues. By abstraction, however, we can see a similarity of form that implies concrete ideational commitments in common. The peace, development and environment lobbies each proceed from the definition of a social problem that is understood as urgent, empirically clear and morally straightforward. Urgency has, of course, proved a staple motivator, so much so that Oxfam has long recognised the disjuncture between the huge success of its disaster appeals and their preference for long-term development work.⁴⁷⁷ We will shortly see a critique of dogma, opposed frequently to ‘starting from the facts’, within the RL frame. This is reflected in a tradition which has avoided the theorisation of struggle in recognisably ideological terms. While each of the lobbies has undoubtedly contained many cross-cutting and overlapping frames those that have had the highest public profile, and those which seem most to foreshadow the RL frame, have typically provided clear-cut claims about avoidable human suffering. This is most obviously the case with the peace movement,

⁴⁷⁶ Friedman, J., 1992, *Empowerment. The Politics of Alternative Development*, (Blackwell, Oxford), pp.12-13.

⁴⁷⁷ Smith, “Oxfam Rethinks.”

with CND transmitting images of nuclear holocaust. Development organisations' use of 'heart-strings' images of suffering is well known, and their arguments centre on absolute poverty and attendant ill-health juxtaposed with plenty in rich nations. The environment movement is clearly more divided in this aspect, but nevertheless has always contained a strong element of anthropocentric argumentation that makes moral claims on behalf of unborn generations whose potentially dire life-circumstances are again juxtaposed with a position of plenty.

While the arguments of the lobbies continue to claim deep roots in empirical reality the RL frame has become capable of making highly articulated political economic critique. In the midst of globalization the field of action has spread from the national to the international level. As the WDM MAI campaign demonstrates, the NGOs and their supporters are increasingly capable of working both across borders and at all levels of governance. As the IMF and World Bank redefined their roles in relation to the Third World and the GATT negotiations accelerated so development and environmental organisations have been increasingly consistent in their explanations for growing poverty and environmental degradation. As the Washington Consensus has increased in certainty and reach its ideological elements have created the conditions for ideological critique. The combination of real political change with the process of learning within the NGO sector has led to the presentation of targets for the mobilization of popular protest. The fact that these targets can be equally understood within the RS and DA frames goes some way to explaining how it is that these different political traditions have been able to combine their efforts in the contemporary cycle of contention.

3. THE RADICAL LIBERAL FRAME

The acceptance that the differing nature of the subjects under study requires subtly different analytical foci, as explained in the introduction, also impacts on the links we can draw between the general movements and the particular, local instantiations. Protest participants, attached to either the RS or DA frames are relatively easily identifiable; the former by their attachment to self-consciously ideological political organisations, and the latter by their involvement in a recognisable style of action. Such connections are less clear-cut with respect to the RL frame. A high public profile certainly amplifies the projected beliefs and values of particular NGOs, which therefore become a part of the ideational environment of local political protest. Organisations with internal democratic structures and in which local membership is highly valued allow for more concrete connections. Here, Friends of the Earth and WDM, both having

active Sheffield groups, stand out. Additionally, there are many organisations that take on a similar approach to those described above, which may be focused on other issues or have support drawn from different constituencies. Here Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) and the student campaigning group People and Planet are key examples with local groups. In addition, the RL frame has a closer fit with mainstream and popular political thought. As a result, it is more apparent in those independent activists and campaigners who are less attached to particular groups. These individuals, highly active around particular campaigns, are as much a part of the movement as those deeply committed to certain groups. As we shall see in chapter seven, the eruption of protest around the Iraq war must be partly explained by the degree to which critique was possible from within a position close to the mainstream of popular political understandings. This all adds up to a tension, common in ethnographic work, between the need for interaction with the individual in order to understand the detail of the research subject, and a concern for generalizability. In the following I will therefore draw on a broad range of sources, from individual interviews and my own field notes, to relatively mainstream and movement publications to evince the connection between the particular and the general.

The Critique of Neoliberal ‘Dogma’

In targeting the IMF and the World Bank in particular, the development lobby has come up with three sets of arguments against the neoliberal free-trade agenda. Specifically, these concern privatization, liberalization and the net resource flow from poor countries to rich ones as debt repayment. I will consider each of these arguments in their technical guise before drawing out some of the implications for the claims and values at the heart of the RL frame.

Both privatization and liberalization are targeted by WDM’s analysis of the IMF’s ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers’ (PRSPs), which replaced the highly criticised Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs): “The core macro-economic elements have changed little from the old structural adjustment programmes with a continued adherence to privatisation, liberalization and a reduced role for the state.”⁴⁷⁸ The first and third elements relate to the claim that neoliberalism is ideologically committed to a small-state approach that insists, through conditions attached to loans or to debt reduction, on the need to privatise large national concerns such as banks and power suppliers. In another report we find that the claim that indigenous companies are not

⁴⁷⁸ Marshall, A., Woodroffe, J. & Kjell, P., 2001, “Policies to roll-back the State and privatise?: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers investigated” published on *Eldis Gateway to Development Information*, available at: <http://www.eldis.org/static/DOC9285.htm>; last accessed: 12/08/05.

yet capable of taking over privatised utilities, and therefore privatising governments have to seek out multinational corporations, offering large incentives in order to fulfil SAPs or PRSPs.⁴⁷⁹ The incentives offered by governments to private companies, and recommended by the IMF, often involve promising to pay the company for any increase in capacity and to pay in a foreign currency (usually dollars). Typically, the agreements also guarantee a monopoly for the incoming company for a period of decades. The RL frame is thus willing to remain within the same broader framework as the neoliberal economists, when they argue that, “without having to respond to market signals there is no economic reason to believe that private companies will create ‘efficiency gains’... there is a gaping chasm between World Bank and IMF free market competition rhetoric and the realities of private monopolies, fixed prices and guaranteed demand.”⁴⁸⁰

The second area, trade liberalization, is also pinpointed as a pernicious feature of SAPs and PRSPs demanded by the international financial institutions. Liberalization is argued to benefit wealthy multinational corporations to the detriment of nascent, indigenous industry. This is most vociferously opposed where those industries provide essential services such as water, electricity or health care. Policy advice from the IFIs has been focused on the development of industries based on the export of primary commodities. This is seen as disabling for developing economies which have a severe need for indigenous production of goods and services. Primary commodities are understood to have key disadvantages. First they offer less potential for adding value and thereby reaping profit. Second, prices are subject to large fluctuations, reducing stability in poor countries; especially where the IMF offers identical advice – to prepare for increased exports in some particular commodity – to a number of countries at the same time.⁴⁸¹ More recently, the practice of ‘export dumping’ whereby subsidised companies in the global north either sell or donate surpluses in the south, wreaking havoc on local economies while often being counted as aid has been widely criticised as a result of the free trade agenda.⁴⁸²

A third component of the development lobby’s developing arguments against the international financial structure, and perhaps the most highly publicised, is the issue of

⁴⁷⁹ Hardstaff, P., 2003, “Treacherous Conditions. How IMF and World Bank Policies Tied to Debt Relief are undermining development.” in *World Bank Debt Reports*, available at: <http://www.wdm.org.uk/campaigns/cambriefs/debt/treachcond.pdf>; last accessed: 12/08/05, p.16.

⁴⁸⁰ Hardstaff, “Treacherous Conditions...”, p.17.

⁴⁸¹ Hardstaff, “Treacherous Conditions...”, p.14.

⁴⁸² Lovett, A., 2004, “The WTO and global trade after Cancún” from the *Oxfam Website* available at: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/trade/interview_alovett.htm; last accessed: 15/08/05.

debt. The Jubilee 2000 debt campaign, for instance, appeared to succeed in a number of ways. The IMF now has a Highly Indebted Countries initiative offering a degree of debt forgiveness. A number of countries including the UK agreed to drop the debts owed to them, for the worst off countries, provided they fulfilled the various HIC procedures. However, these procedures, it is argued, amounted to the very same structural adjustments in the areas of privatisation and liberalization. 'Conditionality' thus came in for heavy criticism, and the organisation Jubilee 2000 morphed at the turn of the millennium into the Jubilee Debt Campaign. At root, the critique is based on the belief that there is a net resource flow from the poorest countries in the world to the richest. This is seen through debt repayments, through the 'fixer' deals for companies taking on newly privatised utilities and through the comparative advantage of western firms now competing on the same terms as young indigenous companies for market share in the third world.

These arguments often appear in sources that have the luxury of precise, considered language that is rarely available in grassroots activist discourse. Nevertheless, they are available to activists on the ground; Oxfam, Christian Aid and WDM all produce concise campaigning packs presenting technical arguments in brief for their members and supporters. The essentials of their analyses of international political economy therefore become part of everyday campaigning discourse. The research carried out by these organisations articulates strongly with the high value placed on 'starting from the facts' within the RL frame.⁴⁸³ It is precisely because of the technical nature of research carried out by professional NGOs that those working within the RL frame will give greater respect to their whole argumentative gamut. Here we find a parallel with the RS frame: in both cases the organisations that are strongly associated with the frames that activists are using are respected as the producers and protectors of truth. However, these complex arguments are also built into moral claims centring on the notions of justice and democracy.

The three areas of argument, as we have seen, can be summarised as describing a flow of resources from poor countries to rich ones. When these arguments are concatenated with an interpretation of colonialism that understands it as the theft of resources from the south to supply the material wants of populations in the north we discover the meaning of global injustice within the RL frame. George Monbiot's 'basic economic formula' expresses a common understanding, "we in the rich world live in comparative comfort only because of the inordinate power our governments wield, and the inordinate wealth which flows from that power. We acquiesce in this system every

⁴⁸³ 'Basil', field notes, December 2004.

time we buy salad from a supermarket (grown with water stolen from Kenyan nomads) or step into a plane to travel to the latest climate talks.”⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, injustice is delineated in both present and historical actions of IFIs and the governments of rich nations:

“While recent evidence debunks the myth that unilateral liberalization policies are good for development, historical evidence demonstrates conclusively that most, if not all, of today’s industrialised and newly industrialised countries used a wide variety of what would now be considered ‘trade distorting’ policy interventions during their development process. Yet little or none of this evidence and analysis on the real world implications of trade liberalization seems to have permeated through to IMF and World Bank policy-makers or their political masters in industrialised country treasury/finance departments.”⁴⁸⁵

This quotation further demonstrates the perceived injustice flowing from global inequalities of power. The north is seen to have taken a particular developmental path that included, for instance, protectionist fiscal policy.⁴⁸⁶ In foisting trade liberalization into poverty reduction packages the north is seen as having had an unjust advantage over the south, which it continues to exploit, “A succession of authoritative studies has shown how the poor suffer most from unfair trade and how the rules are nakedly rigged in favour of the rich.”⁴⁸⁷ This argument is paralleled with respect to the depletion of finite resources and the capacity of the environment to absorb the effects of human production and consumption.

Significantly, the quotation above also demonstrates a particular attitude to the IMF and World Bank; the phrase ‘real world’ evinces the belief that policy is made dogmatically. In relation to both trade liberalization and privatisation the authors refer to ‘one-size fits all’ policies that stem from economic theory rather than realities on the ground. Further, the phrase ‘political masters’ is highly suggestive of the agendas suspected to operate within this sphere. The ability of multinational corporations based in the global north to profit from structural adjustments in the south defines the interests being served by western politicians.

It is most commonly through the connected themes of justice and democracy that we find these issues raised in local campaigning work. The self-proclaimed Trade

⁴⁸⁴ Monbiot, G. (2002) “A Parliament for the Planet” in *New Internationalist 342: Another World is Possible*.

⁴⁸⁵ Hardstaff, “Traacherous Conditions...”.

⁴⁸⁶ Interestingly this was also referred to as ‘fair trade’ in the debates of the nineteenth century, although justified on the grounds of maintaining British economic strength; see, e.g. Medley, G.W., 1887, *Fair trade unmasked: or, notes on the minority report of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry*, (Cassell & Co., London).

⁴⁸⁷ Vidal, J., 2003, “Making Waves” in *The Guardian*, 25/06/03.

Justice Movement (TJM), for instance, saw mobilizations across the country in June 2003 which had been promoted with a ‘scales of justice’ emblem. In a typical symbolic protest, the Sheffield Trade Justice Movement organised a march and rally in the city centre, carrying a seven feet high set of scales with them.⁴⁸⁸ The rallies were connected to a mass lobby of MPs which saw 500 MPs lobbied across the country. In choosing this type of action, activists were learning from the successful campaign against the MAI: “What you find, again and again, is that MPs don’t really know what’s going on, nobody has briefed them on how these international agreements are going to affect people, the poor and the rich. You’ve got to tell them, and some of them will be on your side.”⁴⁸⁹ The lobbying work of the large organisations is based on the notion that those in power can be convinced by argument and is clearly mirrored at the grassroots. While powerful groups with vested interests are perceived as playing a role in creating injustice, the interests of democratically representative politicians seen as necessarily opposed to neither the campaigners, nor those on whose behalf they campaign. We will see that representative democracy is not necessarily seen as the best model of political decision making, and that the RL frame includes stronger notions of participation. However, the combination of applying the anti-dogmatic position to one’s own action with the pragmatic attitude supports the tendency towards utilising the more conventional routes of gaining access to power.

While justice is certainly understood to be a function of equality, in this realm, it is not necessarily equality of wealth in a strict sense. Equality is rather valued in the capacity to influence others’ decision-making. One activist made this particularly explicit: “I do still believe that equality in terms of income is pretty much impossible, and probably undesirable ... it’s some other sort of equality that is essential, more than equality of opportunity it is equality of power.”⁴⁹⁰ The need for power for the poor carries an assumption, often made explicitly, that current power-holders abuse their position for self-interested gain. That is, specific actors intend to use their power to their own good, regardless of the consequences for others. Intention indicates one of the more complex features of the RL frame. Much critique is couched in structural terms centred on the interplay of nation-states and the institutions through which they negotiate. Thus we often find the rules governing the WTO, IMF and World Bank explicitly criticised as favouring rich nations over poor. This does not, however, provide a structural explanation for continuing injustice in the same way that the RS frame does. The intention of agents, individual as well as collective, is not reduced to their

⁴⁸⁸ Field notes, June 2003.

⁴⁸⁹ Field notes, June 2003.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘Basil’, field notes, December 2004.

position within the structures and consequently there is, for instance, potential for good world leaders as well as bad. As a result, individuals can become the explicit subject of critique. As one interviewee recognised, “You think about it and realise that the people who are doing all these terrible things are out there, they’re real and they have names and addresses.”⁴⁹¹ At the same time, structures of knowledge and power are held responsible for limiting the possibility for creative, progressive action within large institutions:

“Both privatisation and trade liberalization policies can work when implemented at an appropriate stage in a country’s development, with effective government regulation and with public support, but there is no evidence that the IMF and World Bank are capable of dealing with such subtlety. Past evidence and current practice still suggest a belligerent adherence to theory rather than a careful examination of real world evidence, and a rigid ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to policy... It is time for the poorest countries in the world to have control over economic policy and to be able to explore their own routes to development.”⁴⁹²

This WDM report again criticises the IFIs for dogmatic reasoning and opposes their own approach of ‘starting from the facts’. Similar arguments are applied in other circumstances. For instance, in relation to the US drive for war in Iraq, ‘Edgar’ argued:

“they did what they did because they had their own view of how the world works, how power works, and then they went and acted on that basis and because they had power ... they made the world in their own image... they have a particular view of world and they make it happen, and their view of the world is, in my opinion, deeply deeply deeply fucked up and damaging. Its one that says that power is everything. And to an extent ... if you act that way it becomes true.”⁴⁹³

The connection between knowledge and power that is explicit in Edgar’s reasoning is also implicitly made in the WDM report when it suggest that because the world-view of the IMF and World Bank is distorted by theory, poor countries should have power over their own direction of development. Here we also see what might be considered a Gramscian notion of hegemony. The ideology of those in power is identified as a key explanation for suffering and inequality. Furthermore because it is the ideology of the powerful it becomes dominant, governing interactions at every level; it ‘becomes true’.

The preceding WDM quotation demonstrates another key component of the RL frame. In accepting the potential viability of privatisation and trade liberalization under certain circumstances, the authors of that report are using an argumentative method that is very common for proponents of the RL frame. They are implicitly opposing their own freedom from dogma, to the dogmatism perceived in neoliberalism.

⁴⁹¹ ‘Basil’, field notes, December 2004.

⁴⁹² Hardstaff, P., “Traacherous Conditions...”, p. 23.

⁴⁹³ ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

Simultaneously they distance themselves from other strands of the broader movement (including the proponents of the RS and DA frames identified above) by demonstrating that they are not necessarily anti-capitalist. Indeed, proponents of the RS frame are as much a target for being labelled dogmatic as are neoliberal economists. In sum, the RL frame, rather than criticising capitalist systems *per se*, takes aim at one particular approach to capitalist globalisation and contains an alternative vision of how a democratic capitalism could be structured to avoid the injustices and inequalities that seemingly flow from the neoliberal vision. It is to this positive aspect of the RL frame that I now turn.

Towards an Alternative Political Economy

Despite the claim, within the RL frame, that one must begin from the empirically real situation it is clear that there are a number of positive elements also contained within the frame that describe an alternative economic and political system. I will describe these in detail in the present section. In sum, they comprise a vision of ‘good capitalism’. This has the following features: enterprises are small in scale; both political and economic institutions must be democratically controlled; it must be based on power equality and the protection of human rights; and it must be replete with built-in checks and balances which mitigate against the accumulation of power and wealth. Because capitalism is understood as a self-organising system – i.e. with negative tendencies resulting from the structure itself – the state is likely to have a role in several areas⁴⁹⁴ including the maintenance of checks and balances, the protection of human rights and upholding legal restrictions at every level from individual to international.

RL frame proponents are unlikely to offer this account of an alternative political economy in such a programmatic way. It is the argument of this chapter that this account is discernable through examining the critiques and alternatives contained in many more specific issue-based campaigns. Additionally it represents the current position in a history of lesson-learning through both political critique and active involvement in issues connected with peace, environment and development. It is, of course, the third of these sets of issues that is most prominently placed in this chapter. The current cycle of contention most obviously takes aim at the institutions of economic globalisation so the prominence of development issues is hardly surprising. Yet, concerns for environmental sustainability and peaceful co-existence are frequently connected to development, and examples will be presented below. Primarily, however,

⁴⁹⁴ ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

the following will focus on the search for solutions to the injustice of wealth inequality understood as a result of power inequality. In particular, I will focus on ideas around fair trade, co-operative organisation and human rights. This will allow a move from issue-focused discussion, to further abstracted concerns throughout the exposition, which mirrors the structure of the RL frame itself.

The Fairtrade Foundation was established by a group of development NGOs in 1992 in order to promote products that represented a ‘better deal’ for producers than those found in the mainstream. Oxfam had started Café Direct the previous year - a major UK coffee importer that guarantees a certain price level and long-term relationship with growers. The Fairtrade Foundation regulates trade in certain products to guarantee higher than market-level prices which includes a premium which groups of producers must democratically choose how to spend. It also offers advice and training for producers. This innovation must be understood as resulting from a drawn-out process of change in the interaction of development organisations to poor communities. For instance, the notion of self-help for the poor, as we have seen, goes back to Oxfam’s earliest development work and often included skills for production for trade. Further, Traidcraft had already been established in 1979 as a “Christian response to poverty”⁴⁹⁵ and also sought to encourage international trade. According to Traidcraft, a fair trade organisation is one which,

“focuses on trading with poor and marginalised producer groups, helping them develop skills and sustainable livelihoods through the trading relationship; pays fair prices that ... enable a living wage; provides credit ... and pays premiums to be used to provide further benefits to producer communities; encourages the fair treatment of all workers, ensuring good conditions in the workplace and throughout the supply chain; [and] aims to build up long-term relationships, rather than looking for short-term commercial advantage.”⁴⁹⁶

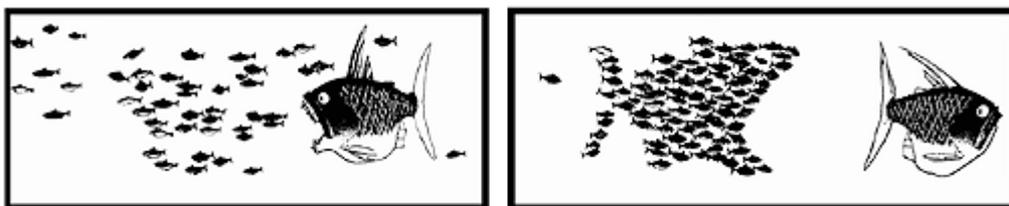
Both Traidcraft and the Fairtrade Foundation attempt to rebalance power in an economy they explicitly criticise for gross inequalities that result from colonial histories and differences in corporate scale. Multinational corporations are seen to be the benefactors of globalization processes that allow them vast choice in suppliers, while their competitive success as businesses ensures that the choice allowed to producers about who to sell their goods to is restricted. A related inequality is in access to information; global concerns can gather information on markets for particular goods across the world, whereas small producers simply do not have that information

⁴⁹⁵ Traidcraft, undated, “About Us” available at: <http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/template2.asp?pageID=1634&fromID=1275>; last accessed: 15/08/05.

⁴⁹⁶ Traidcraft, undated, “What is Fair Trade?” available at: <http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/template2.asp?pageID=1650&fromID=1643>; last accessed: 15/08/05.

available. The role of the Fairtrade Foundation therefore includes ensuring that farmers get training and regular market information. In this they attempt to radically alter economic relationships between producer and trader and between producer and consumer: “Fair trade is a strategy for poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Its purpose is to create opportunities for producers who have been economically disadvantaged or marginalised by the conventional trading system and it promotes trading partnerships based on dialogue, transparency and respect.”⁴⁹⁷ In addition, they focus on environmentally sound production methods; some producers use their premiums to move to organic methods while all have to maintain a sound environmental policy in order to be included in the Fairtrade scheme.

In many instances fair-trade organisations are run as co-operatives. But this is only one area of enterprise that is organised in this way. Described briefly in section one, the *New Internationalist* was set up by development NGOs as a co-operative. Like fair-trade, the intention of a co-operative is to change relationships of production and consumption, recognising the unity that these roles must achieve within the individual. Fundamentally, co-operatives are about changing power structures, both within enterprises and between them. Within the co-operative, equality is taken to be the guiding norm, applied to wages, roles and influence on decisions. It is through democracy that equality is expected to be maintained: “co-ops are founded on the principles of co-operation between people. In other words they have to be democratic - they are responsible to each of their members, not to whoever happens to own their shares.”⁴⁹⁸ Fair-trade organisations demonstrate a recognition that by banding together, small businesses can level the playing-field with large-scale capitalist enterprise. That this same notion is central to the co-operative ideal is evidenced by one frequently occurring symbol which depicts a group of small fish competing with one large fish. One example is shown in figure 1 below. Clearly the purpose is to demonstrate that strength may be found through organised numbers.



⁴⁹⁷ Fairtrade Foundation, undated, “The Fairtrade Mark. Core Standards and Practices Behind the Five Guarantees” available at: http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/downloads/pdf/five_guarantees.pdf; last accessed: 10/09/05.

⁴⁹⁸ Ransom, D. (2004) “Tales of the Unexpected” in *New Internationalist 368: Bite Back – The Return of the Co-op*.

*Fig. 1 – Co-operative Symbolism, from Radical Routes.*⁴⁹⁹

This notion of collective organisation may appear to fit within a socialist ideological framework rather than a liberal one. It is more usefully understood as a radical liberalism, however, due to the degree to which the individual is valued within the collective. The intention of co-operative organisation is precisely to avoid the subsumption of individual interests within those of the larger organisation. The International Co-operative Alliance has laid down principles that the 'good' co-operatives act in accordance with: participation must be voluntary and without discrimination and organisations must be democratic, participatory and autonomous (i.e. democratic control by members must be retained in any link with other organisations).⁵⁰⁰ Co-operatives very often utilise consensus decision making of the form described in chapter four. This set of rules is focused predominantly on maintaining power equality within the organisation, mirroring the attempt to seek methods of equalising power at the level of international political economy.

Support for fair trade and co-operative methods of production and distribution are characteristic of the RL frame. The political economic critique, combined with the notion of accepting the existence of a global trading system as the necessary starting point for any positive change seeks ways to empower the poor within that system. Both modes may also be supported within the DA frame, at least where it corresponds to the free organisation of producer collectives and co-operatives. This is one point at which the libertarian ideals within the DA frame and the liberalism of the RL frame can meet. There remains, nevertheless, a difference in emphasis and large-scale regulative bodies such as the Fairtrade Foundation do not fit easily within the normal mode of activity promoted as direct action. As a result, most of the arguments for fair-trade fit within the RL frame. The following three arguments all illustrate that base:

“traditional products like handicrafts, made in the South for a fair price and sold in the North ... help to overcome ‘exclusion’ from the benefits of conventional trade. Others say that selling Southern products ... that guarantees a better deal for the producers, not only helps more people but challenges orthodox trading relationships. Still others believe that even more people will benefit if big business is made socially responsible and signs up to codes of conduct.”⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Radical Routes is a network of housing co-operatives that offers advice and limited finance for people choosing to buy houses co-operatively; Radical Routes, undated, “About Radical Routes”, available at: <http://www.radicalroutes.org.uk/>; last accessed: 15/09/05, a similar design was used for the cover of *New Internationalist 368: Bite Back – The Return of the Co-op*.

⁵⁰⁰ Ransom, “Tales of the Unexpected.”

⁵⁰¹ Ransom, D. (2000) “Fair Trade: Small Change, Big Difference” in *New Internationalist 322: Fair Trade*.

Each argument presented here refers to a positive engagement with the global trading system rather than either confrontation or subversion. The RL frame thereby accepts that present structures of capitalism may be altered by collective action, without the need for revolutionary change.

The promotion of both free-trade and co-operative enterprise reinforce the view that uniquely among the frames analysed here, the RL frame is not anti-capitalist. Perhaps the most typical summary is that, “big capitalism doesn’t work, but small capitalism is life.”⁵⁰² A more academically inclined activist argues that, “trade links create bridging social capital between European countries ... leading up to the fact that they’ve stopped having wars with each other for the first time in hundreds of years.”⁵⁰³ The foci in these rather different views is that, first, trade relationships are a naturally-occurring aspect of human societies and, second, these relationships can overcome other barriers, having positive solidarity effects and binding participants into a common purpose.⁵⁰⁴ However, the power inequalities seen as inherent in the neoliberal free-trade agenda are perceived as a distortion of what may potentially be a beneficial relationship and fair-trade and co-operatives can be properly understood as speaking to both of these concerns. Nevertheless, this is not reduced to a technical matter of administration and the alternatives within the RL frame are, usually implicitly, taken as a demonstration of a better system of production and exchange. Vocal support for co-operative ventures displays an idealism that is often veiled by discourse tinged with a pragmatic attitude. For instance, one trade justice activist, referring to a very large Spanish co-operative business, remarked,

“I’ve become really saddened by Mondragon recently. It was like a candle, showing us a different ... more just way of doing things. But ... now they’ve started hiring people who aren’t allowed to be members of the coop. So they’ve got no stake in the business, and no voting rights. They’re being paid much less than the members... it’s lost its purpose.”⁵⁰⁵

The implication of this quotation is that the co-operative demonstrates goals in terms of systemic changes that overarch the specific issue interests around which so much activism inspired by the RL frame focuses.

To the extent that these issues are centrally concerned with altering power relationships they allow further specification of the understanding of power within the frame. Like the DA frame, the RL frame positively values empowerment. However,

⁵⁰² ‘Kenneth’, interview, January 2005.

⁵⁰³ ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

⁵⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that this argument also goes back at least to the nineteenth century debates on free and fair trade.

⁵⁰⁵ Anon., field notes, July 2003.

where the DA frame sees empowerment as a psychological result of lived experiences (hence the notion of taking part in confrontational direct action being empowering), the RL frame is more willing to understand empowerment primarily as a feature of structure. There is some evidence that development discourse has been self-critical with respect to its notion of empowerment, moving away from the idea that people or communities can be empowered by external, hierarchical agencies: “In development circles ... empowerment suggests that someone – usually the development agency – is giving power to the oppressed or powerless. But power cannot be given – it can only be taken. ‘Power to’ is the ability to act for oneself, the ability to create rather than to coerce.”⁵⁰⁶ While this idea closes that gap between the DA and RL understandings of empowerment, the focus on fair-trade and cooperatives demonstrate that, nevertheless, empowerment can be a result of particular institutional structures that enable people to take part in relationships with a greater degree of power equality.

The co-operative and (to a lesser extent) fair-trade offer ways of bringing democracy into the economy at the level of individual enterprises and relationships. The democratisation of international economic structures is frequently posed as an amelioration for power inequalities that such institutions currently reproduce. ‘Kenneth’ clearly expressed the expectation that structural change can mitigate against the problems identified in the preceding section:

“I want structures that deal with accumulations of power and nip them in the bud... what I want is a far more effective anti-monopoly law applied right across the board in terms of political power, economic power, financial power and all the rest of it. I think what you need is ... a system which is always working to bring the thing back to a certain level.”⁵⁰⁷

It is a result of the pragmatic attitude, that is, the belief in taking the present situation as a necessary starting point, that makes the reform of such international institutions conceivable. This is one of the key tensions within the broader movement, and will be displayed empirically in both chapters in Part III. At this point it is possible to point to the critiques and alternatives already discussed as accepting regulatory institutions at an international level. Furthermore, the historical material demonstrates how the key organisations I have connected to the frame have worked within international governance. Many movement authors many have proposed particular changes to international systems. Among these, George Monbiot provides one of the most integrated accounts. He proposes a designed system for the management of the

⁵⁰⁶ Ainger, K. (2003) “Against the Misery of Power, the Politics of Happiness” in *New Internationalist 360: Reinventing Power*.

⁵⁰⁷ ‘Kenneth’, interview, January 2005.

political economy, yet with some sensitivity to the need for that system to be self-reinforcing.

“The four principle projects are these: a democratically elected world parliament; a democratised United Nations General Assembly, which captures the powers now vested in the Security Council; an International Clearing Union, which automatically discharges trade deficits and prevents the accumulation of debt; a Fair Trade Organisation, which restrains the rich while emancipating the poor.”⁵⁰⁸

Such work demonstrates the tendency within the frame towards the positive evaluation of the possibilities for international governance,⁵⁰⁹ which will be discussed further in relation to democracy below. However, such grand projects are in tension with the pragmatic elements of the frame that I have referred to throughout.

Far more frequently, the idea of human rights is used to exemplify the possibilities for just international institutions. Furthermore, this is proposed as a demonstration of the radical potential within the current institutional setting: “the UN declaration is a radical document. If all the articles were kept then it would basically make modern national and international governance unworkable ... I'm thinking of the articles on movement of people and all that.”⁵¹⁰ Such claims give the lie to critics who use the label ‘reformist’. Within the RL frame, support for human rights does not imply a readiness only to look to what those in power are willing to give up. On the contrary, it demonstrates a commitment to a particular set of moral values in combination with a tool to use against those in power, where they are not conforming to those values. Amnesty International, described briefly in section one, leads the defence of human rights from within civil society. Through public moral pressure they attempt to hold national governments to account for failing to live up to treaties already signed. Oxfam’s mid-1990s Campaign for Basic Human Rights marked that organisation’s increasing willingness to take a similar approach.⁵¹¹ Human rights articulate with two, otherwise rather disjointed aspects of the RL frame. On the one hand, it speaks to the desire to put in place particular structures that may prove to be empowering. Human rights are necessarily an expression of human equality and as such can be used as a

⁵⁰⁸ Monbiot, G., 2003, *The Age of Consent. A Manifesto for a New World Order*, (Flamingo, London), p. 4.

⁵⁰⁹ There is notable potential for the RL frame to inform, and be informed by the cosmopolitan internationalism being developed by political theorists in response to the clamour of discussion around the impacts of globalization on the nation-state. Operating at a more abstract level it “seeks to prescribe general principles, structures and practices essential to the construction of a more humane world order in which peoples needs come to take precedence over the interests of states”; McGrew, T., 2002, “Transnational Democracy: Theories and Prospects” in Carter & Stokes, ed., *Democratic Theory Today*, (Polity, Cambridge), p.272..

⁵¹⁰ ‘Basil’, email, February 2004.

⁵¹¹ Oxfam, “A Short History ...”.

lever to political and economic equality. In this mode, Edgar recognises that, “it might not be a universal truth but it certainly has a utilitarian value in trying to empower people.”⁵¹² On the other hand, the expression of human equality speaks to the particular morality held within the RL frame. The notion of power inequality is at the centre of the entire critique within the RL frame. It is often identified as the cause of unnecessary human suffering and therefore wrong in this instrumental sense. However, it is also clear that power inequality is understood as morally wrong, regardless of the consequences. The commitment to human rights demonstrates the positive aspect of this concern for equality, and grounds it in the fact of humanity.

The commitment to equality creates a tension, within the frame, with the value on cultural diversity. Because all people, as a consequence of their humanity, have a right to free speech and religious observance proponents of the RL frame are put in a seeming impossible position by those whose speech or culture does not contain that same notion of equality. Simply, is it possible to tolerate the intolerant? Those actively engaged in political processes and moral argumentation necessarily need to guard their ability to make moral judgements about the actions of individual and collective agents. Zygmunt Bauman expresses this position particularly cogently:

“Without self-confidence and a grip on the present, no culture worth defending and likely to inspire defenders in the future stands much chance. Any serious defence of the intrinsic value of the variety of cultural choice needs to start from securing the degree of human self-esteem and self-confidence that makes such choices possible. This simple truth seldom surfaces in current "multiculturalist" discourse, a circumstance which opens that discourse to the charge of reflecting concerns and preoccupations of the most affluent while refusing to the others the intellectual aid they need most: an insight into the causes of their misery and the mechanisms of its perpetuation.”⁵¹³

This argument aids understanding of the preceding material. In its historical development and in the issues it has taken aim at within the contemporary cycle of contention, the RL frame displays a marked focus on the most basic necessities. The environmental and peace aspects of the frame have tended to erupt in defensive, though not necessarily self-interested, moments, whereas the development lobby must be understood as the advance of these interests.

At its most sophisticated level, the moral and structural justifications for human rights are unified. Mary Robinson moved from her position as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights into the NGO sector with a group called the Ethical

⁵¹² ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

⁵¹³ Bauman, Z., 2001, “Quality and Inequality” in *The Guardian*, 29/12/01. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/saturday_review/story/0,3605,625400,00.html

Globalization Initiative. She claims strongly that the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration are truly global values. She argues, for instance, that “Freedom from discrimination for women, ensuring that female children can learn to read, these are human needs for half the human race, not western values.”⁵¹⁴ But the point, for Robinson, of 'values-led globalization' is that by getting governments to agree to a particular set of norms is to offer a tool to individuals who are suffering to insist on some rectification through government policy. It is not, therefore, primarily concerned with articulating a shared set of values, but about empowering people through changing the institutional structure within which they live. In this we see a strong commonality with the examples of fair-trade and co-operatives described above.

Two Democracies

At the start of this chapter I described the nation-state focus of the first-wave of CND, which hoped to achieve international ambitions through the actions of the UK government. I also briefly described the various attempts to lobby UK governments from within the development sector. The current cycle of contention contains two scepticisms with respect to the national governments that were not prevalent at that time. Proponents of the RL frame have been far from immune to these scepticisms, resulting in a deep ambiguity in its conceptualisation of democracy.

The first scepticism is domestically located and takes the form of a deepening distrust of elected politicians. This is a far less axiomatic position than that found within the DA frame, but rather found in the experiences of lobbyists at all levels of government. Most recently, the war on Iraq was frequently cited as the point at which campaigners and activists had finally lost faith in the ability of the government to represent their wishes, leading many to agree that “[MPs] are supposed to be representing my views in parliament, but what they do is they come back from London and represent the views of the government to us”⁵¹⁵. Another suggested, “the pressures to cynicism have been gathering ... but I’ve temperamentally fought against that, and thought the system we’re in is basically democratic. What did it for me was my local MP ... [who] had a chance for a ten-minute rule bill. It was her big chance to make a mark, she could have said something on world poverty, or her own interests which are around children, but no, she just did some little Blair back-scratching job... I’ve given in, I’ve

⁵¹⁴ Robinson, M., 2003, “Making ‘global’ and ‘ethical’ rhyme: an interview with Mary Robinson” on *Open Democracy*, available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-3-122-1627.jsp>; last accessed: 17/03/2005.

⁵¹⁵ ‘Hardy’, interview, December 2004.

given up on party politics.”⁵¹⁶ Naturally, throughout the decades there have been many moments at which those engaged in lobbying elected officials have finally ‘given in’ and CND’s frustrations likely had a similar effect on some participants. However, for many in the current cycle of contention myriad disappointments with an extremely powerful Labour government have led to the search for other avenues of change. Furthermore, this has led to a critique of representative democracy *per se* as insufficient to ensure equalising of power relationships within or between national capitalisms.

The second scepticism of democracy is internationally located and results from the general movements’ engagements with globalization. The notion of the nation-state weakening in the face of global forces, long debated in international relations, is equally contested among campaigners and activists. So, for instance, Monbiot argues strongly that many powers have shifted upwards to inter- and transnational institutions. Furthermore, the global nature of many of the most pressing problems requires global solutions;⁵¹⁷ a problem long recognised by the environmental movement. Ainger similarly argues, “the nation-state is less able to deliver than ever. Where radical governments espousing the cause of social and environmental justice have been voted in at the national level, globalization has severely limited their ability to change anything.”⁵¹⁸ In section 1 a trade justice activist was quoted as saying that MPs had little knowledge of what was being negotiated at the supra-national level. This demonstrates the combination of the two scepticisms: even if one could faithfully trust one’s elected representative to represent, they are, in any case, largely disconnected from key issues.

Combined, these views lead the proponent of the RL frame to look to the international level structures. However, here democracy is found lacking. It is for this reason that Monbiot proposes multiple, democratic international institutions, including a world parliament.⁵¹⁹ While critique of free trade economics takes a technical and consequentialist mode, the critique of opaque and unaccountable structures appears to rest much more on democracy valued absolutely. The critique has several aspects. IFIs are seen as internally undemocratic and unaccountable. It is widely recognised that within these structures, rules of decision making are weighted towards wealthy nations and ‘Whose Rules Rule?’ became a popular banner slogan. In addition, the IFIs are criticised as anti-democratic in some of their work in developing nations. In another thorough WDM report, the organisation claims that IMF conditions are repeatedly

⁵¹⁶ ‘Kenneth’, interview, January 2005.

⁵¹⁷ Monbiot, *The Age of Consent...*

⁵¹⁸ Ainger, “Against the Misery of Power...”

⁵¹⁹ Monbiot, *The Age of Consent...*

pushed by field staff despite the opposition of democratically elected parliaments. Pushing the argument further, the authors state that, “The extent of this ongoing denial of basic democratic rights for the poorest countries and their people means that it cannot be regarded as accidental or an unintentional by-product of history. It is intentional and systematic.”⁵²⁰

The call for democracy in the international sphere is, therefore, a call for a means to limit the abuse of power. RL frame proponents note the “crisis of legitimacy which blights every global decision-making body. Those who claim to lead the world were never granted their powers: they grabbed them.”⁵²¹ The activity of global civil society may be seen as a potential ameliorative to the present lack of democracy, transparency and accountability in international governance: “citizen groups need to give more attention to supranational institutions. There are no direct channels for democratic representation to ... any of the 300 ... intergovernmental organizations that affect the lives of individuals and communities around the world. In this context, CSOs [civil society organisations] today are a powerful reservoir of valuable policy intelligence based on their innovative work in almost every sphere of human existence.”⁵²² With the growth of the social forum movement, such arguments have become more frequent, and offer new ways of thinking about democratic organisation discussed in chapter eight. At base, democracy is understood as a power equaliser as it gives the weak the chance to take part in decisions, thus reducing the reproductive tendencies in structural inequalities. While generally biased towards small-scale organisation the combination of the recognition of benefits of trade and the pragmatic attitude allows for the possibility of the continuation of the much criticised IFIs, for instance. In this case, democracy is seen as the only guarantor against excessive power accumulation: “Given that we’ve got capitalism all over the world, it may be that we’ve got to have some international body to watch over it, to ensure that it’s not trampling on peoples rights and so on. If we’re gonna have to have that, then at least it can be democratic.”⁵²³

The increasing critique of representative democracy as insufficient for progressive decision-making – the domestic scepticism mentioned above – highlights a different conception of democracy, however. Democracy is valued for effective decision making, which is seen as dependent on getting participation from those who will be affected:

⁵²⁰ Jones, T. & Hardstaff, P., 2005, “Denying Democracy. How the IMF and World Bank take power from the people.” in *World Bank Debt Reports*, available at: <http://www.wdm.org.uk/democracy/democracy.pdf>; last accessed: 01/09/05, pp. 44-5.

⁵²¹ Monbiot, G., “A Parliament for the Planet”.

⁵²² Naidoo, K. (2004) “Civil Society and Power Shift” in *Global Agenda*. Available at: <http://www.globalagendamagazine.com/2004/kuminaidoo.asp>; last accessed: 12/05/05.

⁵²³ ‘Graham’, field notes, April 2004.

“my belief in local democracy is not just some fluffy belief in the fact that ‘the people’ should have power, because ‘the people’ are just as stupid as anyone else, [but those in power] are just as dim as the people, so you may as well give power to the people because the people know where they are, and they know what the context is.”⁵²⁴

It is to the extent that democracy is so valued that large-scale, representative democracy is found wanting.

“Any method of democracy on the scale of countries is gonna be flawed, its bad enough just doing it with a group of 10 or 20 people, so on a scale of 56 million its kind of pretty difficult to do... we shouldn't really be talking about democracy on those levels, ideally, you should be saying a lot of stuff should be done locally.”⁵²⁵

What ‘Orson’ refers to as ‘any method of democracy’ is participatory or deliberative democracy. Proponents of the RL frame are typically open to using either voting or consensus methods of decision making in their own groups provided that voting is structured in a way that allows full deliberation. In distinction to the DA frame, then, the RL frame values small-scale, participatory democracy for its deliberative elements, rather than for the commitment to creating a group decision that will satisfy every group member. In addition, the greater the degree of participation the further dispersed is power. At one level, therefore, there is an ideal of participative democracy that both disperses power and leads to better decision making through better communication. However, in critique and suggested alternatives we see that the pragmatic attitude cuts across the ideals, allowing for the proposal of temporary or partial solutions where the ideal is evaluated as unrealistic.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The RL frame inhabits a philosophical space where the respect for liberty meets the desire for collective action to ensure a basic standard of living and equality of power for all. As alluded to in section two, this position is by no means new among those who argue for social change to defeat injustice and could be traced back to the ‘new liberals’ at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵²⁶ While such assertions may help the political theorist understand the RL frame, this chapter argues that it is not the mode through which we can best decipher the understanding present among a particular strand of the current movements. Rather, it is a worldview oriented to action for social change around a concrete set of issues. It is through the examining the positions taken

⁵²⁴ ‘Edgar’, interview, February 2005.

⁵²⁵ ‘Orson’, interview, December 2004.

⁵²⁶ Freedman, M., 1996, *Ideologies and Political Theory. A Conceptual Approach*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), pp. 194-5.

with respect to these issues that I have identified the various elements of this distinctive orientational frame.

In their explorations of alternatives, proponents of the RL frame have identified potential in (among others) fair trade, cooperatives and the democratisation of political and economic institutions. Each of these is understood as changing power relationships in order to make them less reproductive of current inequalities. Such solutions indicate a number of more basic claims that align, broadly, with liberal ideology. First, trade is seen as a natural relationship among people that can, under certain circumstances, be mutually beneficial. Second, democratic institutions are more just because they limit the potential for abuse of power. Third, because all humans have the capacity for reason and sympathy, deliberative institutions offer the potential for more effective decision making. It follows that, fourth, such institutions, including the international level and the nation-state, may potentially offer valuable checks and balances on the negative tendencies inherent in complex societies.

While resource equality is not necessarily a goal within the RL frame, the juxtaposition of great wealth and great poverty creates the moral opprobrium and sense of urgency that serve as motivators for action. The respect for technical expertise and empirical knowledge within the frame has led, through a search for the roots of the problem, to the careful identification of structures of power and knowledge that reproduce inequalities of power, resources, opportunity. It is for this reasons that in its most recent instantiations the 'new liberalism' of the RL frame has taken, as its primary opponent, the neoliberalism of the Washington Consensus.