Hard Times but No Hard Words: A Rejoinder

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"From Syndicalism to Seattle" was first delivered to *ILWCH* late in 2000, conceived during the highpoint of post-Seattle euphoria and before the events of 9/11. In some obvious ways the anticorporate movement in North America and Australia has since fallen on harder times due to: the necessary diversion of radical energies into the antiwar movement and opposition to inept and authoritarian counterterrorism initiatives; a reluctance on the part of some NGOs to continue campaigning in the prevailing conservative political climate; increased surveillance and repression of all forms of dissent and protest; and greatly reduced media coverage due to obsession with the "war on terror." However, in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa, gigantic mobilizations and/or spectacularly stubborn day-by-day forms of resistance have continued and grown.[1] Obituaries to anticorporate activism, invariably focused on the United States, are generally ignorant of these important struggles. In any case, despite the harsher political environment in the United States since 9/11, there are also positive developments that reveal the extent to which the critique of corporate power has gained public attention and political traction. Consider, for instance, the recent emergence of anticorporate blockbuster movies, such as *Super Size Me, Fahrenheit 9/11, The Corporation,* and *Outfoxed.* This new cinematic genre bears the imprint of Seattle: it builds upon the radically democratic anticorporate analysis brought to prominence by the worldwide movement that burst upon the political scene late in 1999; and it provides a valuable and previously unavailable avenue for dissemination of anticorporate ideas. Rather than dying—as those who pen its obituaries fervently wish—the anticorporate movement in the heart of Empire is instead assuming new forms and finding new ways to promulgate its message.

Mae Ngai accuses me of "wishful thinking" in my response to this movement, yet an optimistic response to the anticorporate movement is less ridiculous than to announce the end of history, especially if we remember that the end of ideology—if not quite of history—was announced by Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell as long ago as the 1950s, just before Vietnam, Black Power, women's liberation, and the student movement. As Terry Eagleton observes, to be wrong about the death of history once is unfortunate, to be wrong twice is sheer carelessness.[2]

Whatever its precise fortunes in certain parts of the globe at this dark moment in history, the anticorporate movement has problematized capitalism and put questions of class back onto the political, intellectual, and academic maps. Identity-based movements, as Ngai points out, have now become "class conscious" in that they target corporate power. Anticorporate mobilizations and lit-

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erature during the late 1990s and early this century loudly drew attention to the fact that it is increased corporate power which most directly frustrates the efforts of social movements to protect the environment, to preserve the way of life of indigenous peoples, or to safeguard women and children from trafficking for sexual services, and so on. Anticorporate radicalism has thus reformulated new social movement analysis and reoriented new social-movement activism.[3] Social-movement propaganda and practice now abound with suggestions that it is the market, capitalism, corporate power, structural adjustment policies of international financial institutions, and various other aspects of capitalism and class inequalities, that hinder social movement goals.[4] In effect, the anticorporate movement exposed the significant silence within identity politics: that class was the one form of identity never mentioned.

It is important to differentiate new social-movement radicalism or identity-based *movements* from what became known as "identity politics." Some of the commentary on my article indicates I did not make it sufficiently obvious that I viewed these as different animals, albeit one as a mutant descendant of the other. Other comments reveal that I should also have made my positions clearer to an audience unacquainted with my previously stated intellectual positions. I am grateful to my critics for their comments and for the opportunity to engage in such a constructive debate. I will attempt first to clarify some of the points of confusion, before revisiting the principal points that remain in contention.

Clarifications: "new" versus "old"; the death of class; new social movements versus identity politics

Dorothy Sue Cobble claims I follow the unfortunate fashion of dichotomizing the "new" social movements and the "old," leading to a misreading of the character and history of both. It is indeed an unhelpful value judgment brought to intellectual discussion by the new social movement theorists from the early 1980s. My *Power and Protest* (Sydney 1993) constituted a book-length critique of this unfortunate fashion. It took issue with the "alleged novelty of the new social movements," outlining the ways in which workers' movements have long contested racial, ethnic, and gendered oppression, championed peace and the environment, practiced participatory "grass-roots" organizational methods and pursued antistatist political strategies. It identified also ways in which new social movements are not immune to the problems new social movement theorists impart to old social movements, such as bureaucratization, stagnation, incorporation, and co-option.[5] Yes, as Cobble asserts, the movements were as much alike as they were different. Unfortunately, academic debates have so immured us to the terminology of "new" versus "old" it is difficult to engage with the literature in other language, but using this commonplace terminology does not indicate acceptance of its normative premises.

Cobble argues also that "new social movements" should not be conflated with "identity politics." I agree, and I maintained with regret that by the 1990s new social movement radicalism had dissipated and been displaced to a large ex-

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tent by "identity politics." This was a retrograde development and I thought I had made that clear. I distinguished between ideal-type new social movements, at their highpoint in the late 1960s and 1970s, which emphasised collectivist action towards redistribution, and the "identity politics" of the 1990s, which valorized individualist aspiration towards recognition. This aspect of my article has probably been misunderstood because I use the term "identity" in discussion of both new social movements and "identity politics." However, I argued that the new social movements had offered an effective model of how to mobilize on the basis of identity while emphasizing nonetheless the redistribution of resources, a constructive use of identity which I presented as a model for labor movements to emulate; they were not pursuing the "identity politics" typical of the 1990s. In this decade, I suggested, identity politics did not realize its emancipatory promise because, as Nancy Fraser has argued, the emphasis on identity or recognition displaced the emphasis on redistribution of resources that originally informed the agenda of new social movements, such as feminism; and this move undermined redistributive struggles at a time when corporate globalization was exacerbating economic inequality, thereby contributing to this trend.[6]

I did not make it sufficiently clear that I was acknowledging and lauding the new social movements' emphasis on redistribution of resources, prior to the decline into "identity politics." Nor was I suggesting that this degeneration was absolute. The original version of my article, pruned for length prior to submission, contained the observation.

> The radical kernel of new social movement theory and practice continued to be expressed in the articulation and agitation of feminists, homosexual liberationists, indigenous rights proponents and green theorists, who took serious issue with the implications for emancipatory politics of postmodernism's fundamental skepticism about such politics. However, the reflections of combative new social movement ideology that lingered in the 1990s were marginalized within academic circles. New social movement theorists and activists who continued to theorize and act in collectivist and politicized ways were dismissed by the new breed of post-structuralist and postmodernist "identity politics" theorists as "old-fashioned 1970s-style" feminists or homosexual liberationists or whatever.

Linda Gordon claims I am antipathetic toward identity-politics struggles such as civil rights and feminism. These are not what I would classify as "identity politics" struggles; and I support them wholeheartedly, because very little against racism and sexism was accomplished until identity-based movements (as opposed to "identity politics") forced those important issues into priority. However, there are no such things as identity-politics struggles. If it struggles, it is not identity politics: it is a social movement. It was precisely when new social movement theory and practice lost its critical, collectivist, confrontationist, and campaigning impetus that it became "identity politics." Wendell Pritchett reviews some definitions of "identity politics" that do not equate with my usage, because they confer this badge upon the new social movements that raised issues of iden-

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tity as an effective form of mobilization towards genuine political transformation. My understanding of "identity politics" is similar to that of Eli Zaretsky, who describes "identity politics" as:

> . . . a politics aimed less at establishing a viable identity for its constituency than at destabilizing identities; a politics that eschews such terms as groups, rights, value and society in favor of such terms as places, spaces, alterity, and subject positions; a politics that aims to decenter or subvert, rather than to conquer or assert.[7]

The new "politics of identity" viewed the important process of "identity-affirming" as an end in itself rather than as one of the necessary means to the end of effective mobilization.

Identity politics was the politics of individual parts rather than assertive wholes, and parts concerned primarily with "reflexivity" and "self-identity" rather than collective protest aimed at eliminating oppression and inequality.[8] It cannot alleviate inequalities and hence redistributional conflicts, because such politics is focused on "the reallocation of attention" rather than "the express redistribution of wealth, income, and other consumable valuables by society at large."[9] Frederic Jameson sees such politics as a feature of the postmodern condition in that it lacks "the allegorical capacity to map or model the system."[10] Identity politics engages in a "ceaseless alternation" between "identity" and "difference," which attests to a kind of cultural "blockage" that obstructs further development through interaction and suggests a collective incapacity to imagine or effect change.[11] It matters not that identity groups are about themselves, for themselves and nobody else, for that is their prerogative; but it does matter that identity politics is characterized by introspection, endless academic hair-splitting, and a reluctance to critique corporate power (even when its own identity group is adversely affected by corporate power) because of antipathy to class analysis.

This is the identity politics that I compare unfavourably with the earlier new social movements that each helped create a more holistic movement of Left activists and intellectuals engaged in struggle, were often sensitive to class issues and frequently cooperated with the labor movement to achieve goals. I do not wish to collapse identity categories back into class, as Lowndes suggests; I simply want class to be treated fairly within identity politics. As Pritchett observes, there cannot be a "class identity politics" within the language that currently describes political activism; and my new term "class identity politics" contradicts the original meaning of identity politics. That was identity politics' fatal inadequacy and the impetus for my article.

I was arguing for a Left politics grounded in acknowledgment of multiple identities, of which class is a vitally necessary but not a sufficient aspect: "Working-class people, whatever their other identities, are badly served by the displacement of the politics of redistribution by the politics of recognition, that is, by identity politics that does not also embrace class as a form of identity." Insisting upon recognition of class *in addition to* other forms of identity is hardly

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endorsing a reductionist identity politics based on class, as Cobble suggests. I agree with Nelson Lichtenstein that working-class unity cannot be conjured out of monochrome solidarity but will require a cosmopolitan perspective that recognizes, accepts and eagerly explores diversity. My antipathy to 1990s "identity politics" was due to its refusal to adequately recognize, accept, and eagerly explore the significance of differences based on class, at the same time as it had the temerity to present itself as the champion of diversity.

However, I did not claim that identity politics brought about the decline of labor unions (Pritchett) or weakened the Left (Gordon); identity politics, as I make very clear, occurred in the wake of the weakening of the Left, and this weakening of the Left occurred during the 1970s and 1980 because the labor movements of the western world, as my opening sentence claims, "were less successful in mobilizing their constituencies than were the new social movements . . ." I agree with Cobble that part of the reason for the retreat from class was the declining fortunes of workers' movements in the 1970s and 1980s; and I argued precisely that in the opening section of my article. I mentioned postmodernism as a paradigm that "appeared implicated in the death of class," but I emphasized that its ascendancy was "possibly as much an effect as a cause of the death of class." Gordon accuses me of implying that postmodern academics undermined class consciousness, yet I clearly indicated a much more complex relationship between the death of class and postmodernism.

Joseph Lowndes is right that I do not adequately explain *why* there was a deterioration of class politics on the Left to begin with (though I allude to Touraine's analysis as bearing out the insights of Williams' critique of the British case). However, without the luxury of a spare 100,000 words to argue a case, any explanation is inadequate; stating the fact of decline of class politics did not seem contentious within a short article about identity politics, the growth of which is obviously indicative of a retreat from class.

The possibilities and limitations of new social movements

Ngai complains I do not mention new social movements' concerns with economic inequalities and the allocation of social resources. Pritchett refers to the significant class aspects of many modern social movements and their attention to issues of redistribution. Likewise, Gordon defends the class awareness of the new social movements against my perceived position. However, loss of sensitivity to class issues is one of the significant developments that prompted me to contrast the identity politics of the 1990s unfavorably with the agenda of the earlier new social movements.

New social movements did and do make contributions to working-class struggle, especially in the earlier years when there was greater cooperation with labor-movement institutions. However, new social movements, particularly in the longer term, tend to represent more effectively the interests of the better off among disadvantaged groups, because the values and priorities of new social movement leaders (disproportionately middle-class people) dominate each

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movement's agenda. (I agree with Gordon that new social movement leaders are not particularly less representative of those they claim to represent than are many working-class leaders. The relatively privileged class position of Labo(u)r politicians and many union leaders does also make them less representative of those they represent, with adverse consequences for working-class people.[12] However, labor-movement structures also enable working-class activists to confront such leaders when necessary and provide workplace-based leadership of their own, in ways unparalleled within new social movements.) Moreover, movements frequently lose control over the ways in which their demands are conceded. Even where these are without any obvious class bias in their formulation, they nonetheless enter the mangle of the political mainstream and emerge reshaped according to the pressures within that system. There is plenty of scope for the state and industry to express class bias in how they respond to movement demands, to refract the demands of the movement in ways that placate dominant class interests. (Lichtenstein mentions corporate "diversity management" programs in this context, which have also reached plague proportions down under.)

The gains of working-class African Americans and working-class women from the civil rights and women's movements were dwarfed by the much greater advances made by their fellows and sisters in more fortunate class positions. I would not agree with Gordon that, because the overwhelming majority of African Americans were working class or farmworkers, that demands for racial equality almost always benefited working-class people most. Pritchett is right that it is now generally accepted that civil rights laws benefited middle-class minorities more than the poor, because the rights-based framework had significant class-based limitations. Cobble, too, concedes that equality of opportunity measures ended up primarily benefiting those with the capital to take advantage of such opportunities.

The equal opportunity legislation demanded by the Australian women's movement and enacted in 1986 as the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act* has had very differential class effects. The majority of women in the paid workforce are little affected by it; in general, its ambit is restricted to the more prestigious end of the labour market—to the sorts of jobs men actually desire and where the women are too few. It benefits mainly professional women and businesswomen—the fortunate few who have already advanced well beyond most other members of the disadvantaged sex. Only women who already possess the skills and education required for positions valued by men are able to reap its benefits. For the less-skilled and less-well-educated women, affirmative action offers little in the way of equal opportunities, for men are happy to leave jobs such as chicken-processing to women. Likewise, in July 1990 feminists were successful in achieving the right for fathers to access unpaid parental leave for up to fifty-two weeks—a gain much more likely to be enjoyed by couples in which the woman's salary is high enough to support a father on unpaid parental leave. While some women's-movement demands, such as equal pay, have more neutral class effects, there are many more examples of

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women's movement victories that benefit relatively privileged women and have limited or no relevance to working-class women.

It was right and appropriate for the women's movement to make such demands, and I agree with Gordon that it is impossible to banish individual rights from a Left program, but we should not fool ourselves that these were blows struck just as much for working-class women as for their better off "sisters." Similarly, recent research on women's activism in Pakistan depicts an exclusive network of privileged women who present their rights-based agenda as an inclusive one that represents the interests of all women—while they remain largely oblivious to the harsh realities of the vast majority of Pakistani women whose class position would prevent them taking advantage of enhanced rights for women but who suffer constantly the injuries of gender.[13]

The importance of class

For those of us who remain convinced of the centrality of class, Gordon argues it will not do to assert *a priori* and without argument the "objective importance of class." I was referring to the last three decades of the twentieth century "when class differences and socioeconomic inequalities actually widened considerably" and footnoted this hardly contentious statement with extensive empirical references. The point was then to argue that "the discrepancy between the objective importance of class and its subjective significance became especially marked"—because of the comparative failure of the labor movement to raise class consciousness in marked contrast with the success of the new social movements in promoting awareness of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Gordon concludes that my article asserts that all forms of inequality and domination are ultimately about class. Rather, my gripe is about class being marginalized and sidelined, so I emphasize its significance. Lichtenstein argues that the marginalization of class as a legal and ideological construct is a function of law, legislation, and social policy, more than it is one of left-wing intellectuals; but this does not exonerate its neglect during the 1980s and 1990s on the part of left-wing intellectuals, whose duty it should be not to confuse appearance with reality. As Leo Panitch has observed, "the costs of the marginalisation of class in the intellectual and political arena are becoming increasingly severe, especially in the context of 'globalization'—which is another word for the reach of American imperialism, the power of financial markets, the spread of capitalist social relations, the intensification of exploitation and a vast growth in social inequality."[14]

More urgently than ever the twig needs to be bent back in the direction of class, not because other inequalities are reducible to class, but because capital has today a "totalizing grip on the planet," as Nick Dyer-Witheford puts it. With the aid of new technologies, capital globally maps the availability of female labor, ethno-markets, migrancy flows, human gene pools, and entire animal, plant, and insect species.

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> This is not to say . . . that the corrosive power of commodification necessarily abolishes patriarchy or sexism . . . Indeed . . . the capitalist international division of labor often incorporates, and largely depends on discrimination by gender or ethnicity to establish its hierarchies of control. Nevertheless, sexism and racism do not in and of themselves act as the main organizing principle for the worldwide production and distribution of goods. Patriarchal and racist logics are older than capital, mobilize fears and hatreds beyond its utilitarian economic understanding, and are virulently active today. But they are now compelled to manifest themselves within and mediated through capital's larger, overarching structure of domination . . . because of society's subordination to a system that compels key issues of sexuality, race, and nature to revolve around a hub of profit.[15]

This autonomist Marxist position is not the same as the simplistic Old Left contention that all forms of inequality are reducible to class and that only capitalism causes racism, sexism and homophobia.

I agree with Gordon's condemnation of the Old Left's attachment to the Soviet Union and other Leninist revolutions, and its racism and sexism that alienated so many and cut off examination of race, gender, and cultural forms of domination. As a child of the New Left that responded to the deficiencies of the Old, my publications for twenty-five years have asserted the importance of class, gender, race, and ethnicity, and sexual orientation as independent, often cross-cutting but often also mutually reinforcing patterns of domination and subordination. Gordon accuses me of ignoring the fact that racism has been an enduring, autonomous force that transcends class regimes and class positions. I have not ignored this self-evident fact; it was simply not mentioned in this particular article. On the other hand, my doctoral dissertation and various publications in the late 1970s and 1980s focussed on the failure of the mainstream labor movement and certain revolutionaries to analyze and respond adequately to the problem of racism as a cross-class phenomenon.[16]

In this respect, I would dispute Lowndes' suggestion that working-class identity and culture were mobilized in the 1960s by a populist Right that linked class resentment among whites to racism. Any such mobilization must, logically, have been achieved by appeals to race loyalty expressly against notions of class, class interest, class resentment, and class solidarity, for these are concepts necessarily inclusive of all workers, regardless of color. True class consciousness cannot be racist. The populist Right mobilized the racist sentiments of people exploited by their class position and economically insecure; it did not mobilize on the basis of class resentment. Encouraging racial divisions amongst workers and thereby discouraging class solidarity is a longstanding ruling-class tactic, as David Roediger has vividly revealed.[17]

Lowndes misconstrues my remark that "the labor movement would do well to learn one particular trick from its competitors propounding identity politics" to infer that I see struggles against racism, gender domination, heterosexual normativity in opposition to class politics. My reference to "competitors" was made

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because I was comparing the greater mobilizing capacity and effectiveness of the new social movements and the labor movement; I was not suggesting that their aims and objectives were in opposition but simply lamenting that the labor movement was not pushing its agenda as successfully as other social movements and suggesting it had something to learn from the new social movements: "to emphasize class difference as successfully as new social movements have sustained the rhetorics of other differences."

Cobble contends my structural analysis of society is obsolete because it adheres to a two-class buggy that ought to go the way of the Model T. I agree we need an analysis of society that reflects the multidimensional and multileveled class structures in which we move; and I suggested that the anticorporate movement was inspiring in part because it was operating within such a framework. However, the two-class buggy still has its uses, especially in the model refined by Erik Olin Wright: the capitalist mode of production still produces and reproduces two "unambiguous" classes (the capitalist and the working class) that occupy "fundamental locations within the capitalist class structure;" but there are also "contradictory locations" between these two classes. Yes, Virginia, there is a middle class. In Wright's schema, there are twelve class *locations* across these two class *relations:* three within the owning class, five within the middle class, and four within the working class.[18] Certainly, this twelve-cylinder two-class buggy runs better than the identity politics vehicle with no classes at all and is better suited to handle increasing socioeconomic inequalities than the corporate limousine designed on the principle that whatever is good for capitalists is good for everyone.

The Importance of Class Consciousness

In "From Syndicalism to Seattle" I indict the labor movement for its insufficiently class-conscious rhetoric and political practices in the postwar period, which provide part of the explanation for the decline of new social movement radicalism into class-free identity politics. I am not proposing that the Left as a whole should embrace a class-centric world vision and working-class-oriented strategies, which Cobble dismisses as "a call to resuscitate an earlier class politics that is better left in the past." Rather, I am arguing that the labor-movement component within the broader Left, as the representative of those exploited at the point of production (whatever their other identities) needs to reassert the significance of class in order for class issues to become properly incorporated within future movements for social and economic justice. As Pritchett observes: "Class identification will rise when institutions are created, or revitalized, that make arguments about working-class exploitation central to their program."

In indicting the labor movement for its retreat from class-conscious rhetoric and practice I draw historical contrasts. However, the point of these contrasts is not to advocate return to the argot of the IWW, the violent hyperbole of Sorel, the sermonizing propaganda of the Communist Party or the vulgarity of the interwar Australian Labor Party; it is not to suggest a return to the old class poli-

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tics dressed up in identity clothes, as Cobble fears, or to attempt to reforge a class identity that represents an anachronistic throwback to an age when the blue-collar workers in heavy industry stood at the center of the Western Left's social imagination, as Lichtenstein suspects. Rather, it is to demonstrate what has been lost: a fighting temper, equivalent in important ways in terms of mobilizing capacity within the milieux of their times to that exhibited in the heyday of new social movement radicalism when "identity" was used in constructive ways to engender solidarity and resistance. Lichtenstein is right that in the hundred years that preceded the Second World War, class rhetoric was as much the language of ethnicity as it was the other way round, and that in general a consciousness of ethnicity, race, and class can hardly be divorced. The reason for these constructive interactions is that the more class-conscious rhetoric of the labor movement in this period encouraged the raising of class issues in the waging of other important battles. By contrast, in the postwar period, as Panitch points out, unions took little or no responsibility for the education of their supporters on the nature of capitalism as a system and social-democratic labor movements "lulled themselves into ideological stupor and organizational inertia for three decades with illusions of the humanization of capitalism."[19]

My tributes to the class warriors of the past are taken too much at face value, rather than in the spirit they were meant: to pay homage to those who fought the good fight rather than temporized and compromised. (As for the campaigners of the present, the quoted Seattle comment about Bill Gates was not seriously presented as precise social theory; it was a joke.) Cobble accuses me of celebrating a politics that dehumanizes and ridicules and she depicts the prewar labor-movement language as a politics of anger, name-calling, and demonization that can breed self-righteousness and intellectual rigidity. Heard through early twenty-first century ears, this language sounds peculiar, habituated as we are to the lingua franca of the contemporary labor movement. In the context of its time, however, it was hardly exceptional in response to employers who systematically disputed the basic right of workers to form unions and used more than mere name-calling and demonization to prevent freedom of association amongst working people. Times were tougher then; so too was the language. Depicting an employer as an immoral parasitic enemy could be seen as a mild-mannered response to lynchings and massacres.

The important point in this brief historical overview (thin gruel to ladle out, I admit) is to pinpoint a crucial moment of change in labor movement politics within those countries where the political wing of the labor movement is a contending party of government: when, as Raymond Williams points out in the case of Britain, the Labour Party retreated from a politics that emphasized class identity and decided instead to pursue the politics of equality of opportunity. The earlier, more class-conscious period coincided with the ascendancy of the labor movement as a social movement. This was no mere coincidence, because the classed rhetoric, no matter how unappealing this language might now sound, motivated and mobilized working-class constituencies in ways equivalent to the successful rousing by the new social movements from the 1960s onwards of those

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with other subordinated identities. To refer by contrast to the comparative failure of the contemporary labor movement to speak in languages of class is not the same as to suggest that this movement should use antiquated vocabulary.

Indeed, my argument that the anticorporate movement has responded to the dearth of classed rhetoric forthcoming from the labor movement by developing its own distinctive way of articulating the injuries of class is surely acknowledgement that classed rhetoric must speak to contemporary realities and its style should resonate with twenty-first century sensibilities. Class consciousness "of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind" clearly requires a vocabulary refreshingly different from that which expressed the class-consciousness of previous generations of workers. While the effective and affective *content* of languages of class is more enduring, the *form* of words chosen must differ significantly from one historical period to another, in order to motivate working-class people to perceive their exploitation and mobilize collectively to ameliorate it. Ngai points out I offer no evaluation of the IWW, Communist Party, and the Seattle mobilization in terms of their roles in effecting social change. This is true; I presented these examples as effective in their flamboyant refusal to accept the values of the dominant order, in their bad-mannered attempt to identify enemies of the people.

Cobble points out that most successful movements for economic and social justice historically have been cross-class and social-democratic. Obviously, we need a class theory that recognizes the diversity of the working classes; but a cross-class movement will never dismantle class hierarchies. As for social democracy, its decline is a serious problem felt keenly in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, where Labo(u)r parties have jettisoned the social democratic project to which they were once firmly committed and embraced equality of opportunity politics reconfigured increasingly by neoliberalism. The peculiarity of the United States—the absence of a labor or social democratic party as a contending party of government—has protected the American Left from experiencing the greatest disillusionment of the late twentieth century. Susan Watkins speaks eloquently to this historical disappointment in the British context.[20] Laborist class politics has not disappeared entirely, but in such countries the tribunes of the working people are systematically outmanoeuvred and marginalized within Labo(u)r parties that are increasingly corrupted by participation in parliamentary processes and the habit of forming government.

The anticorporate movement is recommencing the anticapitalist project commenced, then abandoned, by such forces. Is the anticorporate movement also a cross-class movement, as Cobble would hope? I would argue that it is, and that is a source of hope and inspiration; but even more importantly, its central focus is to contest corporate power i.e. transnational ruling-class domination and exploitation of most of us, but especially of working-class people. I did not suggest, as Pritchett claims, that the component movements within the anticorporate movement have all BECOME class movements. My language was more nuanced, in fact pointing to Pritchett's own formulation that they have realized that their concerns share in common the fact that unregulated corporate expansion

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is a common cause of many problems: "cognitive mapping of a new and global type."

Similarly, Ngai argues that the politics of the so-called identity-based movements within the anticorporate movement are "class-conscious" for they target corporate power and comprise working people. Exactly. I thought this was my argument. However, I did not suggest that American college students face a grim economic future and are part of the world's oppressed, as she claims. I stated that their prospects are "grimmer" than those of their forebears who mobilized in the new social movements. I conceded that their position in the world economy was considerably more fortunate than the sweatshop workers in developing countries, while emphasizing nonetheless that the globalization of capital is encouraging forms of solidarity that are more than mere altruism on the part of the relatively affluent, such as college students. The developed world is also undergoing "structural adjustment" in the interests of corporations and to the detriment of all but the wealthiest tiny minority.[21] In Peter Waterman's words, "Global solidarity can thus be seen less as a duty, of ourselves or others, than as an adventure in which all are potentially involved."[22]

In defence of extremism

"Agitators," wrote Oscar Wilde in 1890 in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism,* "are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly-contented class of the community and sow the seeds of discontent amongst them." That, Wilde observed, was the reason why agitators were so absolutely necessary: without them, there would be no progress.[23] The extremism I applaud in the examples from the past and recently in the streets of Seattle and Melbourne is neither ineffective nor delusional, as Cobble contends. Rather, it strengthens the hand of the inclusive and democratically moderate forces she sees as the best hope for progressive social change. Her aspiration to create a different kind of capitalism and with institutions that protect the weak from the strong is most likely to occur if the extremists continue to do battle in the streets, for only then will the reform movement within global capitalism extract reforms.

The assumption of ultraradical political positions affects the spectrum of political debate, shifting it to a point where less radical interpretations of the same viewpoint seem reasonable. By carving out political space for themselves, extremists manoeuvre moderates into an advantageous political position. Reforms are achieved not so much by demanding reforms but by demanding considerably more. It is the more implacable, more truly oppositional sections of movements that destabilize prevailing bases of power to the point where those in power feel a need to make concessions in order to protect the system from political developments considerably more dangerous.

Large and angry mobilizations improve the bargaining power and morale of reforming coalitions. At Seattle, there were victories at the table, for what was happening in the streets stiffened the resolve of the African delegates inside the WTO. They refused to buckle to US demands and coaxing. They hung togeth-

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er and the talks collapsed.[24] The extremist project of rejecting altogether the WTO and similar transnational institutions constitutes the best means to prompt internal reform. On July 23, 2001, the meeting of the Group of Eight in Genoa issued a press release both deploring the anticapitalist protests and pledging to do more to ensure the world's poor shared in the benefits of globalization.[25] Without the protests to deplore there would be no promises to the poor. Without anticapitalists to threaten revolution or at least contest the legitimacy of the new world disorder, global civil society is unlikely to be able to insist upon reforms. Efforts to reform are at their most effective when accompanied by the hint, at least, of insurgency from below.

Would the Roosevelt Administration have been so concerned to endorse labor standards legislation, make the right to organize public policy and institute new social insurance measures, without the memory of revolutionary industrial unionism in the 1910s and militant industrial action in the immediate postwar years, without the fear of working-class politics assuming a menacing form? Lichtenstein argues that working-class movements succeed when they successfully link their fortunes to the symbols, icons, and ideologies of the larger body politic. But how does the larger body politic come on side? What was the process by which the symbols, icons, and ideologies of the New Deal period became more sympathetic to "reasonable" working-class aspirations? The New Deal was profoundly conservative in that it aimed to protect, against violence from the Left or from the Right, the essentials of American democracy.[26] Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt expressed the spirit of this age in his remark: "A good labor union is of value because it keeps out radical unions, which would destroy property." A spectre was haunting America, which inclined the larger body politic to the view that the legitimate trade union would prevent a "revolution of despair" at a time when many had nothing to lose, when one third of the nation was "ill housed, ill clad, ill nourished."

Extremist postures and gestures, such as those offered by the IWW and Sorelian nihilism, and the bulldozing of McDonalds and the trashing of Starbucks, might not in themselves constitute a feasible means to achieve social change; their historical usefulness is the way such words and actions, when presented by significant numbers of people, render reform reasonable and mobilize the mainstream to offer reform. The "legitimization" that Lichtenstein argues is an essential element in a movement's capacity to transform dissent and protest into majoritarian sentiment can only be gained if dissent and protest gain the majority's attention. Seattle attracted a storm of abuse from the mainstream media, but it also received strong support in opinion polls and prompted significant efforts within transnational institutions to repair the legitimation deficit exposed at last by that extremist mobilization.

Unfortunately 9/11 has enabled the centers of political power most closely connected with corporate capitalism to again ignore the legitimation deficit to which they were beginning to respond during the heyday of the anticorporate movement. Only time will tell just how long 9/11 will provide corporate capitalism with extra room for authoritarian manoeuvre. And it is a particular brand

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of authoritarianism brought to us by the neoliberal strong state. It is not the grim and spartan totalitarianism of George Orwell's dystopian imagination, but one bearing the marks of the corporate power with which it is so closely aligned. If the anticorporate movement does not succeed somehow in taming the worst excesses of free-market capitalism, Orwell's warning could be reworded thus: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine an overpriced, sweatshop child-labor-produced Nike running shoe stamping on a human face—forever."

NOTES

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