

# ISSA Proceedings 2002 - In Defense Of The Realm: Administrative Responses To Anti-Globalization Argumentation



*"The world is in a rush, and is getting close to its end."*

Archbishop Wulfstan, York, 1014

Seattle, November 1999. Between 35,000 and 65,000 activists gathered in Seattle to protest the meeting of foreign ministers of the World Trade Organization, a little known - at the time - organization formed to resolve trade disputes. Peaceful marches turned violent as police sought to contain and remove the protesters. The resulting conflagration shocked the world and forever changed the media's treatment of globalism issues. "Seattle was a real watershed. It raised the awareness of the world. Before that, people didn't even know what the WTO was - maybe they thought it was the World Tourism Organization or something" (Ransom, 2001, 26).

In city after city, Washington, Melbourne, Prague, Davos, Quebec, Goteberg, Salzburg, Genoa, Doha, New York, when elite members of the international community gathered to promote globalism, large crowds of frequently violent protesters also gathered. Whether it is the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the Summit of the Americas, the European Union, or the G8 - each organization represents a transnational effort to promote economic growth through their own notion of what will encourage economic development. And each time they meet to set new policy, revamp existing regulations, or work out their differences, they now encounter the stratagems and visceral responses of anti-globalism activists. This shift in the discourse of globalization was rapid and violent. Trade across nation-states and very long distances is not new and neither is the concept that

the world is shrinking. But the rather benign view of globalization that was presented in the U.S. media prior to Seattle was rapidly reconfigured into a war between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” or the powerful versus the powerless.

This essay is part of a larger study on the portrayal of the anti-globalization movement in the American media. We have argued that this social movement is best described as a loosely structured amalgamation of groups opposed to free trade, environmental dumping, and other practices deemed helpful only to large corporations and/or large governments. We believe that the movement engages its audience through a patchwork of “entertaining” activities that are uniquely suited to our current media culture (Baaske & Riley, 2000). Frequently contradictory in their goals and argument strategies, this movement has little sense of hierarchy and can be recognized as a movement only because its members identify themselves as such and because they both share and constitute networks of communication.

The arguments of the anti-globalization movement are extremely interesting – they are polysemic in nature and therefore vary widely and are often contradictory. The aftermath of Seattle is often referred to as the “stain of Seattle” by WTO Director General Mike Moore and other government leaders (Johnson, 2001). This stain is either portrayed as disappearing as violence ebbs, or as reappearing as concerns about sweatshops, rampant poverty, and forced trade agreements come to light (Lady Mac Beth move over!). The subsequent meetings of many of the world organizations have been a roller coaster ride of climactic protests and sedate street theater, as the road-show that is this movement appears in city after city as it doggedly pursues the institutionalized organizations of globalization. The responses by these leaders as they attempt to operate under the glare of worldwide publicity – while their meetings are guarded by strict security and fortress-like barricades – adds another level of interest and complexity to the media spectacle.

Understanding the arguments and the argumentative practices of a movement necessitates an examination of all the social actors. Argument is by its nature oppositional and dialectical. Extracting argumentative discourse from its dialogic context separates the argument from the social interactions that give it form. To put this another way, the shape and form of argumentation is necessarily responsive to the discourse and actions of the other interactants. Each move responds to and is reflective of the arguer’s understanding of the other’s argumentation. Thus examining advocacy as moves and counter-moves is one way

of enabling the argument student and scholar to more fully understand the tensions in social movements. This is especially the case, we believe, when the advocates involved in a controversy represent disparate and divergent voices. In this paper, we consider more fully the administrative responses to the anti-globalism movement.

Administrative rhetoric is the designation given to discourse proffered in defense of the current hierarchy of values; the policies of the current bureaucracies (Windt, 1982). Its advocates, “priests” in Burkean terms, respond to critics who imagine a more perfect social order. Administrative argument, in our minds, is therefore understood as responsive discursive and non-discursive actions engendered by the advocacy of those dissatisfied with the current power structure. Thus we focus on the words and actions taken by the representative and leaders of the international community in response to the protests leveled by the anti-globalism advocates.

Inherent within any argumentative practice is both the content of the advocacy, its substantive dimension, and the manner in which the advocacy is conveyed. Argument is not just what is said, but also how it is communicated. Keeping this in mind we organize our analysis of the administrative responses to the protest advocacy along two lines of inquiry: first, what are the characteristics of administrative argumentation? And second, what is the administrative response to the substantive arguments advanced by the opponents of globalization? This perspective also leaves open the possibility that arguments are physical, visual, or other alternative texts.

### *Argumentative Characterizations*

The heads of state, finance ministers, assorted bureaucrats and media experts clearly do not conceive of the anti-globalization protesters as possessing equivalent standing. In fact, globalization spokespeople and the press consistently seek to denigrate the activists by painting them with broad and negatively charged labels.

Linking the protesters with violence is one such approach. After the violence surrounding the Summit of the Americas meeting in Quebec, Jules Crittenden (2001) of the Boston Herald declared, “Anarchists suspected of inciting clashes” (Crittenden, 2001, 3). The mayor of Prague, a scene of another violent confrontation between the police and protesters described those who battled with the police as “professional trouble-makers” (BBC News, 2001). The violence in

Genoa during a G-8 summit was so pronounced that a 23-year-old protester was shot and run over by police as he attempted to throw a fire extinguisher through the rear window of a police vehicle. The Prime Minister of Rome, Silvio Berlusconi, then threatened to withdraw Rome's commitment to host the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (Boudreaux, 2001). In addition to criminalizing activists, others have suggested that protesters are as out of touch with reality as the "Luddites" of the nineteenth century (The Independent, 2000). Co-optation is another administrative response engaged in by globalists. This includes setting up pre-conference meetings with protest organizers, as the Italian Foreign Minister, Renato Ruggiero, and Interior Minister, Claudio Scajola, did prior to the Genoa G-8 meeting (Trofilmov, 2001). More unusually, the multinational corporation Unilever donated money to the Ruckus Society - a protest group dedicated to training activists to hang from buildings and billboards (Useem, 2001). How well these actions work is unknown but the thought must be that if activists are included and supported and yet they still protest and engage in violence, they must truly be unreasonable and/or motivated by something other than expressing their views.

Argumentative characterizations can also be conveyed non-discursively. This has been achieved through the relegation of protesters to specified protest areas. In Quebec, Prague, and New York, police sought to isolate protesters by limiting them to designated free speech areas. Very tall fencing bound each such area. Police also separate anti-globalism activists from conference participants by erecting chain-link fences. One effect of this is to minimize and marginalize the protesters. When conference participants cannot hear the protesters, their voices have been effectively silenced.

Fencing also has the pernicious effect of inviting criminality. Protesters shunted off away from relevance and locked behind a chain-link fence are practically invited to attempt to knock down the fence. This is what happened in Quebec (O'Clery, 2001). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police erected a 10-foot high, 2-½ mile fence around Old Quebec. The fence became the focal point for the protesting crowd. First they catapulted stuffed teddy bears and Barney dolls over the fence the rejected icon signifying perhaps that they were not a happy family. Then the crowd climbed and cut and rocked the fence until it came tumbling down. When the crowd rushed through the hole in the fence, the police drove the protesters back with tear gas. All of this activity at or near the fence makes one conclusion very clear, "The fence shaped the protests" (Montgomery, 2001, 3 of

5). In her study of the rhetoric of globalization Todd (2002) defines two primary types of response to the protesters by the organizations under attack: containment and criminalization, both of which are displayed in the Quebec story. Finally, there is a simple spin-doctor argument offered by the leadership of the WTO. "One cause of the protests, said Mike Moore, director-general of the World Trade Organization, is that globalization just hasn't gotten enough good public relations. 'We have to communicate its benefits better,' he said" (Boudette & Johnson, 2002, 6). To reuse an old phrase, they thought they had a failure to communicate.

### *Substantive Issues*

The pro-globalization community takes great pains to address the substance of the objections raised by protest groups. Of course, they do so in the context of parent correcting the misstatements and misunderstandings of children. To illustrate this clash of ideas we consider four of the issues central to the dispute: development, democracy, the environment, and inclusivity.

#### The Development Debate

Anti-globalization advocates challenge the premise that reduction of trade barriers enhances the economic opportunity for developing nations. They point, for example, to the exploitation of workers in developing countries by multinational corporations that utilize sweatshops. Workers, they claim, toil in unsafe conditions not permitted in developed nations. Children are also employed because many developing countries lack prohibitions against child labor. While workers make little for their efforts, the corporations reap windfalls. Many unions also fear that reduction of trade restrictions will result in the exportation of jobs. Similarly, poorer countries want the right to ignore costly drug patents to treat growing problems like the AIDS epidemic (Cox, 2001).

Supporters of free trade contend that only development can raise the standard of living of the people of the developing world. They argue that removal of trade restrictions is the best way to promote such development. Bhagwati and Meyer (2002) are illustrative when they argue, "Proponents of trade have always considered that trade is the policy and development if the objective. The experience of the post-war years only proves them right" (Bhagwati & Meyer, 2002, 26). Nelson (2000) is even more emphatic when he contends, "In the past ten years free trade has done more to alleviate poverty than any well-intentioned law, regulation, or social policy in history" (Nelson, 2000, 40).

Three points need to be considered in assessing this substantive dispute. First, despite the claims of the elites (Gittins, 2002), there are many who claim the gap between haves and have-nots has widened (Holt, 2001). Second, globalization development has not fostered “sustainable development.” Major development projects, such as building dams and pipelines are largely one-time only endeavors. Sustainable growth projects should continue to encourage development. For example, founding financial institutions with a stake in the community, such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, are thought to do more for the long term. Finally, the economic dislocations associated with a free market are not illusory. The nature of the free market is to let the market decide who makes what products. While the theory is benign, the practice is that producers move from one community to another in search of cheaper labor, lower costs, and, above all, greater profit.

### *The Democracy Debate*

A second significant concern of the anti-globalization advocates is what they perceive to be the usurping of legislative prerogatives of sovereign nations: the right to make their own laws. These activists insist that organizations like the WTO ignore the wishes of the electorate and legislate policy irrespective of wishes of the polity or its democratically elected leadership. Exemplary of this concern is the case of hormone enhanced U.S. beef. The EU has banned the importation of this beef under the belief that the use of artificial hormones poses serious risk of cancer. The U.S. considered this an unjustified trade restriction and took the case to the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism (DSM), a panel charged with arbitrating such trade disputes. When the WTO ruled against the EU many Europeans pointed to the outcome as an infringement on the right of nations to protect their own citizens (Weinstein & Charnovitz, 2001).

The administrative response to such allegations is two-fold. First, globalization supporters contend that all policies adopted by the WTO require consensus. That means that any nation member can veto a policy prior to its enactment. This, they claim, is the ultimate democratization of the trade process because all members participate through their elected (if that is the case) leadership (The Economist, 2001). Globalization advocates also challenge the assumption that DSM decisions usurp democratic decision-making. No nation is forced to change its policies. No U.S. beef has entered the EU market despite the DSM’s ruling (Barfield, 2001). Thus the anti-globalization advocates appear to win twice - they find a great deal of media support for their local democracy arguments, and the U.S. is effectively

shut out of that market.

The administrative response, however, was less than forthright. It is correct that individual nations can walk away from the WTO, but to do so risks the imposition of trade sanctions and less developed nations rarely have the capability to go it alone. And, while it is true that the EU has not been forced to accept U.S. beef, it is also true that the EU has been forced to compensate the U.S. monetarily through the imposition of stiff tariffs. Finally, the DSM utilizes an adversarial process that relies on teams of lawyers, experts, documentation, access to resources, and a variety of other components that are not equally distributed across the 142 member nations. While the EU and U.S. may be able to bring comparable resources to the arbitration table, it is obvious that the same cannot be said of most disputants.

### *The Environment Debate*

A third issue of interest to many of the anti-globalists involves the effect of globalization on the environment. Environmentalists form a significant component of the anti-globalization movement. Their concerns, in part, arise from the DSM's refusal to consider environmental issues as germane to trade disputes. These activists argue that it is legitimate for nations to require that producers protect the environment while creating goods. They argue that pollution abatement should be a cost of production that all pay. This levels the marketplace and protects the environment. Again there is an exemplary DSM case dramatically presented before the world - the sea turtle. U.S. policy recently blocked the importation of shrimp harvested without the use of Turtle Excluder Devices (DeSombre & Barkin, 2002). These devices were considered necessary by the U.S. to adequately protect the endangered sea turtle. Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Malaysia thought the restriction was unfair restraint of trade and brought the dispute to the WTO. In 1998, a WTO DSM trade panel ruled in favor of the Asian nations. Environmentalists made the sea turtle a cause celebre and condemned the DSM process for failing to consider the environmental costs as part of the trade equation.

WTO supporters quickly pointed out that the sea turtle case was not proof that the DSM failed to consider the environment. Rather, they claimed that the ruling was made on procedural grounds. The facts of the case largely support the globalizationists. DeSombre & Barkin (2002) explain that the U.S. Department of State initially ruled that the embargo applied only to fourteen states in the Caribbean and Western Atlantic and these states were given several years to

comply with the law's provisions. The Earth Island Institute and other NGOs sued the U.S. government in the U.S. Court of International Trade. This court ruled that the prohibition must be extended to all states that fish for shrimp. The Court also ruled that the regulations be applied to all states immediately and in full. The WTO deemed that the Court imposed extension of the original act was discriminatory. This ruling was upheld upon appeal.

More importantly, both the DSM and the appeals board concluded that the U.S. law required that shrimpers use specific devices to protect the sea turtles. But, as DeSombre and Barkin explain, "If other countries unilaterally passed laws requiring different sea turtle protection measures, target states could be faced with a situation where they had to comply with potentially incompatible laws in order to export a product. This could undermine the principle of a rule-based system that is fundamental to the international trade regime" (DeSombre & Barkin, 2002, 15). In other words, by specifying the means of sea turtle protection the U.S. was usurping legislative prerogative from the sovereign Asian nations. In addition, the Appellate panel found that DSMs could "accept unsolicited submissions from nonstate actors such as environmental groups, and that panels should determine whether an exception to international trade rules had a legitimate environmental purpose before determining whether it constituted a disguised barrier to trade and was applied in a fair and justifiable manner. Both of these decisions can be interpreted as making it easier to defend environmental exceptions to WTO rules" (DeSombre & Barkin, 2002, 16). Nevertheless, significant environmental concerns remain.

### *The Inclusiveness Debate*

The final issue we will consider is the allegation brought by anti-globalization advocates that the elite institutions of globalization are products of western and northern hemisphere democracies (Iritani & Peterson, 1999). The explicit conclusion drawn is that southern and non-western nations are relegated to second tier status. Advocates for this position point to the lack of progress on issues important to developing countries made in the first round of trade talks (the Uruguay Round) and to the limited access developing countries had to the positions of influence in the trade talks (Yerkey, 2001). The "real news" of the Seattle meeting was that northern and southern hemispheric nations could not agree on the topics for the next round of talks. Critics of globalization point to the intransigence of the northern nations as the cause of this breakdown.



The administrative response to these charges had to wait until the outcome of the WTO meeting held in Qatar (even then it took an extra day for the ministers to reach agreement). The culmination of the Qatar meeting was a new round of talks aimed at addressing some of the many issues promoted by the developing world. These include reduction of non-tariff supports for food, intellectual property rights, and services. Globalists trumpet these accomplishments as proof that the northern elites have opened the door to developing nations.

This administrative argumentative position neglects to recognize that it was the pressure of an increasingly obstinate G77 (developing countries) that prompted the U.S., Japan, and the EU to weaken (Khor, 1999). And it was only when India and other developing nations threatened to walk out of the Qatar talks that the big three agreed that these issues would be included in the talks. The inclusion of these topics in the next round of trade talks is symbolically significant. Including the topics does not however guarantee the outcome of the discussions. The northern powers included so many items to be negotiated that it is conceivable that none of the southern concerns will be adequately addressed.

Finally, even the former Chair of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz (2002) admits that the current bureaucracies have not served the needs of developing nations: "Globalism today is not working for many of the world's poor. It is not working for much of the environment. It is not working for the stability of the global economy. Part of the problem lies with the international economic institutions, with the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, which help to set up the rules of the game. They have done so in ways that, all too often, have served the interests of the more advanced industrialized countries - and particular interests within those countries rather than the developing world" (Stiglitz, 2002, 41).

### *Post 9-11: Quiescence and Rebound*

Of course, our analysis, as well as the actions of both sides in the globalism dispute, has been altered by the events of the war on terrorism. Meetings of the IMF and World Bank scheduled to be held in September 2001 were canceled. Mass protests that were to occur contemporaneously with those meetings were also canceled. In fact, the protest movement may have been intrinsically changed by the world's increased sensitivity to terrorism and violence. Several "mainstream" protest groups have indicated a desire to avoid confronting American interests, especially when such protests spark violence. "I think we will have to reassess the role of big street protests," indicated Thea Lee, associate director for international economics with the AFL-CIO labor union. Similarly, Tim

Atwater of the Jubilee USA Network, a coalition of religious groups pushing debt relief, noted, "We have to appreciate that people are mourning, have fears and are pretty confused about the world. We have to be a little more creative to get people involved in causes that will make the world a better place to live for their grandkids" (Hiebert, 2001, 26).

Despite these cautionary expressions, as long as the concerns remain, protests will follow. The first two months after the September 11th attacks there were few protesters in evidence. The EU meetings in September and October 2001 attracted very little attention, and the IMF and World Bank meetings in Ottawa, Canada drew only a few thousand activists. Because of the difficulty in getting there and the restrictions on participants, even the WTO meeting in Doha in November resulted in little media attention devoted to coverage of the protest groups. But anti-globalization protesters signaled that the respite was over when 80,000 protesters gathered in Brussels during the December EU meetings (Shiskin, Kazakina & Taylor, 2001) and a quarter million people rallied in March of 2002 in Barcelona. Both protests were relatively passive and resulted in few arrests.

In our previous research on the protests in Seattle we noted that the media portrayed the amalgamation of protest groups - people dressed as sea turtles and the rioters as well - as one large street theatre. Post 9-11, the protesters decided to embrace the metaphor and actually put on a dramatic show. As Fernandez (2001) noted, the protesters in Washington brought a 70-foot long, smoke spewing dragon that was 17 feet tall. "Protesters saw the dragon as a fanged, power to the people avenger against corporate greed and made it the centerpiece of their demonstration (Fernandez, 2001, B02).

Whether there will be a return to violence remains to be seen.

### *Conclusion*

The administrative discourse of globalization leaders and advocates is their attempt to create the "truth" surrounding their activities and their communication. Although our assessment of these arguments may not always seem charitable, we understand quite well that as Foucault (1980) noted, "There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth' - it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a

battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays (Foucault, 1980, 132).” In this sense argumentative truth is linked with systems of power and the operation of the arguments. In the globalization battles, there are many facts but few truths. Giddens (1999) notes that the evidence indicates that globalization appears to be improving the world’s economy for most citizens but the widening rich-poor gap remains a terrible problem. And the World Bank report states that globalization leads to faster growth and poverty reduction in poor countries” (Watkins, Dollar & Kraay, 2002, 24). These conundrums that will require continued analysis of the public arguments surrounding globalization.

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