

Self-Presentation

The Research, Training & Information Unit on Globalization (Urfig)

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Self-presentation of the Research, Training & Information Unit on Globalization (Urfig) taken from their website, September 16, 2005.

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Presentation

We are internationalists. “*Mondialisation*”, as it is said in French, as an objective phenomenon, is a source of joy in as much as it inspires a greater ethical demand on non-discrimination; in as much as it facilitates a rapprochement between peoples and the emergence of a world-wide solidarity; in as much as it raises, through the concrete challenges it provokes, the issue of subsidiarity and the capacity to set up, at a global level, transparent and controlled institutions. These are the many reasons why we refuse to be labelled as “anti-mondialistes” by certain journalists all too often inclined to draw caricatures.

What we do fight against is globalization, that is, the partisan vision which certain groups of people - within the business world, political parties and the media - try to put forth as an ineluctable phenomenon, as the limit of a humanity that has apparently reached the end of its history. Globalization is the result of a choice and of a will. We refute the relevance of this choice and oppose this will with radical resistance. Because globalization, as a total project, is an initiative which promotes the process of enslavement, a process by which our world and its inhabitants are being subjected to the appetite of power and to the profit of the few.

More than ever, human beings are being confronted to a global undertaking whereby they are being dispossessed of the control of their own destiny. Brutal forms of subservience - slavery, serfdom, colonialism, Taylorism, Stakhanovism - are being replaced by the most insidious forms of alienation and destitution. For centuries, women and men have fought in order to obtain the rightful recognition of human dignity. They have fought to make man a little less of a “wolf for man”. After some spectacular achievements, this quest is today being countered, thwarted and attacked by those who have imposed themselves as the “masters of the world” (term used by participants in Davos to describe themselves). Today, these people are seeking to restore and impose 19th century practices upon a humanity entering the 21st century.

We are internationalists. Putting into question the practices of international institutions and, in particular, those of the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development and the World Trade Organisation can in no way be considered as a nationalist standpoint. It is in the name of democracy and not in the name of the Nation-State that we condemn the non-transparent and oligarchic nature of these institutions. Sovereignty is not the monopoly of the Nation-State. It must be able to flourish at all levels, above and below the Nation-State. In the same way, our respect for diversity can in no way be confused with an identity crisis. Together with many others, we fully accept the necessary complementarity between deep-rootedness and universality. In the words of Jean Jaurès, *“a small amount of internationalism takes you away from the homeland, a large amount brings you back to it”*. One’s homeland, in our eyes and in the words of Cicero is *“the place where one feels good.”*

Resisting globalization involves a great number of activities, all of which are necessary and all of which complement each other. We have chosen the one which consists in exposing the reports of experts so that the largest number of people may have access to them in order to foster and nourish positive action. We will provide feedback on the works of other colleagues such as, for example, the excellent team of the Corporate Europe Observatory (Amsterdam) and of the Focus on Global South (Bangkok). We will submit ideas for collaboration whenever needed.

The matter at hand is an extremely complex one. This complexity is further increased by both the secrecy and the lack of transparency of decision-making mechanisms. The texts by virtue of which our very lives are being ruled are, by their wording and formulation, inaccessible to a large majority. This is no coincidence. Drafted in utmost secrecy, they contribute to raise the screen behind which decision-makers are hiding.

The creation of the Unit is based upon the realisation that decoding the relevant texts, negotiations and decisions as well as their interpretation and popularisation has become a pressing necessity. This is our first aim. We also seek to share this work with those who have no access to such information, that is those who, in their majority, live in the countries of the South.

Our work is a contribution to a large movement, the diversity of which we completely and wholeheartedly adhere to and promote. Today’s citizens’ International is strong because it rejects the historical model of internationals and the imposition of a model by the centre. Their failures are well known. We seek to be a part of an international that prioritises the pursuit of its objectives and minimises structural and organisational constraints. Models which respect diversity and which oppose the classical hierarchical models based on pyramidal structures can be efficient working models. This is a reality that no one can deny, not even those who are committed to highlighting that which differentiates us rather than that which unites us.

From the beginning, the URFIG project has received strong support from Oxfam-Solidarité in Belgium and from the Institut pour la Relocalisation de l’Economie in France. Two foundations namely, the Fondation France Liberté and the Goldsmith Foundation were critical for the financial support of the project. The support of Professor Pierre Bourdieu as well as the generosity of a couple of donors who wish to remain anonymous have been a preliminary source of inspiration and motivation. We hereby extend our utmost gratitude to all of them.

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