
BOOK REVIEW

McNally, David. *Another World is Possible: Globalization & Anti-Capitalism*
2nd Edition. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2006. 256 pages.

I was brought up during the revolutionary movements of 60-70s in West Bengal (India) where Marxist literature was available from sidewalks, railway hawkers to fancy bookstores all at such prices, even the poorest Indians can afford to buy them. I read books written by world's greatest authors, met some of the left revolutionaries, and from my day to day experiences I concluded that capitalism is bad, globalization is bad and that we need to change these for a better world. However, I was confused about the path to reach there. David McNally's *Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism* has shown the way forward.

His book consists of eight chapters. McNally's first chapter starts with the rising hope for a better world with each revolt by the downtrodden. He introduces some contemporary anti-globalization, anti-capitalist movements, both spontaneous and organized across the world. He analyzes the issues and the people in these movements and finds striking similarities: truly popular movements, not elitist, self-mobilization of thousand of participations, challenging the system instead of attacking only an individual corporation or company.

In chapter two, McNally takes on the claim that globalization is about free trade, the creation of jobs, and the reduction of poverty. Relying on extensive documentation he demonstrates that most large world economies are now less internationalized than they were during 1913-1973 (p. 30). During the key decades of globalization (i.e., the 1980s and 1990s) exports dropped, and most international trade consisted of intra-corporation transactions (p. 32). Furthermore, developed countries still enjoy various forms of protectionism: government subsidies, anti-dumping laws, and U.S. trade laws such as Section 201. In fact, from 1975 to 1992 import barriers into the U.S. rose from 8 to 18 percent (p. 31). Indeed, globalization has expanded the rights of property rather than the rights of people. For example, under Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a foreign private company has the right to sue a national government even if the government tries to protect the interests of its citizens. Globalization speaks for free trade; but it is more like freeing capital, not the trade. McNally says, if anything has defined globalization, it has been large-scale foreign direct investment (FDI) and the growth of financial flows that accompany it (p. 39). In the 1990s FDI soared by 314 percent, utterly eclipsing the 65 percent increase in world trade and the 40 percent increase in World GDP

(ibid). McNally concludes with documentation that globalization has deepened poverty and widened inequality across the globe.

Chapter 3 is about the famous *invisible hand of the market*. Capitalism has always been sustained by an ideology that tries to prove that trade is intrinsic to human nature, and that the invisible hand of the market will correct all irregularities. For most of history, human society has been organized around the principles of *reciprocity* and *redistribution* (p. 87). From its origins, capitalism and the market economy has undermined these principles and been accompanied by cruelty (i.e., the forceful eviction of peasants from land, the transformation of human labour into a commodity, the creation of social alienation, the privatization of the commons, the commodification of the human genome, the destruction of the environment, and the growth in poverty and inequality). The most important part of this chapter is McNally's discussion of the misconception that the current system can be fixed through policy changes. Once again, McNally cautions us that it is not some policies, but the entire system that must be changed.

Chapter 4 is about the color of money: racism, gender-bias, and its relationship to capitalism. Here, McNally demonstrates that numerous social ills are the products of capitalism. We have the misconception that racial oppression preceded capitalism. On the contrary, McNally shows that capitalism created racism to ensure its existence. Describing the origins of racism, McNally quotes Eric Williams: "White servitude was the historic base upon which Negro slavery was constructed". For economic reasons, England colonized Ireland, and in the United States the condition of the Irish migrant workers was worse than the African slaves. In order to justify this economic exploitation, Irish workers were racialized and referred to as "white negroes" or the "smoked races" (p. 174). In the case of gender discrimination McNally admits that the subordination of women did not emerge with capitalism. Nevertheless, capitalism has deepened this kind of discrimination giving rise to gendered-wages and sexist employment laws. Thus, McNally concludes that money does not have any colour; it is the making of money which is important.

In chapter 5, McNally turns to the newest empire of the world: U.S. imperialism. Following 9/11 the American President said "Stand with us against terrorism... or face the certain prospect of death" (p. 205). This doctrine—the right of the mighty to decide who shall live and who shall die has been a cornerstone of imperialism throughout history. McNally adds that it is impossible to understand U.S. imperialism without understanding the brutal *internal colonization* through which land and resources were violently expropriated from aboriginal peoples. Imperialism, after consolidating its power in U.S.A., moved across the globe under the camouflage of protecting democracy, liberating the citizens, financial aid, and very recently, to end terrorism either through its military power or through its collaborator

institutions: IMF, World Bank, the WTO, and lastly the “War on Terror.” The results are: millions of deaths, poverty, military dictatorship etc.

McNally is now almost at end of his journey. Following his analysis of capitalism McNally turns to the origin and nature of democracy in chapter 6. He compares the western style representative democracy with real, radical democracy. In his view, representative democracy is related to the rise of capitalism and the exclusive right to private property. In these systems people vote occasionally to elect some representatives who then control their lives. Citing examples from Greek antiquity, McNally argues that real democracy originates from below and allows a direct participation by the people. Though capitalism has diluted democracy McNally nevertheless finds examples of contemporary social movements in which democracy is practiced at the grass-root level. Here people are not assembled under a formal flag, but under common sufferings. In this context, McNally suggests that “if socialism is to have a future, it will be because these variants have been able to popularize their vision” (p. 345).

“Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” So, the analysis is over now. The most important question becomes: how to change the unequal, cruel, uncivilized world? What could be the alternative to capitalism: to replace it with something nicer! (p. 336). McNally says that change requires an exploration of socialism from below, radical democracy, and the de-commodification of life and labour (p. 339). In this context, he suggests ten guiding principles for anti-capitalist politics which he believes will take us to the “Socialism for 21st century” (p. 344).

Finally, I would suggest that in the next edition of this otherwise excellent book, McNally provide some discussion of the social movements in Africa, which is largely overlooked as a site for class struggle. The book would also benefit from further analysis of the role that states play in the international system, and how the transformation of workers takes place from a class-in-itself to class-for-itself. On this last point I would recommend a book that I read twenty-five years ago. Professor Sharit Bhowmik’s *Class Formation in the Plantation System* would be an excellent complement to *Another World is Possible* because of its discussion of the transformation of the worker’s consciousness.

Kanchan Sarker
Department of Sociology,
University of British Columbia (Okanagan),
Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada