



MAUDE BARLOW'S NOTES FOR *SHOUT OUT FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE!*

June 25th, 2010 - Massey Hall, Toronto

On the eve of the G-20 gathering, let's look at some facts:

Fact: The world has divided into rich and poor as at no time in history. The richest 2% own more than half the household wealth in the world. The richest 10% hold 85% of total global assets and the bottom half of humanity owns less than 1% of all the wealth in the world. The three richest men in the world have more money than the poorest 48 nations.

In 1960, the wealthiest 20% of Americans made 20 times more money than the bottom 20%; five decades later, they make 75 times more. The top 10% own two thirds of the wealth while leaving the rest to share the remaining one-third. Almost 90 million Americans are "twice poor," meaning they live in households with income less than two times the poverty threshold. California is on the verge of implosion, unable to care for its citizens or its run its affairs.

Fact: While those responsible for the 2008 global financial crisis were bailed out and even rewarded by the G-20 governments gathering here, the International Labour Organization says that in 2009, 34 million people were added to the global unemployed, swelling those ranks to 212 million, the highest ever recorded. Another 200 million are at risk in precarious jobs and the World Bank reports that another 64 million will lose their jobs in 2010.

By 2030, more than half the population of the mega cities of the global South will be slum dwellers with no access to education, health care, water or sanitation.

Fact: Global climate change is rapidly advancing, claiming at least 300,000 lives and \$125 billion dollars in damages every year. Called the "silent crisis," climate change is melting glaciers, eroding soil, causing freak and increasingly wild storms, and displacing untold millions from rural communities to live in desperate poverty in peri-urban slums. Almost every victim lives in the global South, in communities not responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and not represented here at this summit. The atmosphere has already warmed up almost a full degree in the last several decades and is on course to add another 2 degrees by 2100.

Fact: Half the tropical forests in the world – the lungs of our ecosystems - are gone; by 2030, at current rate of harvest, only 10% will be left standing. 90% of the big fish in the sea are gone, victim to wanton predatory fishing practices. Says a prominent scientist studying their demise, "there is no blue frontier left." Half the world's

wetlands – the kidneys of our ecosystems - were destroyed in the 20th century. Species extinction is taking place at a rate one thousand times greater than before humans existed. According to a Smithsonian scientist, we are headed toward a “biodiversity deficit” in which species and ecosystems will be destroyed at a rate faster than Nature can create new ones.

Fact: We are polluting our lakes, rivers and streams to death. Every day, 2 million tons of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste are discharged into the world's water, the equivalent of the weight of the entire human population of 6.8 billion people. The amount of wastewater produced annually is about six times more water than exists in all the rivers of the world.

We are mining our groundwater far faster than nature can replenish it, sucking it up to grow water-guzzling chemical fed crops in deserts or to water thirsty cities who dump an astounding 700 trillion liters of land-based water as waste in the oceans every year. The global mining industry sucks up another 800 trillion liters which it also leaves behind as poison and fully one third of global water withdrawals are now used to produce biofuels, enough water to feed the world.

Nearly 3 billion people on our planet do not have running water within a kilometer of their homes and every eight seconds, a child dies of water-borne disease. The global water crisis is getting worse with reports of countries such as India, Pakistan and Yemen facing depletion. The World Bank says that by 2030, global demand for water will exceed supply by 40% - an astounding figure foretelling of terrible suffering.

Fact: Knowing there will not be enough food and water for all in the near future, wealthy countries and global investment, pension and hedge funds are buying up land and water, fields and forests in the global South, creating a new wave of invasive colonialism that will have huge geo-political ramifications. Rich countries faced by a food shortage have bought up an area double the size of the United Kingdom in Africa alone.

I don't think I exaggerate if I say our world has never faced a more pressing set of threats and issues than it does today. So what are the twenty leaders here going to talk about at their million-dollar-a-minute summit? (By the way, this summit will likely cost close to \$2 billion in the end – the entire budget of the UN for one year.) I assure you, they are not going to tackle the above issues in any serious way. The declarations have already been drafted, the failures already spun.

Instead, this global royalty, who have less and less in common with their people and more and more with their class, are here to advance a status quo that serves the interests of the elite in their own countries and the big business or “B-20” community that will get private and privileged access to advance their free market solutions to the eager leaders.

This agenda is more of the same medicine that made the world sick in the first place: environmental deregulation, unbridled financial speculation, unlimited growth, unregulated free trade, relentless resource exploitation, tax cuts for the wealthy, cuts to social security, and a war on working people. In other words, savage capitalism.

Let's look at our own country here and the assault that has been launched against the work of generations of Canadians toward a just society. Steven Harper's government has cut the heart out of any group that dissents: women, First Nations, international agencies like KAIROS, Alternatives, and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. He stands silent while some try to kill our precious public health care system by the death of a

thousand cuts. He has gutted the environmental assessment rules, turned over regulatory oversight to the mining, oil and gas and pulp and paper industries, and allowed an amendment to the Fisheries Act that permits perfectly healthy lakes to be renamed "tailing impoundment areas" and destroyed by mining companies.

Canada is the only country in the world that ratified the Kyoto Protocol and then officially abandoned it. Steven Harper went into Copenhagen expressly warning of its failure in advance! Recently, Canada sought to block a moratorium on geo-engineering at the Convention on Biological Diversity led by the wonderful ETC Group. Bioengineering is the latest fad of those with too much money and not enough brains, to deal with climate change by large scale interventions to adjust planetary systems such as pumping sulphates into the stratosphere to block sunlight, blowing ocean salt spray into clouds to increase their reflectivity, and sequestering greenhouse gases in the oceans.

Under this government, Canada has also retreated from its former stellar international stand on human rights. Canada voted against the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples and has been the most vocal opponent of the right to water at the UN as well. Let's face it: Canada under the Harper government is increasingly seen as a human rights denying eco outlaw. I love my country and cannot believe I would ever say such a thing but I think that, based on the Harper government's record, the UN should deny Canada the seat on the Security Council it is seeking this fall

Steven Harper will use this summit to promote the Alberta tar sands, Canada's Mordor, and the real reason he took us out of Kyoto; welcome the global mining and oil and gas interests into a free for all in our North; and promote the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the biggest free trade deal ever negotiated here and one that will expose every local school, hospital, day care, water service, green energy project, public works projects that you can name, as well as every rule that reflects local democratic values of fair trade and sustainability, to challenge by big service corporations finally able to get their hands on the local spending that has eluded them till now.

No wonder Jonas Gahr Store, Foreign Minister of Norway, says the G-20 lacks legitimacy and is a "biggest step backward in the way international cooperation has occurred since the Second World War." He and we join voices with millions around the world tonight to say Scrap the Summit! No more exclusive summits! Send these global crises to the G-192 at the General Assembly of the United Nations where they belong.

Well they promised you leaders at this summit and leaders we have seen on this stage tonight. It is clearly time for the rise of the biggest civil society movement ever if we are to tackle these issues these leaders have so clearly failed to touch. This weekend, civil society won't spend millions to build a fake lake - we will work tirelessly to save many. Civil society won't build a security fence - we will bridge divides. Civil society won't hide its head in the tar sands - we will point our finger squarely at those who would trade away our future for dollars or power today and say, "Enough!"

Let us end this wonderful evening on a note of hope. When President Evo Morales called the global climate justice movement to Cochabamba two months ago, he expected 7,000 people. Instead 35,000 of us came from all over the world and worked tirelessly for four days to put together a peoples' agenda for climate and water justice - this was also a Shout of for Global Justice! Many exciting things came from this gathering but for me, the most exciting is a draft of a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth which recognizes that our human rights come from a living ecosystems without which we would not survive.

As Wild Law author and human rights advocate Cormac Cullinan explains, “The day will come when the failure of our laws to recognize the right of a river to flow, to prohibit acts that destabilize the Earth’s climate, or to impose a duty to respect the intrinsic value and right to exist of all life will be as reprehensible as allowing people to be bought and sold.” Evo Morales calls this “living well” as we don’t aspire to live better than others, rather to share and protect the bounty of our collective commons in a just and equitable way.

Weeks later, I was honoured to be part of a delegation to the G-77 and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. It is my firm belief that the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth will one day take its place alongside the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proof that the human species can in fact advance and that in true fact, another world is possible.

There is another fact. I have four grandchildren I love like life itself. At one and the same time I worry about them coming into this world I have just described. But I travel a great deal and, at the same time, I see the privilege they have being born here in Canada with our bounty and their potential. Once a small child in Chiapas Mexico tugged at my skirt as I was walking by and said, “What about me?” Her words haunt my dreams. What about her? What about a better, more just and sustainable world? Why can we not build this? I say we can and pledge here tonight to stay with this struggle. Another world? I already feel it in this room.

To paraphrase Arundhati Roy, “Not only is another world possible, it is under construction. On this special evening, I can hear her breathing.”