

# INTRODUCTION

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On February 9, 2006, more than 560 representatives from unions, union federations, academia, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world gathered at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in New York City for the "Global Companies-Global Unions-Global Research-Global Campaigns" conference. The overall goal of the conference was to strengthen labor's capacity to conduct more effective strategic corporate research and run more effective comprehensive cross-border campaigns against the world's largest transnational firms. Yet perhaps the theme of the conference was best summed up by AFL-CIO secretary treasurer Richard Trumka in his remarks in the opening plenary:

Brothers and Sisters, I like the theme of this conference because it lays out the challenges before us in almost biblical terms—global companies begat global problems for workers—global problems begat the need for global unions—and if global unions want to truly match the might and power of global corporations we have to undertake global research and global campaigns. (Trumka 2006)

Unions around the world continue to operate in an ever-more complex and rapidly changing corporate environment. Increasingly the employers they face across the bargaining table or in organizing campaigns are part of diffuse transnational companies that have minimal loyalty to any single industry, product, or country. At the same time, never before have the ties between governments and supragovernmental institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union (EU), or the World Bank been

more closely integrated with the interests of the world's largest transnational corporations than they are now. In today's environment, large sectors of the public have come to believe that Wal-Mart is unstoppable in leading the pursuit of a worldwide race to the bottom. On this issue there is little difference between workers in North Carolina who watch their jobs move to Mexico and those in Ireland who watch their jobs go to India or in China who lose their jobs to Vietnam (Bronfenbrenner and Luce 2004). They only need look at Oscar-nominated films such as *Syriana* or *The Constant Gardener* to find out what happens to those who dare to challenge capital when it is in cahoots with the highest levels of government.

However, this is just one piece of the story. In the real world not every effort to fight back against the forces of global capital ends in devastating defeat. The more than 560 people gathered in New York in February demonstrated that there is a strategic front uniting against the combined power of the neoliberal state and transnational corporations. The labor movement and its allies have done battle with some of the most powerful transnational firms and governments and won. They can do it again, but only if they understand the power structure and vulnerabilities of these new kinds of corporations, the extent of their operations, and the relationships they have with their stakeholders. Equally important, they will succeed only if they build a global labor movement based on equality and respect through cross-border campaigns. It will be critical to involve unions and NGOs locally, nationally, and internationally. The Global Unions Conference and this book, which came out of the conference, address these challenges.

## **A Historic Perspective**

In 1986, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), under the leadership of its new young president, Richard Trumka, joined with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), other South African unions, the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), and the rest of the U.S. labor movement to unleash a worldwide campaign against oil companies operating in South Africa, with Royal Dutch/Shell as the first target of a global boycott (Walker 1986; Multinational Monitor 1986).

Shell was not chosen randomly as the target by either the South African or the U.S. unions. Oil companies were the focus of the boycott because oil was critical to the South African economy; the military and the police, for example, depended on oil to break strikes and crush demonstrations. Having no indigenous supplies of oil to rely on, the South African regime was wholly dependent on the big oil companies for its very survival. Royal Dutch/Shell in particular stood out as a target because it had continued to ignore

pressure from the United Nations' voluntary oil embargo to stop supplying oil to South Africa, but also because it had a long history of serious health and safety violations and antiunion actions in its mines and refineries in South Africa (Multinational Monitor 1986; Knight 2001). The fact that two of its coal subsidiaries, Shell SA's Reitspruit and Shell USA's A.T. Massey, had just been involved in two brutal strikes involving the UMWA and NUM provided additional grounds for making Shell a key target (Walker 1986).

The global campaign against Shell was perhaps the most comprehensive and most effective example of cross-border solidarity of labor and its allies in history. Unions, antiapartheid groups, churches, civil rights organizations, and social justice NGOs from around the world came together in common "cause not out of their own self-interest but to make clear to the world's largest 'transnational firms that they were going to make the cost of doing business « with South Africa prohibitive and the costs to the South African apartheid government even greater. Profits were cut and businesses withdrew. Some corporations, such as Mobil Oil, pulled out quickly; others, such as Shell, endured great costs but never left. But eventually the apartheid government could no longer withstand the combination of external pressure and escalating action by the black majority inside South Africa. What made the story even more remarkable was that it occurred during the period when much of the world's labor movement was still bitterly divided along cold-war lines. Despite the close ties between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the African National Congress (ANC), and the Communist Party, not only unions such as the UMWA, the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)—allied with TransAfrica and FSAM from early on—but the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) endorsed the Shell boycott as well (Knight 2001; Walker 1986).

The boycott was active in more than a dozen countries, particularly in •Royal Dutch/Shell's home countries of Britain and the Netherlands. While unions in Europe were not enthusiastic about the boycott tactic, most supported antiapartheid sanctions, including the oil embargo, and South Africa's nascent trade union movement in other ways. Seafarers' unions from several countries, for example, provided critical support for the oil embargo by helping to track and to expose the global oil trade with South Africa. The Danish and Norwegian labor movements successfully convinced their governments to impose bans on oil transports and exports to South Africa (Hengeveld and Rodenburg 1995).

There were unionized workers at oil companies in all countries affected, particularly in South Africa, who actively questioned the risks and benefits of the oil boycott (Baskin 1991). These were particularly important lessons to learn: global alliances and the long-term battle against transnational firms have

short-term costs that affect workers and unions differently in different countries. How to balance interests and identify common goals in this context can be the most difficult challenge for global campaigns.

Without question, workers and their representatives around the world would be living and working in a very different environment if similar stories of coordinated struggles had occurred during the last twenty years. Stopping the collusion of governments and transnational corporations in depriving workers of fundamental political, social, and economic rights has become harder today because, unfortunately, labor did not learn this lesson from its involvement in the South Africa divestment campaign. Instead of being emboldened to challenge global capital and construct a more united, progressive, and internationalist vision, in most cases organizations returned to their own struggles. Periodically one or another group asked for support in their individual contract or organizing struggles with employers, and different organizations stepped forward. The support, however, was sporadic and temporary. Some of those battles reached a truly global scale, such as the Steelworkers' struggle against Bridgestone Firestone to keep their union and hold on to pattern bargaining in the rubber industry, which ultimately involved solidarity actions in eighty-three countries (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 2003). Another example was the successful campaign to organize 1,200 workers at Gina Bra Form Company in Thailand, which won support from the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and from more than a dozen international union organizations, labor NGOs, and consumer and student solidarity organizations from around the globe (Robertson and Plaiyoowong 2004).

Yet twenty years after the global labor movement launched its boycott against Royal Dutch/Shell, the world's largest corporations wield more power and are more globally connected and less fettered by global union solidarity than they were in 1986. Now the challenges are greater. Where before transnational corporations seemed at least somewhat bounded by loyalty to product, firm, industry, or country, today the largest of these firms increasingly supersede most government authority and are constrained only by the interests of their biggest investors, lenders, and shareholders.

For too long most union members and their leaders tended to see their collective bargaining environment as truly limited by the national boundaries of their own labor laws and the interests of their dues-paying members. Even as more of the employers they dealt with became foreign-owned or had foreign operations, and as nearly every industry in every part of the world was faced with having jobs outsourced from higher-wage countries to lower-wage countries, unions continued to think of themselves as part of a national, not international, labor movement. There were noteworthy exceptions. In some cases, such as Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation or Chunghwa Telecom, these were defensive actions, in which local unions, with the help

of national unions, global union federations (GUFs), and local, national, and international NGOs, mounted global campaigns to save the members' jobs and in many cases the union itself (Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 1999; Chang 2006).

In contrast, other organizations have moved aggressively to build alliances as part of organizing campaigns. These include the AFL-CIO, Teamsters, and Union Network International (UNI), which supported a global campaign to organize workers at Quebecor in the United States, Europe, and Latin America (Trumka 2006; Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2006); the global organizing campaigns at Nestle and Coca-Cola by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) (Garver et al. 2006); and UNITE HERE's campaign to organize Pinault-Printemps-Redoute (PPR) subsidiary Brylane (Clean Clothes Campaign 2002). But these campaigns have been few and far between. The greater capital's capacity to increase the power and speed with which it restructured its organization, the more difficult it was for labor to find its bearings. In the words of Hassan Yussuff from the Canadian Labor Congress, labor struggled to "match the other side's speed and mobility and capacity to change" (Yussuff 2006).

## **Global Unions Conference**

In recent years there have been many in both the labor movement and academia who have been thinking and strategizing on just how labor can best meet the challenge it faces in organizing and bargaining with the world's largest and most powerful transnational corporations. Starting in the fall of 2002 a group of union leaders, union researchers and strategic campaigners, and labor scholars, led by Richard Trumka, now secretary treasurer of the AFL-CIO; Bruce Raynor, president of UNITE HERE; Ron Blackwell, director of corporate affairs, AFL-CIO; and Kate Bronfenbrenner, Cornell ILR, came together to begin discussing these issues. This collaboration led to the Global Unions Conference in 2006. From the beginning its primary mission focused on improving labor's capacity to take on the world's largest transnational corporations and shift global economic and political power back into the hands of workers and communities. The framework for our initial discussions grew from the following assumptions.

I First, there continued to be a severe shortage of individuals in the United States and around the world who were trained in strategic corporate research. < Even those who were conducting research tended to use a simplistic model that failed to capture the complex and diffuse nature of corporate structure and ownership among the world's largest transnational employers. We now have developed a model for teaching strategic corporate research that better

captures the complex and changing character of these firms. The challenge, however, was how we could best disseminate our model to the widest audience possible.

Second, most unions were not researching the employer they were dealing with in organizing or bargaining campaigns. While some industrial unions had run noteworthy cross-border campaigns when confronted with aggressive employer opposition at the bargaining table, such campaigns were rare in the organizing context and infrequent in the bargaining context, and were almost always defensive in nature.

Third, even those campaigns that did exist were too often unilateral in nature, with the expectation that unions in other countries would come to the rescue of U.S. unions faced with tough foreign-owned transnational firms. U.S.-initiated campaigns to support organizing and bargaining by Unions and workers in other countries were much less common. This problem was not limited to the United States. Unions engaged in struggles with employers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and, to a lesser degree, western Europe, sought help from workers in the Global South or eastern Europe but did not reciprocate.

Another critical tension developed among some unions in Europe over whether the comprehensive campaign model interfered with their own positive relationships with employers. At the same time, others in Europe wanted to link more with unions in North America and the Global South in these campaigns as they watched the same employers that had been battling unions in North America begin to move toward privatization and shifting of union work out of western Europe toward eastern Europe and the Global South. Unions in the Global South continued to raise the question of how much workers in the Global North understood that their lifestyle and living standards depended on the continued degradation of living standards and environmental conditions in the South.

Finally, there was an extreme shortage of quality academic research relating to all aspects of these questions, from the changing nature of corporate ownership structure and practices of the world's largest transnational firms to the extent and effectiveness of union responses to these changes in the structure and power of global capital.

With these concerns in mind, the initial planning group reached out to the larger labor and academic community around the world in order to move forward with the planning process. In February 2006 this collaboration bore fruit, when the conference opened to a standing-room-only crowd, with registrants from fifty-three countries and six continents. The majority of the participants were from outside the United States, and more than seventy came from the Global South, including fifty-seven whose travel was funded by contributions from unions, universities, and NGOs supporting the conference.

Representatives from every GUF and many national trade union federations were in attendance.

The conference also featured strategic research on ten key transnational corporations from diverse sectors and industries such as Wal-Mart, Alcoa, Starwood, Exxon Mobil, Kraft, and Sanofi-Aventis. These companies were the focus for discussions of both a strategic analysis of the structure and flow of corporate power within each company and how best to build and strengthen lasting cross-border networks' among unions, scholars, and NGOs working with these target multinationals.

One of the most important aspects of the conference was the effort made to ensure representation from the Global South for all ten target firms and the connections that resulted from that effort between trade unionists from Europe and North America and trade unionists from Asia, Africa, and Latin America from the same company. However, this coming together of participants from the Global North and Global South was not limited to the target company sessions alone. It was a common thread in every part of the conference, from the plenary sessions to the workshops and panel presentations. In fact, this may have been the single most significant accomplishment of the conference and part of what made it such a historic event. In a time when global outsourcing has led too many workers and their unions to complain that seemingly undeserving workers in the Global South are stealing jobs that "rightfully" belong in North America or western Europe, this was one space where the framework for that debate had shifted to a common understanding that this was not a U.S. problem or a European problem but a global labor problem that could be solved only through a united effort.

The large number of participants from unions from Europe and the full support from the GUFs also represented a significant change in the perception of where the European labor movement and GUFs stood on the issue of comprehensive cross-border campaigns. In fact, the sessions were filled with stories of unions in Europe beginning to link with one another and with unions in other countries, as employers with whom they had heretofore had a stable labor relationship were now engaging in large-scale cutbacks in jobs and demands for concessions in wages and social benefits.

Representatives from every country denounced the growing power of neoliberal governments in the economic, political, environmental, and military arena and their oppressive impacts on workers, sacrificing their economic and democratic rights in the name of global capital. As Bertha Lujan, former national coordinator of Mexico's Authentic Labor Front (FAT), argued in her plenary speech, political struggles against neoliberal governments, such as the recent victory in Bolivia, are of equal importance in challenging capital.

We need an ideological campaign so that we can be victorious over those who have power over us, and we can then become organized only in so far as

our organizations are strengthened, and each one of us needs to contribute our grain of sand so that we can have a new world at home, at our workplace, in our country, in the world. (Lujan 2006)

Organizing the conference involved surmounting enormous hurdles—financial, geographic, and political. In fact from planning to fruition it would take four years. It was a historic event, not just because 560 trade unionists and academics came together to talk about how to take on global capital but specifically because of who was in the room. From around the world the people gathered there were representatives from unions, academia, and NGOs who were actively involved in either researching or conducting cross-border campaigns with the world's largest transnational firms, a group that had never gathered in one place before. The conference, both inside and outside the formal sessions, focused on a chance to share strategies, make connections, learn from one another, and build lasting networks for the future. For the three days of the conference the divisions that fell by the wayside were the split in the U.S. labor movement, the tensions over GUF protocols, and old cold-war legacies about which unions should be invited to the table. It felt as if a global labor movement was indeed possible.

### **Compiling This Book**

The conference planners believed that one of the ways that trade unionists and academics were going to gain an objective understanding of how to best strengthen labor's capacity to mount more strategic, comprehensive, and effective cross-border campaigns was to generate more high-quality research on labor's efforts to date—both successful and unsuccessful—at running cross-border campaigns with transnational firms. Thus part of the conference-organizing process was a call for papers, sent out in English, French, and Spanish to scholars and trade unionists all over the world. The best papers would be published by Cornell University Press as part of an edited book.

More than ninety-six paper proposals were submitted, and of those, fifty-one were accepted for the conference. The subjects ranged from critical debates on the role of IFAs to tactical questions on the use of the Internet in cross-border campaigns, as well as analyses of cross-border campaigns in specific industries such as logistics, auto, bananas, or the retail sector or in specific countries such as Thailand, India, or China. Prior to the conference, the literature on global unions consisted of a handful of books and articles. By the end of the conference, for the first time, there was a body of original research relating to global comprehensive cross-border campaigns.

As editor, my challenge was to put together a book that would do the best job of moving forward the goals and themes upon which the conference was based. That meant, first of all, presenting the model of strategic corporate research and comprehensive campaigns that had provided the theoretical framework for the entire conference. Second, the collection would need to capture the challenges of running comprehensive cross-border campaigns in the current global environment as well as the range of innovative strategies that unions have attempted to use to adapt to different circumstances, industries, countries, and corporations. Finally the chapters had to communicate the global character of comprehensive cross-border organizing and bargaining campaigns. My goal was a book that included original research from scholars around the world on cross-border campaigns involving different companies, industries, regions, and sectors that took place, for the most part, outside the United States.

The book starts with a chapter by Tom Juravich that describes the evolution of the theoretical framework and model for strategic corporate research and comprehensive campaigns upon which the conference was based (and the model that was used to prepare the research reports on the ten target companies for the conference). Juravich not only provides a detailed road map for understanding how power flows in the more diffuse and complex structures that dominate the transnational landscape today but also lays out a framework for moving from research to a critique of the company and identifying profit centers, growth strategies, decision makers, and the key relationships that then become the multiple points of leverage upon which comprehensive campaigns are built.

The nine chapters that follow provide a cross section of examples of comprehensive cross-border campaigns in different kinds of industries, corporations, regions, and circumstances. Each is distinct because each campaign was entirely different from all the others, with no overlap in either company or union characteristics or in industry. Yet in combination they provide a full picture of the range of strategic responses that unions are using in trying to develop a more global response to a complex world economy. The common thread for each of the campaigns is that in each case the unions involved had to tailor their campaign to adjust to the unique environment in which they were operating.

The first three chapters cover three very different campaigns in Asia—workers in a medical supply company in Malaysia, Unilever workers in India, and women apparel workers in Sri Lanka. In chapter 2, Peter Wad tells the story of how the workers at a Malaysia medical supply company were able to organize a union in their factory through an alliance with a Danish NGO that was dominated by the Danish labor movement rather than through the expected route of using pressure from the unionized workers at the heavily unionized company headquarters of APM-Maersk in Denmark. This example not only

captures the largely untold story of links between unions organizing in the Global South and unions in Europe but also demonstrates how the model presented in chapter 1 will require the development of a unique strategy depending on the differing vulnerabilities of the company, and how alliances with other stakeholders can best be utilized in exerting pressure on the firm.

The challenge of alliance building between unions in the Global South and those in the Global North is given some historical context by Ashwini Sukthankar and Kevin Kolben in chapter 3. They remind us that even in the earliest days of colonial India, labor struggles had a cross-border consciousness. Workers in India protested issues such as the establishment of a subcontracting employment system because it led to absent and unaccountable employers. More currently, as they argue in their two case studies of Unilever subsidiaries, cross-border campaigns are most effective when the strategies are largely shaped by the issues and interests of Indian unions and consumers rather than decided top down by northern unions and NGOs. Only then can they overcome the negative legacy of job protectionism from Europe and North America and the sense among many Indian trade unionists that the emphasis of northern unions and NGOs on corporate social responsibility often ends up being offered as an alternative to unionization.

— Using data collected through participant observation research while she worked as an apparel worker in an export processing zone (EPZ) apparel factory in Sri Lanka for eleven months in 2003, Samantha Gunawardana tells, in the voices of the workers themselves, how even in the most hostile of environments, workers can and do organize through cross-border comprehensive campaigns (chapter 4). Victory did not come easily but in stages. First, women-to-women networks grew out of the women's common identity as EPZ workers and the multiple problems they faced in the workplace and in their living situation. Then the women began coalition building with local NGOs, which was then followed step by step by national and international labor and NGOs from around the world. Gunawardana argues that in this kind of environment these worker-to-worker networks, nationally and internationally, are necessary for success. Given that between 2003 and 2006 the number of unionized workers in the Sri Lankan EPZs grew from six thousand to fourteen thousand, this appears to be a strategy worth heeding.

The book then switches gears by moving to a campaign on a very different scale in the banana sector in Latin America and the Caribbean. Here Henry Frundt presents union comprehensive campaigns at a much more advanced level. He explains how the banana unions used a combination of cross-border strategies to increase or rebuild union density and strengthen bargaining power, not just in one company in one country but in multiple: transnational firms throughout the banana sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (chapter 5). As Frundt describes, not only did the banana unions utilize multiple

coalitions with small farmer associations, European and North American NGOs, and the IUF, but they also employed a diversity of strategies. These ranged from directly negotiating with transnational banana firms for both local contracts and IFAs to challenging international trade policies that adversely impact banana workers. The banana unions have also worked to establish independent certification programs and Fair Trade Labeling programs that recognize organizing and collective bargaining rights as well as social and environmental standards.

The next three chapters focus on three campaigns in Europe involving dockworkers and General Motors workers Europe-wide, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU)-Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) campaign with school bus drivers in the United Kingdom. The dockworkers, or dockers, the focus of Peter Turnbull's research in chapter 6, may have one of the longest traditions of cross-border solidarity of any industry, since international linkages are a natural outgrowth of the work process in marine shipping. However, Turnbull's research focuses on cross-border campaigns strictly within the EU context—namely, the response of European dockers to directives issued by the European Commission in 2001 and 2006, both of which seriously threatened job security, social benefits, and union power on the docks across Europe. In what would be called the "war on Europe's waterfront," docker unions and the International Transport Federation (ITF) launched a campaign of demonstrations, strikes, and coordinated workplace education and action across Europe to get the first directive, voted down in an unexpected victory for the dockers in 2003. This was followed by a more nuanced but equally successful campaign of lobbying and legislative action in 2004–6 backed up by the threat of the capacity to strike. As Turnbull explains, the European dockers' story is a lesson in how unions can adapt to the changing political and economic environment, in this case the EU, by developing new "repertoires of contention" to tilt the balance of power away from transnational capital.

Valeria Pulignano provides a critical analysis of how the European Metal Workers' Federation, absent any historical tradition of cross-border bargaining or organizing, worked to coordinate workplace and community actions across borders throughout Europe in response to the recent wave of corporate restructuring and threats of plant closings, job loss, and cutbacks in wages and benefits at GM and its subsidiaries (chapter 7). She describes how unions were able to coordinate activity across borders to restrain, but not prevent, GM from forcing locals and regions to compete against each other to save jobs in their communities. Pulignano argues that the GM case suggests that union bargaining power in a restructured Europe depends on moving from national to European bargaining structures and coupling this process with constant communication and linkages across borders at every level of the trade union movement.

Amanda Tattersall explores the challenges and possibilities of attempting cross-border alliances in the service sector through her analysis of SEIU's global partnerships unit and the Driving Up Standards campaign between SEIU and the T&G in the United Kingdom from 2004 to 2006. Chapter 8 explores the structural innovation of the global partnerships unit and draws out the possibilities and difficulties for this form of global union collaboration. Tattersall notes the strengths of the campaign—its success in global coalition building to stop employers in the United Kingdom and Europe from treating their U.S. employees and unions differently than they treat those in their headquarters countries. She also points out that there are some significant limitations in the current practice of the Driving Up Standards campaign that provide important lessons for effective global partnerships. Using criteria developed for evaluating the effectiveness of labor-community coalitions, Tattersall found that obstacles to global union collaboration can arise where there is a lack of clear-cut mutual interests, distinct differences in practice and organizing style between the two unions, and uneven partnership in decision making. Still, given the lack of cross-border organizing in the service sector, the global partnerships unit offers significant opportunities for future endeavors, where SEIU and other unions can build on this initiative to create more mutual partnerships and effective campaigns in the future.

In chapter 9 Dimitris Stevis and Terry Boswell address the opportunities and limitations that International Framework Agreements (IFAs) and other IFA-like global agreements provide unions when taking on large transnational corporations. As Stevis and Boswell explain, these global agreements are a fairly recent and primarily European phenomenon that many GUFs and European national unions see as their most significant accomplishments. Some even consider them to be the closest the labor movement has gotten to truly global negotiations with the world's largest transnational corporations. Those with a more critical view of IFAs, including many national union federations and national unions outside Europe, emphasize IFAs as unenforceable agreements that are almost entirely concentrated in European countries. At best IFAs can be one element in a multifaceted comprehensive cross-border campaign, but at worst they can be used by employers to co-opt or undermine the union campaign. Stevis and Boswell contend that the answer is to address the limitations of IFAs by making them truly global and enforceable and by also empowering GUFs to act more like real global unions, suggestions that are also emerging from the IUF's review of the effectiveness of IFAs.

Finally the last chapter, by Darryn Snell, looks at the true outlaws among the world's largest transnational corporations. These include firms that have been charged with direct involvement in a wide range of human rights violations in the Global South, such as mass executions, rape, torture, forced labor, forced relocation of indigenous populations, and active involvement in

or direct support for military operations ranging from toppling governments to crushing rebellions. This group also encompasses those who are charged with more indirect involvement with human rights abuses because of their failure to do anything to correct or prevent the conflicts and human rights violations that are occurring around them. Snell looks first at how NGOs and trade unions have worked together to investigate and prove the extent of human rights abuses taking place and then at how they have held corporations accountable through lawsuits, shareholder actions, boycotts and divestment campaigns, and developing codes of conduct. As Snell points out, none of these are simple, because many companies that NGOs may target for a financially damaging lawsuit, a boycott, or divestment, may have large numbers of unionized facilities in Europe or North America or in other countries in the Global South that could suffer severe hardship if these campaigns were successful. But as Snell concludes, partnering with NGOs to stop these abuses cannot be optional for the global labor movement. As in the fight against apartheid, if unions do not put everything they have into a global challenge of these firms, then they have lost their moral standing.

### **Building a Sustainable Global Network**

The third and final goal of the conference was to "lay the groundwork for building a sustainable global network of unions and academics to continue to work together to effectively engage transnational corporations worldwide." Certainly just holding the conference and allowing the connections to be made accomplished a big part of this goal, as does the conference website, which includes all the company research reports, video streaming of all the conference speeches, and copies of all the papers presented at the conference (see <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/globalunionsconference/>). Yet in the end it is this edited book that the conference planners hope to have as the most lasting legacy of the conference. We hope that it will be read by researchers and strategic campaigners from unions and NGOs around the world to help them critically analyze how their organizations could more effectively work together to take on transnational corporations in their industry or regions. We hope that it will also be read by labor scholars across many disciplines to encourage more and better research in both cross-border campaigns and the changing nature, structure, and practice of transnational corporations. We also hope that it will be read by young people in the labor movement and in universities and colleges around the world and will inspire them to work with unions and NGOs as part of the global effort to stop the race to the bottom.

The lessons that can be learned from this book are the lessons that we hoped were learned from the conference itself. As Hassan Yussuff said in his closing

speech, the simplest lesson of all is that "[w]e need to meet like this more often. This kind of critical, collective reflection among researchers, activists, union staff and leaders produces formal and informal exchanges that are valuable for action" (Yussuff 2006). Unions and academics wrestling with these same core issues must find ways to come together on a much more frequent basis and must make the effort to raise the funds so that the north-south connections that were initiated at the conference are no longer the exception but the norm.

We also desperately need more and better research from a much wider range of scholars, but even more important, we need more scholars to actively engage with the research issues raised by the themes of this conference. This includes more in-depth research focusing on every aspect of large transnational firms, as well as both quantitative and qualitative cross-cultural research on employer and union strategies in organizing and bargaining in the global environment. I issue this challenge knowing full well the risks that are entailed in conducting research on powerful transnational corporations. But these are risks that we as scholars must take if there is to be an informed challenge to the neoliberal agenda.

This book demonstrates how much further the labor movement needs to go in truly building a global labor movement. As Valeria Pugliano points out, unions in Europe are still in the nascent stages of understanding that they have more to gain as a united European labor movement than by putting their local interests first. Unions from the Global North, particularly the GUFs, also must understand that IFAs and cross-border campaigns that do not take into consideration the interests and concerns of workers in the Global South are doomed to failure.

Finally, unions can no longer afford to limit their cross-border activity to defensive actions. Strategies such as strategic corporate research, worker-to-worker exchanges, global coalitionbuilding, *rndsom^xehensiv^ssuoapaigns* need to become a constant in the organizing and bargaining rektionshipwith "these large transnational firms. Labor has an even greater capacity than capital to be globally connected because it can connect with workers at every level. Whether apparel workers in EPZ zones in Sri Lanka, dockworkers in Europe, or banana workers in Latin America, in the end, all the workers whose stories are told in this book took on capital and won by uniting, first with one another, then with other unions and NGOs, and then with the world. As Hassan Yussuff reminded us, "we need to make it an automatic reflex to appreciate that global capital has its weaknesses. Too often ... the strengths have been emphasized. The weaknesses and failings are real. The focus on them reminds us hope should always be more convincing than despair" (2006).

The chapters in this book make clear that unions have the capability to build the cross-border coalitions necessary to take on transnational corporations.

The question is whether they are willing to make the fundamental ideological and cultural changes necessary to make this happen on a global scale. If they are, then maybe it will be five, not twenty years before Wal-Mart is no longer driving the global race to the bottom; before firms such as Exxon Mobil, Coca-Cola, Talisman, Caterpillar, and any number of large pharmaceutical companies will no longer be able to profess to be good corporate citizens in some countries and operate entirely outside the law in others. All of us who put so much work into the conference and into this volume did so because we believe that unions and their allies do have the capacity to change and become a global movement. But most important of all, we believe that with these changes, the balance of power, like the arc of history, will finally be tilting away from capital toward workers, their unions, and communities in both the Global North and Global South.