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SELLING THE COMMONS > Tripping Up TRIPPs

Well you know I started this phase of my life literally 87, both under the awareness made directly by the big corporations that told us that by the turn of the century five companies would be controlling our food and health through patents and genetic engineering and corporate mergers.

As well as the Uruguay round of GAT which was drawing in intellectual property rights and patents into a world trading system. And that's when I decided this is what I must work on because it was really about the most fundamental fabric of our moral existence. To treat other life as I had mentioned, to take away from the poor their means of survival and sustenance.

And I think in these thirteen years we've had tremendous successes. First when TRIPPs was being negotiated, the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement. It is always said the reason we need to do this is because Third World pirates are amazing innovations. And what they used to always give as examples were Madonna cassettes. And Michael Jackson CDs that people were copying this stuff.

Now most of the world doesn't listen to Madonna and Michael Jackson. And the piracy in fact that's serious and affects life is the piracy of the knowledge and biodiversity of the Third World. I think we managed to put on the international agenda this reverse piracy that happens on the part of the powerful. The theft of the resources of the poor by the corporations of the world.

And biopiracy is now a language in the negotiations in the World Trade Organization. When countries are challenging TRIPPs and asking for review and change in the agreement they use the language of biopiracy. We stop the Third World being viewed as the pirate and we showed the corporations were the pirate.

But we've achieved something more. In the December of 2000, the pharmaceutical industry of the world organized to chase the South African government because South Africans were importing low cost drugs from India. And the corporations would have liked to see Africa turn into their market monopoly. Even if this meant that the high cost drugs that they sold would not reach most of the victims of AIDS and malaria and TB.

Well they had to withdraw from that case. But what is even more significant, in the first half of 2001, the absolutely unjust case of the United States against Brazil for allowing the manufacture of low cost AIDS medicine. A case they brought to WTO to basically say that preventing the spread of the AIDS epidemic was illegal according to WTO rules.

Bringing medicine to the people was illegal. A government acting on behalf of public health measures was illegal. Well the world wide movement forced the United States to withdraw that case just in time for a review of TRIPPs.

At this point, instead of the Third World being told you'd better change your laws because it comes in the way of corporate profits, the tide has now turned. And the Third World is saying anything in TRIPPs that come in the way of public health measures, the right of farmers to save seed must change in TRIPPs. Anything that promotes biopiracy must change. I think the tables have turned.

THE NATURE OF THE CORPORATION > Rights Vs. Responsibility

The people in these corporations need to be global citizens. They need to take responsibilities for their actions because the corporations, the corporation as a legal fiction being given human personality, is really the beginning of all the treachery of our times. We need to relocate these institutions back in the people who run them, who gain from them. Who make the millions out of them. Who destroy other peoples lives by the location in these corporations. But corporation was created as a legal fiction so that those board of directors of the eastern company could have rights without responsibility. That when there were losses, they wouldn't have to pay them, the company bore them. But when they got huge new loots of gold somewhere it would be their share.

Now this separation of rights and responsibility is the beginning of any destructive enterprise. And it's not the corporation itself but the people in those corporations, the CEOs of those corporations, the managers of the corporation, who need to go into any place only if people want them. Not by changing the rules of trade. They need to live by the rules of any locality, any community, any country, just like everyone else does. They cannot be above the rules of citizenship.

And when they leave they need to leave exactly like the rest of us do. I've taught in North America, I always have to pay taxes before I go home. These guys think they have a right to loot everything and walk off with giving nothing back to a country or a community. That is the context of responsibility I was talking about.

I have dealt too long with evasive concepts of abstract power, which disembodies the power that ultimately is held by real human beings. And to me, the corporation is the people. It includes those stockholders who would like to be able to make easy money just by putting their shares in there. It includes everyone who gains by the abuses of that corporation. Nothing in the world is abstract - only abstract. Everything has concrete form.

The corporation's concrete form is the people who gain from it. And the people who gain from it, its management systems, its ownership systems and in our contemporary time when more and more of the ownership is in the hands of

shareholders. Everyone who participates in, in the kind of casino economy through which destructive action can be terribly rewarding on Wall Street.

And it's because these concrete embodiments have worked out this abstract disembodiment that we see the kind of crisis we are seeing. We just have to re-embodiment the corporation back and every shareholder of Monsanto needs to take responsibility for genetic pollution. They cannot make the money and disengage from the responsibility. Every manager in Monsanto needs to feel responsible for the farmers of India their pushing to suicides.

Note

More than 25,000 small farmers in India have reportedly committed suicide since 1997. While it is difficult to confirm exact figures, recent international news reports suggest about 200 farmers each month kill themselves by hanging or by drinking pesticide.

ETHICS AND VALUES > Corruption Of Science

Science is becoming the cutting edge tool in the hands of corporations for profits. And given that it's the cutting edge tool, not only are they taking over the public spaces of research. And take over of entire departments in universities is a very, very good example where public tax money pays the salaries of scientists but a tiny amount of a million dollars makes the entire output of that lab the property of Monsanto.

But the third category is actually the most disgusting category, with third rate scientists, and I deal with them all the time. Who do no science, who just do propaganda. Who are merely mouthpieces. Who have a degree behind their names but what they deal with and what they debate with you is not the content, not the scientific content of the subject matter but attacks, personal attacks.

My website has been hijacked, has been hacked and linked to a porn site, that's part of a scientific warfare. It's scientists who announced that I run a pornographic site. The scientists who write that the planet will be saved by plastics and pesticides. These are prostitutes who have sold themselves and their time. And the only reason we, we even give them an ear is because we have been trained over two centuries to respect the degree so heavily. I think it's time for people to listen to content. Not bother about whether someone has a PhD before or after their names. And definitely not, not get convinced by corporate propaganda. They are ways in which the same message can be the reason for brainwashing you. But the same message if your mind is trained right can be the place from where you lift falsehoods and pick new strategies of defending the truth and defending people and their rights.

... You can talk to them but that talking counts for nothing. The real place which counts is how we change the structures of accountability and governance and the powers and rights of people.

