



Perceptions of Globalism

Group of 78 luncheon talk by Farhang Rajaei, January 2000.

We should be thinking civilization and culture, not just international trade, when we think of globalization, Dr. Farhang Rajaei urged at the first speaker's luncheon of the new millennium (give or take a year). The challenge of globalization is to reconcile two organizing principles, he said: the market and self-protecting society.

Dr. Rajaei, visiting associate professor of humanities at Carleton University, is the author of the new book, *Globalization on Trial: The Human Condition and the Information Civilization*, an IDRC publication. Educated as a lawyer in Iran, Rajaei went on to earn a master's degree in public administration at the University of Oklahoma, and a PhD in international relations at the University of Virginia. While working on his PhD he was a member of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations and later taught at the Institute of Philosophy in Teheran and at the National University of Iran.

Speaking on the aftermath of the Battle of Seattle, he saw it as largely a battle of misunderstanding between the ministers and officialdom of the World Trade Organization, on the one hand, and the 35,000 demonstrators representing some 130 organizations, on the other. The WTO had gathered to discuss an agenda of liberalization that actually went far beyond trade. The demonstrators, most of them serious rather than merely disruptive, felt their humanitarian concerns were being overridden by trade policies and regulations.

There would be no meeting of minds on globalization unless people thought of it in global terms, not just trade terms. Today's globalization is a sophisticated process, but has its roots in humanity's collective consciousness of its togetherness. Today the perception of that oneness is transformed by the information revolution, a revolution in the possibilities of making connections between people.

The Battle of Seattle had been a case of "using globalization to organize against globalization". Non-governmental organizations using the Internet had been able to bring worldwide pressure to bear. "Globalization is the government of nobody," said Dr. Rajaei. *Le Monde diplomatique* called it the "rule of cosmocracy". Thomas Friedman in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* described it as the rule of "electronic herds".

Economic globalization has offered great opportunities for wealth creation, said Rajaei, but has also created huge disparities. The organizing principle of the self-regulating

market must not be allowed to overwhelm the organizing principle of the self-protective society.

As urged by the United Nations Development Program's 1999 Human Development Report, he said, globalization must include six principles: *ethics* (less violation of human rights, not more), *equity* (less disparity within and between nations, not more), *inclusion* (less marginalization of people and countries, not more), *human security* (less instability of societies and less vulnerability of people, not more), *sustainability* (less environmental destruction, not more), and *development* (less poverty and deprivation, not more).