

# Boulder's own foreign policy

## City takes on fast track globalization

by Brian Klocke

Boulder Weekly, August 16, 2001

What does globalization have to do with Boulder? In a phrase, all politics are local. Tired of being shut out of the official WTO, IMF, FTAA and World Bank meetings on the global economy, activists are taking action in their own backyards to stop the threat of corporatized globalization. Maude Barlow, of the Council of Canadians says that the global trade agreements of these institutions will "remove the ability of all the governments of the Americas to protect health, safety, and well-being of their citizens and the environment they share."

Two resolutions opposing the "fast track" of "official" globalization will appear on the Boulder City Council meeting agenda on August 21. One of the local resolutions commits the Council to opposing Fast Track legislation, which critics say will limit Congressional debate on the massive text of trade deals by not allowing any amendments, but simply a yes or no vote on the entire package as "friendly advice" to the President. The same resolution also opposes "any provisions in FTAA that would restrict Boulder's ability to regulate environmental and quality of life issues within its own jurisdiction," and "opposes any international treaty or agreement which would limit the ability of the City of Boulder to enact legislation in furtherance of human rights values."

The second resolution commits the Council to being the fifth US City to join the World Bank Bonds boycott, along with several socially responsible investment firms, labor unions, churches and religious communities throughout the US. Inspired by the anti-apartheid boycott of South Africa, 23 University of Colorado faculty members recently signed a public letter supporting the boycott.

At least two CU faculty members differ. Keith Maskus, economics professor and World Bank intern, doesn't "understand why a city like Boulder needs to have its own foreign policy." James Markusen would "Much rather they spend their time improving the City of Boulder, than doing useless silly gestures wasting the taxpayers' time."

Although Maskus believes that Boulder's "ability to run (government) is utterly unaffected by world trade agreements," he did say that if Boulder, "discriminated against a foreign corporation in favor of a domestic one", it would get them in trouble with the WTO and if enough cities joined the bonds boycott, the World Bank would be affected. Markusen believes that many people opposing the Bank's policies, "are people who don't understand simple economics. Going after the Bank is not going to help."

Tom Mayer, CU sociology professor, refers to a 1998 Meltzer Commission report.

"A congressional committee concluded that the World Bank's actions have been irrelevant to the elimination of poverty. It is driven by the political and economic interests of the G7 (richest nations)," Mayer says.

Markusen asserts, "Of course the World Bank and the IMF are run by high-income countries. I believe they're doing the right thing. Denying access to markets will isolate the developing nations from the world economic community."

Mayer, also a member of CU Faculty for Social Responsibility, counters Markusen's argument.

"The Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the Bank do not bring developing countries into the world economic community, but isolate them more deeply by committing them to conditions of poverty and environmental destruction in order to meet their debts."

In 1999, the United Nation Commission on Human Rights released a report on the effects of structural adjustment policies that concluded, "The economic, social and cultural rights of millions of poor people across the third world have been systematically undermined as a result of neo-liberal adjustment policies aimed at sustaining the servicing of this debt by destitute nations." The report estimates that the transfer of wealth from the third world to the developed countries is more than \$213 billion per year and growing.

"We are not against world economy, but for one which values justice and does not engage in the market fundamentalism of the World Bank," Mayer says. "The world is becoming an ever more integrated system. One does not exist in isolation. To not confront the abuses of organizations like the World Bank is to give away our local sovereignty."