

Chris Harman & Michael Hardt

Harman-Hardt Debate:

The Working Class or the Multitude

(January 2003)

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*This debate with Michael Hardt, co-author with Toni Negri of **Empire** was organised by Globalise Resistance on 25 January 2003 at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre Brazil in front of about 300 people. The two main speakers spoke for 21 minutes each, and there were then some 22 contributions from the floor – one of the highest degrees of participation at any meeting at the forum.*

In transcribing the debate, I could not decipher from the recording of most of the names of contributors from the floor, and four of the contributions at all. The transcriptions of some of the other contributions are based on translations provided verbally at the meeting.

Chris Harman

What I want to start by saying is how absolutely important this debate is. It is now just over three years since the new movement around globalisation burst on the scene at Seattle. Since then we have had the great battle at Genoa, we've had September 11th, we've been through the war against Afghanistan and we have the expectation of the world's greatest power directing its armed might against a poor third world country in the next four or five weeks. For all of us the centrality of agitating against the war is there.

The very development of the movement is increasingly raising the feeling among us that not only is another world possible, but another world is necessary. This raises the question of how we get it. How do we gather the forces that are necessary to transform the situation?

Historically at this stage many movements in the past have found it important to take up the ideas of Karl Marx. The reason is simple enough. Writing when capitalism as a system was beginning to take its hold on small parts of western Europe and the eastern seaboard of North America in the 1840, 1850 and 1860s, Marx began to analyse what this system was and, above all, how to change it.

I only want to focus one element – how Marx placed at the centre of the debate the understanding that capitalism itself creates a force that can potentially grow up in opposition to it and overthrow it. This force is the working class.

Underlying this conception of the working class are four elements.

The first is that capitalism's basic motivating force is the seizure of people's labour – what Marx called their surplus value – which individual capitals then accumulate in competition with each other, so that the whole reality of the system is that is based upon the alienated labour, the stolen labour, of people who work.

The second element is that the dynamics of the system lead to the concentration of the forces that are based on accumulated labour,

stolen labour, and the creation of massive workplaces in massive industrial conurbation's, huge cities, that become the centres of the system.

The third element is precisely because workers are concentrated together like this, when they fight against the system they are forced to fight on a collective manner, not an individualistic manner. They can be individualistic and not fight against the system. It happens all the time. But when they want to fight to improve their own conditions they have to fight collectively.

Here they differ from the oppressed classes of previous class societies. The medieval peasants could imagine that the peasant family could individually get more land and improve its conditions. In the world today there are still many hundreds of millions of peasants and of small proprietors, each of whom imagines that their family could grab more land or more of the market that they could improve their positions individually. Marx's central notion is that workers are forced to fight collectively, whether they fight in the factory or at the level of the whole society. They do not fight collectively all the time. Marx described how they are driven to fight collectively, they suffer defeats, they fragment and then are forced again to fight collectively.

The last element in Marx's conception is that because capitalism is based upon competition between rival capitals, so that each of them has all the time to try to raise the productivity of labour, this mean the capitalist class needs an exploited class that has much more culture than any oppressed class previously in history. It needs to be able to read and write, to have some basic knowledge of the world, in the modern world they need a working class increasingly that has some limited notion of IT, of computers, and so forth.

These are the four characteristics that Marx points to. He says that they create at the heart of capitalism a force that has the potential to

fight the system. It does not fight the system all the time. But it has the potential to fight the system.

Against this, whenever we have been through periods of defeats of struggles, theorists have arisen who have said it is not the working class that is at the centre, but some other force. In the late 1970s and the 1980s world wide we went through a defeat for the working class struggles – the defeat in Chile, the formation in Europe of various social democratic governments that brought back the market, that began to break up welfare systems, the bloody dictatorship in Argentina, a whole period of defeats for the working class movement. In any period of defeats the workers' organisations fragment, workers turn upon each other, people see individual solutions, in that situation theories arise which say the working class is no longer central and that there is some other agency we can turn to.

So a man called Andre Gorz wrote a book some 20 years ago called **Farewell to the working class** which put across these ideas.

As far as I am concerned we are not in a new period of struggle internationally. In some countries is it more advanced than in others. In some the crisis of the system is much greater than in others. But we are talking about a new wave of struggles of which the anti-capitalist movement and the anti-war movement are part. In this new wave of struggles people are beginning to look for new answers.

One set of ideas put forward are in the book produced by Michael Hardt and Toni Negri called **Empire**. One of the central ideas is that we can no longer look to the working class as an agency of change, we have to talk about something else.

What I want to do briefly is to test that hypothesis against certain factual information, and then come to some conclusions. I've written a 15,000 word article on the question and I don't intend to read it out to you.

But the central argument in the Hardt and Negri book is that the working class is beginning to disappear, that the old notion of Marx of people concentrated together in large workplaces, where their time is measured against the clock, where their lives are fragmented between the time in which they work, when they are effectively prisoners inside the factory or the office, and the free time have to recuperate from their work, Hardt and Negri want to argue this is no longer the case.

Their central argument is expressed in a long quote I want to give here – and I hope you will bear with me while I read it.

‘In a previous era the category of the proletariat centred on and at times was effectively subsumed under the industrial working class. Today that working class has all but disappeared from view. It has not ceased to exist but it has been displaced from its central position in the capitalism economy’

They go on to claim that everyone under capitalism is part of the system and that therefore everyone under capitalism is equally central to the struggle against it.

I would argue empirically there is no empirical evidence whatsoever for this notion of the disappearing working class.

Here are a few facts.

We have been witnessing, world wide, changes in capitalism over the last quarter of century. This should not surprise us. The whole history of capitalism has been of change, with new areas of production advancing and old areas disappearing. The process always takes the form of the advance of capitalism drawing people into new workplaces, at a higher level than in the period before. This exactly true of the present period.

If we talk about the disappearance of the traditional working class in manufacturing, mining, and so forth. The reality is that this is not a class that is disappearing. I just want to give a few figures from what is

still the world's biggest economy, the United States. At the end of the 1970s there was a panic in the United States with people talking about 'de-industrialisation'. But in 1998 the number of people working in industry in the United States was 20 per cent higher than in 1974, roughly; 50 per cent higher than in 1950 and it was four times the level of 1900. There was this continual growth in the number of workers in old style industries – mining, manufacturing and so forth. It is true that the total number employed in the economy as a whole grew more rapidly than that. But the absolute size of the traditional industrial working class – if you want to use the Spanish term, the *obreros* as opposed to the *trabajadores* – continued to grow right up until the beginning of the recession that began two years ago.

If you talk about the Japanese industrial working class, you are talking about a working class that grew massively in the last half century. I don't know the figures for last three or four years, but in 1998 it was bigger than in 1970 and in 1970 it was much, much bigger than in 1950.

It is true that if you talk about some European countries the picture is slightly different. The number of workers in manufacturing industry in Britain, for example, was halved during the last three recessions. The number of people in manufacturing jobs in France has fallen by about a third, in Italy by about 20 per cent. But a fall of 20 per cent is not a disappearance of this category. There is continual growth of the number of people in 'traditional' industries world wide.

But alongside this has gone the vast expansion in the number of people in paid employment. Again I want to give figures for the advanced industrial countries, because they provide some indication of what the general trend is.

Here Hardt and Negri made a great deal of growth of what they call service employment and they give the impression that service

employment is all what they call ‘informational’ employment – employment to do with the processing of information.

The reality of service employment is very different. People confuse the categories of industry and services with the categories of manual work and white collar work. But the services have always included very large numbers of manual workers. Dockers are service workers. Bus workers are service workers. Train drivers are service workers. If you look today at the United States there are 103 million people included in service employment. It is not true that all of these are informational workers, some sort of new category. There are 18 million in occupations with a decidedly manual cast to them – janitors, ‘security personnel’, ‘food services’, cleaners, people who to fill the shelves in shops, and so on. There are another 18 million in routine clerical jobs, terrible jobs in many ways indistinguishable from manual jobs, people involved in typing, filing and so and so forth. There are another six and three quarter million sales assistants, people working on checkouts at stores. Vast groups of workers whose jobs are as routines, as boring, as tiring, as devastating to their lives as any traditional manual work. Something like 42 million people altogether in such jobs in the United States.

Far from the working class disappearing, you put together 42 million of these jobs and the 30 million in old style manufacturing jobs and so forth you come to a figures that indicates that the majority of the population of the United States are still workers.

If you add to that other changes that are taking way, the way that jobs like teaching are increasingly subject to the payments systems that used to exist only in manufacturing or mining, payment by results, managerial supervision, managerial bullying, assessment procedures, stretching today in Britain today right up to the university level, you talking about the transformation involving more and more people being drawn into the old style of jobs. When people talk about

informational jobs, I am more tempted to talk about ‘Macjobs’, of even teaching becoming almost a Macjob, part of a production line.

It is extremely problematic to talk about ‘Fordism’, a stage of mass production, giving way to ‘post-Fordism’ where mass production is finished. For me ;what is happening is the globalisation of Fordism. Someone working for Macdonalds is working for a Fordist enterprise in which everything is measured, everything is timed, everything is dominated by the methods and procedures that used to characterise industry.

One other thing should be said. It is often claimed that these jobs are all insecure jobs. It is said in Hardt and Negri that all these are jobs that could disappear overnight. Here we have to be careful. Everywhere those who employ workers want to create a feeling of insecurity among workers in order to break their ability to fight back. And to there has been over the last 20 or 30 years an increase in insecure employment. But it is also true that everywhere that capitalism exploits labour, it wants some degree of commitment from the workforce, some degree of stability to the workforce. And therefore you find in Europe 18 per cent of jobs are insecure jobs, 82 per cent of jobs are more or less permanent jobs. The average time for which people stay in the same job in Britain is the same now as ten years ago. This is important because the notion of insecure jobs is used in Britain by the New Labour government to say everyone has insecure jobs therefore you cannot fight to defend your job. For us it is important to understand that there insecurity and the attempt to create insecurity among workers. But at the same time there is a stable workforce that has the capacity to fight back.

I’ve talked so far about the situation at the centre of capitalism, the advanced industrial countries. I’ll now talk briefly about the situation in the rest of the world.

The latest breakdown of the composition of the world's workforce was carried out in 1995 by Deon Filmer, for the World Bank, of all things. His break down shows about a third of people in paid employment, and about half still involved in self employment on the land.

But if you analyse the categories further, you find that in most third world countries today about half the people working the land for themselves are to some extent also dependent on waged labour. So about a third of the world's workforce are involved in classic capitalist relations of production, dependent completely on waged labour to survive, about a third remain self employed, mainly peasants in the countryside, and third who spend part of their time working for capital, part of the time working for themselves – and increasingly under the control of multinational trading corporations, supermarket chains, and so on.

Two simultaneous processes are changing this picture over time.

The first is the massive urbanisation of the world. In 1975, 37 per cent of the world's population lived in towns. In 1995, 45 per cent lived in towns, and estimates suggest that if these trends continue in 15 year time half of the population of the third world will live in towns. There is massive urbanisation of the world's population.

Within that there is a trend where people who used to work the land are forced to seek work in large cities. But that transformation does not mean there is automatic growth of the permanent workforce.

In most parts of the world, there is a small growth of the permanent workforce and, alongside it, a massive growth of transitory workforce, of people who either live by the most meagre forms of self employment – selling matches, shoe laces, driving taxis, or sometimes selling their own bodies – and alongside them people who try to sell their labour on a casual basis.

But this exception of parts of Africa, the employed section of the workforce is not disappearing. It is growing larger. And the classic methods of capitalist control are still in existence. Even if you talk about Brazil you find in the 1980s there was a small growth in the permanent workforce. In the early 1990s it stagnated. In the mid 1990s it began to grow again, it is probably stagnating at the moment. There is an interaction between the growth of the casual workforce and the growth of the permanent workforce. The permanent workforce is not disappearing.

Why does all this argument matter?

The last thing I want to talk about is the politics involved.

Let's go back to the centre of Marx's conception. It is that workers who are concentrated together in large workplaces, under the thumb of managers, subject to time keeping, subject to the pressures continually to be disciplined by the system, at the same time have the potential when they struggle to shake the system, but not only to shake the system. They have the potential to organise themselves, because they are concentrated together. The culture capitalism itself forces on them let alone the culture of understand, creates the potential for becoming a force that can change the system. When they move, they move collectively.

When we talk about the picture of the world today, we have to say there are all sorts of movements that break out in the world today. The crisis of capitalism creates all sorts of pressures for revolts and rebellions. But it is not true that all these are collective struggles and they all lead to struggles in the same direction.

The notion of the multitude that Hardt and Negri put across implies that any struggle anywhere has the same weight and the same importance.

We have to say two things. Firstly, the whole history of revolts by peasants or by the urban poor who are not in workplaces is that they explode on to the streets and then they are driven back into their hovels or their farms and the revolt collapses. The history of the workers struggle is that when workers struggle and gain victories, they create collective organisations that persist over time and they begin to create the possibility of a counter-hegemony, a weapon against the system as a whole.

The second thing we have to say about the notion of multitude is that not all multitudes are progressive.

I will just give the example of India.

In 1983, a massive textile strike shook Bombay. It probably the biggest strike the world has ever known and it lasted for 12 months with a million workers on strike. For that period collective ideas dominated the mass of poor people in and out of jobs in the Bombay area. That strike was defeated. In the aftermath of it what came to dominate in Bombay, rooted among the poor, the self-employed and so forth, was what one might call a fascist organisation called the Shiv Sena, which directed the hatred of the middle castes against the lowest, the Dalits (untouchables), the hatred of Hindus against Muslims. In the same city, the same multitude of people subjugated to capital, their lives being ruined by the system, could turn in two directions. One to collective struggle, one to individualistic struggle. The collective struggle is beaten, the individualist struggle comes to the fore.

If you talk about multitude, either you've got the progressive multitude, whose position rooted in the system drives it forward to challenge the system, or you've got the reactionary multitude.

I'll give another example. Argentina. Thirteen months ago we saw the fantastic eruption of the population of Buenos Aires on the streets. We saw the multitude bring down the government. What the multitude was not capable of doing was framing some sort of alternative that was

capable of stopping Argentine capitalism continuing to go into crisis. The central focus in Argentina, the working class organised in the workplaces was held back from entering into the struggle by the trade union bureaucracy. But unless you talk about the organised working class, those in workplaces with traditions of collective struggle, coming onto the stage in Argentina, you are talking about continuing paralysis of the struggle.

The last thing I wan to talk about is Venezuela. We've had an epic conflict taking place there over the last five weeks. It is conflict between the rich and the poor. The rich are backed by the United States. The poor come on the streets in support of Chavez. But it has to be said the demonstrations behind the rich and the demonstrations behind the poor have been more or less equal in size – although people argue that the recent pro-Chavez demonstrations have been slightly larger.

When you just talk about multitudes, you can have a multitude to the left and a multitude to the right. You have to ask what is the dynamic that drives it forward and can carry it on. Unless you talk about people whose experience under capitalism forces them to act collectively and to provide collective alternative, you cannot talk about really changing the system.

Michael Hardt

Somehow Chris has inspired me. I'm not one to go quoting Marx all the time. I usually I say don't let's made Marx into a Church. Let's not treat it as a bible. Let's learn from Marx, learn from others, also learn from ourselves.

But Chris has inspired me. His arguments are in fact against Marxism. So I might as well refer to them.

Let me start then with one falsity. It seems to be as SWP speciality about our book to quote something and then misread it purposefully. But luckily a lot of you will have read the book so you know.

The point which Chris quoted did not say that the industrial working class had disappeared. What Chris read out was that ‘the industrial working class has been displaced from its privileged position’. Let me explain what I mean by this so that we can clarify things. I agree with the wonderful quantity of data. The question is rather: what is the hegemonic position within labour? In other words in a capitalist economy there is one kind of labour, one form of labour, one sector of labour that acts in a hegemonic way over the others.

Now remember, in Marx’s time, what Marx said was that the industrial working class exercised hegemony over the other forms of labour, not in quantitative terms. When Marx was writing the industrial working class was very small in England. In the world generally it was minuscule. Most of the workers were in agriculture, in mining, in primary production. The industrial working class exerted a hegemony over the others. What did that mean? It meant it had the power to transform other forms of labour. Other forms of labour had to become more like it. Agricultural work had to industrialised, mining had to industrialise, society itself had to industrialise. And that was the hegemony of industrial labour over other forms of labour.

We are not talking in quantitative terms. We are talking in qualitative terms because that economic sector in Marx’s time was extremely small.

What Toni and I say, in a perfectly Marxist fashion, is that today we have passed from the hegemony of industrial labour to the hegemony of what we call immaterial labour under which we include a variety of activities all of which produce an immaterial product. The labour itself is material but it produces an immaterial product, like an affect or a feeling. We can say fast food workers not only produce something

material but that also produce an affect, service with a smile, they create a sense of well being. That's a kind of immaterial labour, we say. Also the production of images, the production of ideas, the production of knowledges, happens throughout the economy at high and low levels. But it's not, as Chris aptly said, it's not the quantity that predominates in the world economy. Absolutely not. It's quantitatively minor. And yet it exerts a hegemony over the field of labour. So in exactly the passage Chris quoted – I'm grateful for that – we talk not about the disappearance of the working class, but of the working class being displaced from its privileged position.

What this hegemony does do is define the global division of labour. Certain kinds of immaterial labour are isolated in certain geographical zones in the world and it is important to recognise those differences. Industrial labour is accumulated in some places, agricultural labour in others, and there differences between those different kinds of labour, a definite hierarchy.

Now let me talk about the working class. Chris is insistent about the priority of the industrial working class as an organisational force and the need for it to exercise political hegemony over other forms of labour.

It seems to me that the concept of working class has come to be – it does not have to be but it has come to be in our language – and exclusionary and corporatist concept. Let me talk about some of the exclusion that we have come to understand in our common usage the concept of working class. Chris has underlined this at great length that the concept of working class has come to mean for us the industrial working class.

Who's excluded by that? Certainly unwaged labour is excluded from that. Unwaged domestic labour carried out by women is not part of the working class under this definition. They are excluded. According to what Chris says, there struggles are not important, or rather there

struggles are unrecognisable, they cannot be used, they have to unite under the industrial working class.

There is also an exclusion of the poor, of unemployed. They are not part of the working class. They can be threat to the working class. They have to kept out of the political movement. Marx's own writings about the lumpenproletariat – at what I consider unfortunate moments in Marx's writings – do coincide with Chris's point.

So unpaid domestic labour is excluded, the poor are excluded. The peasantry also is excluded. There is long tradition of this in Marxist and socialist thought. It is in many senses an unfortunate tradition. The claim was in the 19th century among Marx and Engels that the peasantry and the industrial working class did not have common conditions of labour and that they could not unite politically. The peasantry, he said, because of their incommunicability, their dispersion, could not unite politically, could not act politically. At best – this is the very bad tradition on our shoulders – at best the peasantry can act under the guidance of the industrial working class.

The notion of the working class excludes agricultural workers. That's another exclusion I want to point to.

What Chris said, and there is a tradition of this, but it is a tradition I want to argue against, is that the struggles of those who are excluded from the working class must be subordinated to the struggles of the working class. There is a long tradition of this.

But we see many movements today that are very properly challenging this. The best examples for me being the Zapatistas, the *Sin Tierra* and the *piqueteros*, which are not only objecting to that tradition, the political division, but also demonstrating the utility of organising across that division, of ignoring that division in a way of expanding the notion. The notion of the multitude is an attempt to reconceive for today the concept of the proletariat rather than that of the working class. Because the working class has become an

exclusionary concept, whereas proletariat means, at least in its original formulation, all of those whose labour is employed by capital, those who are waged and those who are unwaged, those who work in the fields and those who work in the factories. So this expansion of the notion of the proletariat is what we try to capture with the notion of the multitude.

It implies, and I can come back to this later, a radical critique of the way most labour unions are organised today, in a corporatist way. Our critique is an attack on the corporatist practices of the unions and an expansion of the political mobilisation of those outside those privileged sectors of the working class, privileged in a series of senses.

I want to give a more philosophical conception of the multitude, which I think is useful in this context.

Like I say, Toni and I see multitude as a class concept, as a way of seeing class and its political uses. Generally, people accept the notion there are two conceptions of class. There is one which is usually associated with Marx's own work which we think of as the unitary model of class. This is grounded in Marx's work when he continually talked in his work about the tendency in capitalist society for a reduction of class differences so as to tend to a two class model of capitalism, the class of those with nothing to sell but their labour power, the proletariat, and the capitalist class. So Marx talks about the reduction to the two class, or unitary model, with one class of labour.

We traditionally have as an alternative to that in the various academic and intellectual notions of class what is thought of as a liberal model in which is about a pluralism of classes. This liberal model says there is not just one category of labour but rather there is a variety of classes in society, none of which has priority over the other. This is the liberal pluralistic model as opposed to Marx's unitary model.

It seems to me that both of these concepts of class are correct. We should both think of labour by this unitary model and simultaneously by the plurality of classes model.

If we look at Marx's work we find, especially in historical writings, he talks about a great variety of classes. In the **Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte** Marx talks about numerous classes of capital. He does not just talk about a unitary class of labour and a unitary class of capital.

What is going on here is that Marx's unitary model of labour can either be seen as a tendency – that there are many classes, but that the tendency is towards a single class of labour. Or another way of seeing it is that he sees the single class as a political project. It's not that today there is a single class of labour, but that it could be our political project to create a commonality of labour and to recognise that commonality in political terms. That I think is the way we understand this term the multitude.

It is not that there are two ways of thinking about it: either there is one class of labour or there is a plurality in a liberal sense. It is not that there is one struggle or there are many struggles. Rather, and this is what the term multitude is trying to deal with, we have to understand the potential commonality of various classes of labour and also the potential commonality of struggles. They remain different, but they recognise their commonality.

Let me give you one more, even more philosophical point. Let me explain how we see multitude in the history of the concepts of European philosophy.

Let me make a few contrasts and I'll then try to give you what that means in terms of political organisation.

First of all it's important for us to distinguish the concept of the multitude from the concept of the people. What we mean is that the

concept of the people has traditionally been used in political philosophy as unitary concept. In other words, the concept of the people is of a single thing abstracted from the population, and by unitary is meant self identical. National identity comes under that category.

The concept of the multitude is always internally differentiated. The multitude is a plurality. That is the difference between the people and the multitude. The people is one, the multitude is many.

It is important to distinguish the multitude from a series of other concepts – the masses, the crowd, the rabble. All of these are social multiplicities, are pluralities. But they are passive, they cannot act on their own. The mob and the masses not only can be guided, they have to be guided, they need an external force that leads. By contrast, the multitude acts on its own, it is able to act in its own name, it refuses leadership.

For me the definition of the multitude is the social multiplicity that is able to act in common. It is able to be active, so that these various differences can act together, can act in common.

If that is too philosophical, let me give an example.

It seems to me in the North American context we inherited two models of organisation in the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s. They were seen as exclusionary. We had the unitary model, the party model, in which the movements are unified under a single leadership. There can be many movements, but they are unified under one leadership.

In contrast to that we also had a refusal of that unitary model, insisting on differences and on the autonomy of these differences. In North America the feminist movement, the race movements, the gay and lesbian movements were central to this conception, this refusal of unitary centralised organising. There seems to be an insoluble choice between identity and difference.

Now it seems to me that since Seattle in 1999 – it probably started earlier, it would be better to locate it in Chiapas – at least since Seattle 1999 we were forced to recognise we no longer faced these alternatives.

First of all we saw in Seattle the groups that we thought were objectively antagonistic, contradictory to each other were actually acting in common. The trade unionists, the environmentalist, the gays and lesbians, church groups, the anarchists, the communists, they were actually working together yet keeping their differences. We've seen a new model of organising, a model that refuses the contradictory couple of identity and difference, that refuses to say either we are united under the same centralisation or each act individually in our separate parts. What we've seen instead is that we have to recognise – we even have difficulty; understanding it at a conceptual level, but we have to understand it at a political level – that we can remain different, that we have to remain different, but that we must act in common. Sometimes this is referred to as a movement of movements, to grasp this notion of our autonomy and our commonality. Sometimes as the notion of network, thinking of the distributive notion of the network of the internet, these various terms have come about independently to try to understand this new model of organising.

So it seems to me that this contradictory conceptual couple of identity and difference has been displaced by a complementary conceptual couple of commonality and multiplicity.

If identity and difference contradict one another, you have to choose one or the other. In fact commonality and multiplicity do not contradict. WE can be both, in fact we must be both.

So the notion of the multitude is trying to mean that. The notion is that we have to have a new kind of organising that gets away from the exclusionary centralised intractability that has traditionally been associated with the party and traditionally been associated with the exclusion of various social groups.

Debate from floor

First contributor (from Florida)

I fully identify with Michael Hardt's description of the multitude and I see it in practice where I live, where I see a movement away from what I call a platform based rigid organisation where after a platform has been established everybody has to follow it rigidly, a movement towards what I call issue based coalitions where the differences do exist and people coalesce around an issue dynamically, where today we may be one coalition about one issue, tomorrow we may be another coalition around another issue, and we may find ourselves on different sides so to speak from day to day.

My question to Michael is would you say that that basically is a result of our information technology. In the past we could not communicate quickly at a distance, so we had to come together once a year or every three or four years and put together a platform that had to be followed, whereas today we can communicate quickly and in five minutes exchange information in these coalitions quickly. So would you say this is primarily a result of improvement in communication?

Second contributor (from Chicago)

I have a question principally for Michael Hardt. It is about the notion that there is a new class of immaterial workers who occupy a hegemonic position within the working class. As I understand it, for Marx industrial workers were hegemonic for two reasons.

First , all struggles of the working class were related around struggles of industrial workers.

Second the industrial working class had the capacity to inaugurate a new mode of production, and in doing so to draw other sections around it.

I want to know if the immaterial working class is hegemonic in the same sense. Do the struggles of the multiplicity articulate themselves around the struggles of the immaterial working class? Does the immaterial working class and the multiplicity gathered around it have the capacity to inaugurate a new mode of production?

Third contributor

I've got a couple of points I'd like to open up for discussion.

Firstly, I'd like to bring out the point that there is not necessarily this broad commonality of interest among the working class when you look at variations in income or working conditions among the working class, like for example, the longshoremen in the United States earn a lot while the working class people and NGOs will not make a lot of money and working conditions vary. The general point is that there are plurality of interests among the working class.

What I wanted to say was that what unites multitudes in struggle essentially is the desire for autonomy and the ability to effect a change without the mediation of a centralised state body, or a centralised body at all. People are very interested in taking the reins into their own hands and intelligent enough to be given the power to do things without some kind of authority, and especially without an authoritarian authority telling what and when they can do something

The other point I wanted to bring up was about Argentina. When Chris Harman spoke about Argentina I really didn't understand what was going on, because right now in Argentina factories are being seized by the workers. So if the working class is supposedly not engaged in the struggle, I don't see how that can be.

The fact of the matter is that things are going wrong in Argentina because there's a military imperialistic dictatorship. It's a military struggle rather than the fact that the working class is not involved. All classes are involved, well maybe not the elites, but all segments of society are participating, and the problem is how to overcome the repression, not whether or not we have the banner of the working class flying. Everyone taking part, that is what is so amazing about Argentina.

Fourth contributor

I am from Mexico, and Zapatismo ensures that this no longer a theoretical question but a practical one. We are not in Seattle any more but we are in Porto Alegre and on the threshold of a war which may have terrible consequence for humanity as a whole. If we are going to turn this global movement into a movement against the war and if we are asking that it should be led by the working class, we cannot organise it. We need to build the widest movement so that the vast majority of humanity can express its resistance to war. As the Zapatistas have shown we can win a new world.

Fifth contributor (Michéle from Canada)

I want to comment on the contribution of the sister from Mexico. I think the danger of war now is totally on everyone's mind and it just seems to be unstoppable. What we are talking about is strategy for getting rid of capitalism. There is a global anti-capitalist movement that wants to see an end to this horrible system which is inflicting harm on millions of people.

It is a misreading of Marx to see it as class trumps raise, class trumps gender, that the working class stands over your raise or your gender. What he is talking about is the question of strategy. Where are the

forces that can critically attack the system at its roots. It's not a value judgement about class being primarily and standing over the other things. It is a question of who can actually shut the system down. This is the vital question for the movement today. We have a world wide movement against capitalism and imperialism. We saw it on the streets here in Porto Alegre. It was fantastic. It is important not just to celebrate what is happening in Argentina, we celebrate it, but we know that the hidden fangs of imperialism and capitalism are there trying to get back on top of Argentina. We see what is going on in Venezuela. It is a crucial question: What are the forces, and what fight does there have to be in our cities and our countries to make sure this system does not recover from the blows this movement wants to inflict on it so that we can have a better world.

Sixth contributor

I am Josefina and I come from Argentina. I want to give an opinion and also ask a question about two issues. The first relates to the question of the hegemony of the working class. I raise not a quantitative but a qualitative one, although quantity if of course as important foundation.

I see the concept of hegemony as being about whether the working class is capable of gathering about it the other forces to address the socialist solution to the capitalist crisis. In relation in Argentina in this sense there is a movement for the occupation of factories and taking production under workers' control. And I am personally working with these comrades in the factories.

An important example is the case of Zanon, whether the workers are occupying the factory creating new jobs for unemployed workers. In creating their ceramic goods they've used land given to them by the Mapuche Indian communities, and they've used it to make goods named in honour of the Mapuche. All this is a form of production without bosses and it has been going on now for a year and more. It is a

little example of what we mean by working class hegemony in which the working class, not in any corporatist way, addresses the problems of other groups in developing and seeking out solutions to the crisis. So that is the sense in which I see there is still a need for working class hegemony, not in the sense of imposing itself, but in the sense of gathering around it these other forces for a socialist solution.

As regards the movement against the war, raised by one the previous comrades as to whether it should be limited to the working class, categorically not. But would it not be wonderful if the unions in Brazil and in Italy and the other countries gathered around them and led the movement against the war, blocked the production of those factories producing arms, and turned the movement against the war into movement directly against capitalism.

Seventh contributor

I see that the Marxist way involves going through the state. All the Communist Parties have based their work through the state. Negri, Hardt and Holloway dismiss the notion of the state. I feel that you are Communists but at the same time are resisting the notion of the state. I want to know how decision making will take place with this multitude that is not the working class alone because we do want to reach communism. I read in an interview with Toni Negri he's talking about the red zone and I don't see how you get from there to the conquest of the state.

Eight contributor

I am from the Greek social forum. I feel that this opposition between the multitude and the working class is false. These terms do not mutually exclude each other. In the Marxist tradition the working class is a set of persons. In this society we can identify a number of people as

being the working class, with the rest another class. For Poulatzas and other French writers from the 1970s we have a notion of a set of class positions. I think it is more correct to say the Marxist view is a way of functioning. Every twenty years we have this talk that the working class does not exist any more, and then we find it again.

The notion of the multitude has a certain tradition. It was used by Spinoza in the 17th century. He has this paragraph where he says that people's minds are not able to grasp every problem but when talk to each other and listen to each other they come to solutions which did not exist in the beginning. This is the way of functioning of the multitude.

So the question has nothing to do with statistics. So it would be absurd to say we have one thousand in a multitude. It is not a question of numbers, it's a mode of functioning which does not necessarily exclude the existence of the working class.

The point made by Chris Harman is correct in the sense that it is not necessarily good, we should not idealise the multitude. It is not necessarily positive. It can be negative.

Ninth contributor

I am a South Korean. I have just one question to the speakers. It seems to me that there is another factor that has to be taken into consideration. To it's not just a question of hegemony, but for me one my major concerns is this new emerging form of organisation of the multitude in terms of transformations coming from different identities. We also have difficulty in sustaining these mobilisations on a minimum common agenda precisely because there is a great desire to respect the differences and autonomy of each actor and this requires a tremendous time and effort to agree a common agenda for all the actions. We can agree what we against – against the war, against globalisation – but we

have a great difficulty in agreeing strategies and visions of where we want to go. In terms of that getting more numbers, certainly the mobilisation of the working class, but in terms of sustaining adhesion to an agenda, I think there are great differences. The people we are fighting against are producing changes at great speed, and we have these difficulties in arriving at what we want to do. I would like to hear from both speakers what you think about these factors.

Tenth contributor

I am from Buenos Aires Argentina. I remember the panel you were on last year, Michael. What I remember is how isolated you seemed in presenting the book **Empire** *vis à vis* the rest of the people on the panel. So I am happy see how this concept has been gathering more friends and supporters in the intervening year.

I want to make a critique of the critique, as it were. Many comrades still face to read it as work in progress. They see it a fallen from the sky, rather than as product of work both political and analytical over 30 years.

So I think that terms that you dealt with, ‘affect’, ‘immaterial labour’ are key to understanding both the multitude and empire.

I sense almost a sense of nostalgia for what capitalism built in its development, and also a forgetfulness about the brutality of that process of development. I don’t know if work is better or worse than it was a hundred years ago. It is almost certainly better in some way, worse in others. What we have to remember is the centrality of struggle, history of struggle is part of that history to, and we must not just talk about the achievements of capitalism. So I want to ask you to develop more this idea of multitude, where the concept of multitude belong within the system of exploitation and domination.

Michael Hardt

One thing that seems to be a general, repeated question, is the question of strategy, or organisation.

But first I need to clear up a misunderstanding. One of the earlier contributors asked whether the immaterial labour force, those who produce primarily aspects and deal with information etc., if they are going to be the vanguard of the working classes. That is not what I meant. I should have clarified that.

When I spoke of the hegemony of immaterial labour over other forms of labour I did not mean a political hegemony of immaterial workers over other workers. I am not trying to propose that Microsoft workers in Seattle are going to lead us to the future. It is rather used in an analytical mode to try to recognise how other forms of labour are being transformed, how industry is being informationalised. Even questions of agriculture have much more to do with information. Questions about seeds are questions about information. So various sectors of the economy are becoming informationalised. But there cannot be a hegemony in a political sense of informational workers.

The question then is who will lead, how will we organise? What sort of strategy is adequate these days? My tendency is first of all to refuse to answer the question directly. I do not think that I as a philosopher ought to answer such a question. My tendency rather is to learn from what has been done. So the first contributor sort of suggested the Indymedia should function as form of linking, the coming together in struggle and separating in struggle, that's important..The Zapatista comrade also suggested a way. Forms of struggle that are linked up – I'd prefer to learn from them rather than say what I think we should do. Recognising the incredible creativity of Zapatismo as a form, the incredible creativity of the *piqueteros* movements in Argentina, to try

to read them and see what's happening, rather than saying what should happen.

I don't mean when I am talking about the working class, the comrade who was talking about labour struggles, industrial struggles in Argentina, said the working class does struggle and does lead certain sorts of struggles. I think that is true and I support them. I don't ignore the fact that certain groups in certain times take a hegemonic position, and when they do people listen to them more. And there are certain groups that people listen to more. Think of the effect that the Zapatistas have had across the world. In a way they have had a hegemonic position. But this is a variable, not a permanent situation.

The question of leadership, in a personal sense and in the sense of the movement, a definition of strategy, has to be posed in a way that takes groups together and takes them apart, in a way that must not be fixed.

So I try to refuse to answer questions about strategies, or rather displace them into question about existing movements' strategies, recognising the commonalities among them is the best way to address the question.

Chris Harman

I have not been arguing at all that we have to despise, ignore or spit on any struggle other than that of the working class. I have written a history of the world in terms of a history of struggle for the last 5,000 years of class society.

The question that confronts us, however, is not what the anti-globalisation movement – I don't like calling it the anti-globalisation movement, let's say the movement for a different globalisation – achieved in Seattle. The question is: What do we have to do to win?

This is crucial. The movement in Argentina is fantastic. I wrote a pamphlet on this a year ago extolling the movement. The question is that a year on people are dying of starvation in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, in the world's second biggest meat producer people are dying of starvation. What is to be done? That is the question that Lenin raised too. You may not want to give the same answer as he gave, but the question has to be asked.

The question of the Zapatistas. I'm sorry. I was in Mexico six years ago at the time when the Mexican army massacred people in Chiapas and I went on a demonstration of 10,000 people in Mexico City, and I asked, Why weren't there half a million people demonstrating in Mexico City? What is to be done to bring forces to help these struggles? We are faced with the likelihood – I feel like saying the near certainty – I hope it's not a near certainty – that in the next four or six weeks bombs will be falling on Baghdad. What is to be done?

In saying that, we have to say what has been built so far, but we also have to say, what is our weakness?

We've had what you might call a multitude on the streets of London, we got 400,000 in September. We think we will get a million on the streets of London in there weeks time. My only pity about being in here is I wish I was in London agitating, leafleting, arguing and so forth.

But we also have to say, when we have done that, what is the weak link on our side. And the weak link is that what stops capital is those that create the value it is exploiting. That is the weak link of capital. Capital cannot exist without workers. Capital can murder the unemployed, capital increasingly finds the peasantry marginal, because it relies upon big agribusinesses and capitalist farming of one sort or another.

What is our weakness? The reality is that we have not mobilised the force that capitalism itself creates. It is alright for Michael Hardt to say the working class exists. But he is ambiguous on this question. I

wonder why his book is so difficult to read. I feel like asking sometimes how many people have read it from first to last page. It is difficult because of its ambiguities. The problem is not in the language, but in the thought. At one point it can say the working class is ‘close to invisible’, it can say in one passage the working class in the United States is getting smaller absolutely. When I show it is getting bigger absolutely, we are told the figures are irrelevant. They are relevant. And let’s be clear, when I speak of the working class I talk about people’s whose labour adds to the accumulation of capital. This is not just manual workers – *operaios, obreros* – it is also wider sections who have been drawn in. But they have been drawn into the global fordist society, into forms of exploitation that used to characterise manual workers. This is what is happening in the schools in Britain, even in the universities, among office workers on a massive scale.

The question for us is: how do we reach these people? It is not good saying we have movements of the multitude, of different groups doing different things, when I know in Britain that we’ve won a section of the intelligentsia against the war. How do we win the mass of people whose value keeps capital going is the central question. What is to be done? And here we have to say that those people have a continuing relationship with capital. They have not disappeared. Their lives are still made miserable by capital. They are still concentrated in large workplaces. They still hate the system but do not know the system exists We have to pull these together.

The problem with **Empire** as a book is that it evades these questions. When its says there is no longer any difference between the time we work for capital and the time we have as free time, ;you would not think that across the world people are moaning about the loss of free time as it is turned into time in which they are slaves to capital. It runs away from strategy; and from concrete analysis. And these questions are crucial for our movement.

When **Empire** says the informational workers are now the 'hegemonic layer' I interpret that as meaning we have a movement that has come from people who have slightly less hard work than most people, have more time to think, more time to get together at meetings, more time to demonstrate, to organise and so forth and do the things we do, which is all right. But then we say 'we are the elite' and we can ignore the rest of people. And when people say the working class approach ingress the question of women, the fact is that women are being drawn into paid labour at the same time as they have to carry the burden of child care. The contradictory feature of capitalism is that by drawing them into waged labour it makes them more amenable to forms of collective organisation than ever before. And we have to confront this question.

It is not good saying we cannot talk in old fashioned terms and so forth. We have to say: What is the reality? The reality is a bigger than ever working class, a third of the world's population, a third of the world's population are seem-proletarian in this sense, and there are very large numbers of people who are unemployed, who have been driven to the margins of society, who can be drawn into the movement, but being marginal to society means they do not have the power to change it. How do we mobilise the force that can change it? And when people talk about mobilising against the war, there is one small example from Britain. I think the whole of the anti-war movement in Britain recognises this: when 15 train drivers refused to transport weapons for the war, everyone [knew] this is the way forward. How do we transform that into a mass movement of people refusing to use their labour for the war. It is not easy. There are not automatic answers. But unless we approach it in those terms, we are ducking the issue. And Empire ducks the issue.

Eleventh contributor

I want to ask a question of Michael Hardt. You have spoken a lot about the multitude and you have not touched upon the question of empire. When I first read the book I felt I identified with it. After the attacks on 11 September I had to question myself and I have found myself as the war of the US progresses having to question that concept of empire. And so I want to ask how are the attacks of 11 September reflected in any way in the concept of empire.

Twelfth contributor

There have been discussions on what are the definitions of the oppressed classes, the working class, and whatnot. I believe there are not several classes. There is only one class – the oppressed. I believe the struggle must be for the freedom of all peoples, I do not think we must restrict that struggle. When you see people with hunger, you do not ask what class they are. You want to help those people.

Thirteenth contributor

Empire idealises the progress towards a world without national frontiers. In a recent interview, Toni Negri responded to the unilateralist offensive against Iraq, as a clear counter tendency towards empire. His answer was that it seems to represent a resolution to the contradictions of empire, a passive revolution that progresses in a reactionary way. The solution was a consolidation of a European bloc, an alliance of the European powers. What do you think our response should be in the face of this new offensive?

Fourteenth contributor (from Australia)

I want to respond to one of the earlier speakers when he talked about how agreed with the concept of multitude because it reflected a desire

for autonomy against centralisation. But when you look at the world toady, you look at George Bush, the US ruling class, and you look at how authoritarian they are, we do not want to have anything to do with the system they run. But I think you have to look how they run a system, George Bush is not acting on his own, he has a class behind him, the United States ruling class, he has tremendous power, he has military power, a state that can go anywhere in the world, tremendous economic power, with the big corporate links that his government has, therefore they have control over ideas, and mass media and education, and I think that the concept of multitude recognises that power. If you recognise that power, we cannot just run away from it or hide from it or be autonomous from it.

Some people have referred to workers taking over their factories in Argentina. There are fantastic actions there. But you can't just sit there. You can't just take over one factory. You still have to deal with the question of repression in Argentina, you still have to deal with the question of the United States's ability to wage war on whoever they want to get whatever they want, their ability to squeeze people economically. We do need to be able to organise, to engage in collective organising. The concept of multitude rejects that collective organising. That's why I think we have to have a class analysis.

Fifteenth contributor (from London)

IN relation to the movements and the working class, it is not either one or the other, they are both important. Chris Harman mentioned the case of the railway workers in Scotland who refused to move munitions for the war. This is a very important development among workers in Britain. And why did they take this action. They did so because of the massive protest movement in Britain against the war. Without that protest movement, workers would not have had the confidence to stop those trains. It is not the working class or the movements, but both.

The movements can give the working class that confidence, that inspiration it needs to attack the ideology of the ruling class.

Sixteenth contributor

There are three issues I want to take up. The issue of the subject, of strategy and of political organisation.

The revolutionary subject is a combination of the exploited classes. The hegemonic role of the working class in that alliance is determined by its role in production. Its centrality is related to the centrality of that class in the reproduction of society itself. When Marxists talk about strategy, they are talking about a process that takes us from where we are towards an objective in the future. When we talk about the self organisation of workers today it is directly linked to how we see the organisation of workers in society in the future. So when we talk about the soviet style of organisation of workers with leaders who are subject to immediate recall we are looking towards a future society built around that form of origination with the great mass organisation sovereign. The party in this situation play the role of an intermediary, carrying the historical experiences. We have to centralise just as the bourgeoisie is centralised.

Seventeenth contributor

I have a question to Chris Harman. You said that there need to be more train drivers and more truck drivers that will not deliver the weapons, because that they have the power to stop the war, they are the revolutionary class. The only thing I want to say is that it is not only the driver who can stop the trucks, I think that the *piqueteros* movement in Argentina has proved it can do it.

Eighteenth contributor

I am from South Africa. I would like to express disappointment about the way this discussion has been conducted. A sharp contrast has been drawn between something called class struggle and something called the multitude. I think both Michael and Chris are to blame for that dichotomy being created. In South Africa what we called the class struggle was a political struggle that involved the race question, the question of nationality, of gender, of land, of every conceivable kind of issue. What united us was a common sense of what oppressed us.

At the same time, however, there were weaknesses in our struggle that have left us with a situation today where we have a neoliberal regime brought to power by popular struggles. And may therein lies something to be reflected on in this false dichotomy between class struggle and the multitude.

If you take the word hegemonic that has been used over and over again, I think the word has a useful genealogy within Marxism. It was about how the ruling class rules by having everybody in society conceiving themselves as individuals , as not part of a collective that constitutes the majority and therefore can overthrow the rulers. On the other hand, the other part of the classical understanding of hegemony was how the working class acts as a unify of all other forms of struggles. And that was not an organisational question be instruction – and the legacy of Stalinism over the last 70 years meant that was precisely was did happen. I think that Marxism cannot be used for such an understanding by decree, that you can make people follow the working class, whatever that might mean. That is why I am making some critique of Michael's position. One the other hand if we have the understanding that all forms of opposed groupings and struggles, if we do not seek to address in practice what unifies those struggles, then I think I think we are looking at the weak side of these struggles, rather than at the possible strength that we have. I think this was a source of the weakness we found to our peril in South Africa. In unifying all the

range of struggles of oppressions, the working class failed to act as a hegemonic fraction, as the hegemonic class that unified the other struggles and so ;issues of national liberation, issues of democracy were usurped by an elite and presented as their vision of what unified struggles.

I think that we cannot avoid coming to the question in this way. The plethora of different movements that have arisen in the past 20 years is a positive development, but what we seek to take the struggle forward is how you unify those struggles. And what I think is characteristic of the working class is that it is a unifying class. They display in practice the possibility of unifying all other forms of struggle against the common enemy.

Michael Hardt

There were many more questions than can be answered. I think the point made the last speakers from South Africa is important. You should not think of this discussion as an alternative, either working class or multitude. One has to think rather about the possibilities of organisation within this, a strategy of organisation.

There are two things we should think about in terms of strategy, which does not, as I say, exclude the working class – Chris is not talking about excluding all those apart from the working class, he's talking about forms of strategy, centralisation versus contingent network forms, and the question of whether the working class, those industrial workers, are given priority, a central role. In strategic terms it should not be thought of either as a contradiction or an alternative.

I want to deal with the speaker who replied to an earlier speaking saying we do not want centralisation. He said we do want centralisation in order to be strong enough against the enemy we face. There are two issues I would like to separate.

The first is about effectiveness. The second question you should also raise too is about desirability. Do we want a centralised form of organisation, if we want effectiveness do we want to concede the democracy of the movement itself, do we want to impose these exclusions on certain movements,, on certain populations, on certain members of our own populations, and transform ourselves into something we don't want. These are political questions about the movement ourselves and our desires for it.

I would also argue that it is not more effective, that we will not win, by having a traditional, centralised, party-oriented movement based on the industrial working class. I think also that what is more effective today, for having progress within the movement and the movement having external effects, is in fact a new kind of movement, a movement that refuses centralisation, that refuses leaders, that finds ways of acting in common, with individual acting in networks, acting in movement. That also seems to be not only more desirable but also more effective.

Chris Harman

Just a few points. Someone raised the point about empire and imperialism. I did not raise this in my introduction because this would have led to us both speaking for at least another 20 minute each. But I should say that I regard the term 'empire' as a dangerous term, because it does not understand the degree to which there are rival imperialisms. There is a hierarchy of imperialisms, one of which at the top is the United States. It is military supreme, it is not economically supreme, it runs into collisions with the other imperialisms, those imperialisms are very important. I think one reason the US is going to war in the Gulf is that it wants to grab the oil so that it can dictate to European and Japanese imperialism and China what the shape of the world should be. This is important because it means there are splits inside the enemy camp, and we have to take advantage of these splits. They provide us

with fantastic leeway. What do we have to do about it? We have to mobilise without supporting any of the rival imperialisms, but to see the fight at the moment is against US imperialism as the most important thing we have to do and to build a movement against it.

And when we talk in these terms, I want to come back to question of centralisation. I come from a tradition that believes in socialism from below, that does not believe in some Stalinist, monolith dictator of the world. I remember years ago we used to have long arguments with various Maoists and Stalinists of various sorts about these questions. I do think, however, there are certain sorts of central decisions that have to be taken. At the moment, for instance, there are many people talking about doing their own things as if American was not about to bomb Baghdad. My feeling is that the World Social Forum should take a decision that the priority over the next few weeks is to mobilise against a war on Iraq, and to understand that if we can stop George Bush waging war on Iraq it makes it easier for everything else we want to do. If we lose then it will effect other questions. The Free Trade of the Americas, will go through more easily, there will be more poverty in the third world, the IMF will get nastier. We have to understand the way things are connected and that means some sort of central decision making.

I want then to move on. When we talk about how to implement our struggle we then have to look at the weaknesses of the movement. Let's all be honest. The movement is a minority movement. It's a very powerful minority in terms of the activists. But we are all aware that we do not have deep influence in our communities, we are all aware that we cannot mobilise everyone in our street or everyone in our workplace. This is the weakness. How do you address this?

You can't say, 'We are a multitude, isn't it fantastic'. You have to say: What are the issues facing the mass of people and where do those masses have the power to change society? And those people whose lives are completely messed by people, who are forced to work day in, day

out, whose time is measured by capitalism. That's what I mean by the working class – it is quite dishonest for Michael Hardt to use the phrase 'industrial working class'. I said the industrial working class has not disappeared but I find that, for instance, my partner who is a teacher, her life is more and more like the life my father used to lead because he was a plumber. People have been more and more moulded together into a certain life pattern by capitalism, it is a working class life pattern, whether they work in an office, a school or a factory. That is where we have to organise. That is where we have to tap the power.

The other side are very aware of that. Why do you think they produce such disgusting popular papers, full of hatred towards minorities, to gays, refugees, immigrants. It is because they understand they want to control the working class. We have to understand we have to fight to liberate the working class, for the working class to begin to emancipate itself. That means we can't rest easily and say 'we've achieved this' or 'we've achieved that'.

Let's talk about Argentina. The key problem in Argentina is that last year you had the *piqueteros* movement and you had the *asambleas* movement, but the employed working class, terrified of losing their jobs remained under the control of the trade union bureaucracy. Until that control is broken you will not talk about the liberation of Argentina from the IMF and from capitalism. We have to think in those terms. But that means we have to think not only in terms of the *piqueteros* movement, but also of how the *piqueteros* movement can break through to the employed working class. How can it mobilise the people who keep the buses running, the trains running, the water being produced, those factories that continue to operate, the offices going.

This is the question you have to deal with if ;you want to change society. I'm sorry, I've read the Hardt and Negri book, and it evades that question. It reflects a period of defeat, a period in which there were all sorts of movements, but employed workers did not have the

confidence and courage to fight. But in a new period we are beginning to see that confidence and courage.

Any time in the 20th Century when workers, manual and white collar, moved together collectively, they shook governments, they reshaped society, they stopped wars. When they were beaten back, not only workers suffered, every other group that wanted to emancipate itself suffered, every other group fighting oppression suffered.

Until the workers in Mexico City move, the Mexican government will pin the Zapatistas in the area down near the Guatemalan border, in poverty, misery, where their children die in the hospitals like they did last week. You have say 'how do you get the Mexican workers to move?' You have to relate to them. You have to see they have problems. They keep the Mexican economy, and to some extent the US economy, going. You have to say, 'How do you relate to them, how do you organise them?' Relating to them strategically is the central thing for our movement

I want to thank Michael for debating with us because I think the argument over strategy is absolutely important.

Think there are two powerful arguments facing this social forum.

The first is the immediate one of the need for a central call for everyone to mobilise against the war. There is the global day of action coming up on 15 February – Athens, London, Ramallah, Cairo, we should aim to have mobilisations everywhere in the world to turn disagreement with the war into social disorder against the war.

I think we then also have to think how we cut through and break out of the minority status of the movement, to make the link with the people who have the power to change capitalist society because their work keeps capitalist society going, the working class. And that is the central question.