**PROPOSING A CITIZENS’ AGENDA:**

The 1990s has seen what may be the most vigorous protest activity since the 1960s. Protest movements, however, are somewhat different from those in the 1960s. In the past, targets of protest tended to be governments that were using aggression or oppression to achieve their ends. Since then it has become clear that multinational corporations wield more power than some governments, while not being subject to the same democratic controls. Today, multinational corporations are more often the targets for protest movements around the world.

In her book, *No Logo*, Canadian author Naomi Klein pointed to three campaigns in particular that illustrated the potential impact of a citizens’ agenda the campaigns against Nike, McDonald’s, and Shell. The opposition to Nike has centred on its use of sweat- shop labour in the developing world. McDonald’s has long been a target of protesters for various reasons, but came into the lime light especially during a court case that came to be known as “McLibel.” McDonald’s sued four local activists in London, England, for libel when they were handing out a brochure in front of their fast-food restaurants. Unfortunately for McDonald’s, the ensuing court case lasted seven years and became a forum for exploring and exposing a vast number of misdemeanours and questionable practices of the corporation. Although the activists were ultimately ordered to pay damages, they claimed a victory since they were able to open up a multinational company to serious public scrutiny.

Finally, the protest movement against Shell focussed on the right to protest and free speech, which was undermined by the execution of Nigerian Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni leaders. All these campaigns made extensive use of the Internet to reach thousands of people across the world and co-ordinate efforts on a global scale. The Internet has been called “the most potent weapon in the toolbox of resistance” since it allows citizens groups from different continents to share information instantly and without having to rely on the mass media to cover their side of a story.

These movements are examples of a larger, growing sentiment many citizens understand the impact that multinationals have on our lives and are attempting to wrest power from corporate hands and place it squarely in the hands of the public. Protests have taken the form of worldwide boycotts, political pressure on governments, and exposure of unfair corporate practices in the mainstream media. Schools, universities, and municipal governments are rejecting sponsorship or donations from corporations whom they feel are guilty of social injustice.

Meetings of global trade organizations and alliances such as the G8 and APEC are regularly faced with massive protests. People from all over the world gathered at Seattle, Washington, in 1999 at a meeting of the World Trade Organization and took the world by surprise at the size, organization, and vehemence of their protest. As a counter- measure, governments hosting these meetings are creating larger barriers and using increased security to keep the protesters out. In Quebec City the site of the Summit of the Americas in 2000 — concrete barriers and barbed wire fences earned the scorn of protesters who dubbed the city “Fortress Quebec.” The clashes between security forces and individual protesters are also becoming increasingly violent; a situation protest organizers fear will undermine their actions.