

global agenda for the new millennium." They will be joined in this role by other organizations of "civil society," such as Amnesty International, World Wildlife Federation International, and Save the Children Alliance.

Put simply, this is the latest sell-out of citizen authority and national sovereignty to private corporate behemoths. Long starved for funds, prestige and clout (foremost by the United States), the U.N. is sidling up to ever-fattening corporate coffers for financial viability and a piece of the action. And many a corporation is eager to enhance its tarnished reputation. For a new image, how about United Nations blue stamped on product labels?

"Partnering" on Corporate Terms

One might assume shared values and commitments in a partnership, but don't believe it. Corporate adherence to codes of conduct is strictly voluntary. The International Chamber of Commerce, a supporter of the Global Compact, has made it clear that lack of monitoring and enforcement is a requirement for its participation. Thus corporations will simply keep tabs on themselves!

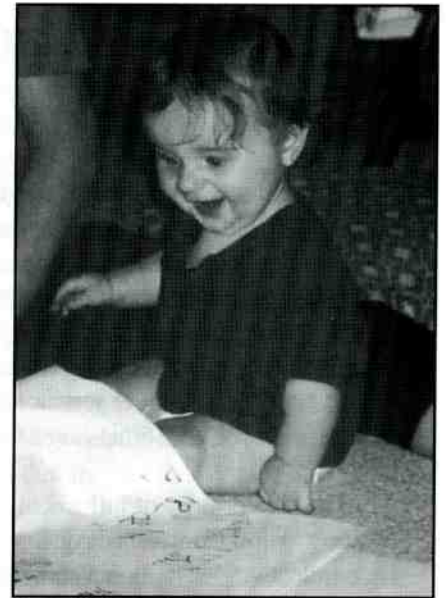
Trade unions are welcome to join the Compact so long as they agree to a "non-conflictual approach so that common solutions to the social challenges of globalization can be reached." What's wrong with this picture?

Kofi Annan claims that the Global Compact will bring us "sustained economic development, higher standards of living, and increased technological innovation... We have good reason to be satisfied: we can expect to live longer than our parents..., we are better nourished, better educated, in better health..." Has he not read the United Nations Development Program's Report on Africa, which speaks of a 20-year drop in life expectancy over the next decade if current trends are not reversed?

This maneuver by Annan and the United Nations is a desperate act, flowing from the insidious notion that there is no alternative. Such acceptance reflects a lack of understanding about democracy; about the history of the corporations' rise to dominance; about the appropriate relationship that people should have with their corporate creations; and about the inevitable outcome for all of us, and the earth, if we do not take charge of these institutions.

It is our responsibility to define corporations and to keep them accountable to that definition. When they harm

the body politic, their privilege to exist must be questioned. This approach is consistent with putting the people in charge of all corporate entities — quite the opposite of cozying up to corporations in hopes that they will pay our way and volunteer for good behavior.



Paula Schnepf's son helps organize the paperwork during last November's Challenging Corporate Power campaign retreat in California.

What You Can Do

- For up-to-date information on resistance to the U.N. Global Compact, check the campaign to Challenge Corporate Power, Assert the People's Rights page on WILPF's website, and "The U.N. Global Compact: Tangled Up in Blue" at www.corpwatch.org. If you don't have access to the Internet, ask Charmaine Sprengelmeyer in the WILPF office for a copy of the campaign update. Send \$3 for a copy of the 18-page corporate watch article.
- Educate your community about this critical issue. Lobby your congresspeople to pay in full the U.S. dues to the United Nations.
- Write to Annan, explaining that the Global Compact violates the United Nations' basic principles and mandates and should be revoked. Address: Secretary General Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretariat, United Nations, New York, NY 10017.

Thanks to Felicity Hill, International WILPF Liaison to the United Nations, for her hard work with the coalition opposing the Global Compact and her help with this article.

.....
Virginia Rasmussen is a member of the Challenging Corporate Power, Asserting the People's Rights campaign.

REVISED STUDY PACKETS: After reviewing dozens of evaluation forms from around the country, the leadership team has revised the study group packets to make them more effective. Some readings were eliminated and new ones added, and some questions were revised. We've made cosmetic and useability improvements. Some new sessions were added, including one on the economy and militarism, and one on people's and workers' resistance movements. A list of resources, including alternative materials like videotapes, was added. We are putting all the materials on the WILPF website for easy access to a wider audience. For a complete revised study packet, contact Charmaine Sprengelmeyer at the office; a \$5 donation is requested to cover expenses. You may also contact Charmaine to obtain only the new study units.