

## George Kell's black sense of humour"

Alejandro Teitelbaum

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On the 28th of last August, Interpress Service (IPS) published in their online portal an article by George Kell, Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, entitled "*Building a Sustainable Future – The Compact Between Business and Society*", where he began writing: "*Can we envision a day when a critical mass of companies is investing in a better world? Where business is delivering value for the long-term – not just financially, but also socially, environmentally and ethically? Over a decade ago, it was hard to imagine, but we can now say with confidence that a global movement is underway*".<sup>1</sup>

The article continued with a real ode to big business, which, according to the author, is destined to save mankind from all evils.

Anyone who reads the newspapers or watches TV can learn about wars, massacres, epidemics, massive population displacement, ecological disasters, extreme deficiencies endured by a good portion of the world population, an increasing gap between a tiny minority of the wealthiest and the huge crowd of the poorest, etc.; situations largely caused by the unlimited desire for profit of big business, with the complicity of the world's political leadership.

Bluntly, no, we cannot imagine what Mr. Kell imagines, for we lack his imagination, worthy of Baron Munchausen, the famous storyteller. Would Mr. Kell's nose grow, like Pinocchio, every time he speaks or writes? Unless he planned to write a black humour satire in the style of Jonathan Swift in his "A Modest Proposal."

If, on the other hand, Kell wanted to persuade his readers (in other words: to manipulate their minds) about the humanitarian and beneficial nature of transnational economic power, we believe he has not been up to this ambitious goal. He lacks training. Thus we recommend that he takes a course, for example, in the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University, California. Yet, there is no doubt that George Kell is a fundamentalist—a free market ayatollah.

*In 2004 he wrote in the foreword to a document of an organisation called Sustainability entitled "The 21st Century NGO. In the Market for Change": "Moreover, the ascendancy of **markets** demands that societal actors come to grips with today's **market** fundamentals in order to reach their goals. The UN Global Compact is an ambitious experiment in multi-stakeholder collaboration intended to embed global **markets** with universal principles around human rights, labour, and the environment".<sup>2</sup>*

Regarding the Global Compact we wrote some years ago:<sup>3</sup>

*.... "This partnership between the UN and large transnational corporations creates a dangerous confusion between an international public policy institution like the UN, which according to its Charter represents "the peoples of the United Nations ..." and a group of organisations representing the private interests of an international economic elite. This alliance, consequently, goes in the exact opposite sense of the necessary process of democratisation of the United Nations. The presence*

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<sup>1</sup> George Kell: Building a Sustainable Future – The Compact Between Business and Society, IPS, 28, August 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The 21st Century NGO. In the Market for Change. Sustainability, The Global Compact, UNEP, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Alejandro Teitelbaum: "La armadura del capitalismo. El poder de las sociedades transnacionales en el mundo contemporáneo". Editorial Icaria, Barcelona, enero 2010.

of some NGOs, even if they have great international reputation, does not change the profoundly undemocratic content, opposite to the Charter of the United Nations, of the Global Compact.

..."The Global Compact was announced in 1998 by the UN Secretary General in a report to the General Assembly entitled "Entrepreneurship and privatisation for economic growth and sustainable development" (A/52/428).

The Secretary General said in this report... « deregulation has now become a watchword for government reforms in all countries, developed and developing » (paragraph 50 of the Report) and advocated the sale of public enterprises giving « ownership and management to investors who have the experience and skills to upgrade the performance, even if that means, at times, selling the assets to foreign buyers »(paragraph 29). At the beginning of that paragraph he spoke against the « wide distribution of ownership of privatised assets », that is, against the participation of small savers. The proposal was clear: all large profitable companies should be monopolised by big transnational capital.

"This is an attempt to legitimise the policy practiced worldwide of selling off profitable public companies (sometimes with downright corrupt procedures) to privatise profits and socialise losses."

Over time it has been clearly demonstrated that the Global Compact is a mere instrument of the large transnational corporations. At this point the question arises of whether the Global Compact is a branch of transnational corporations at the United Nations General Secretariat or if this is –through the Global Compact– a branch of transnational corporations in the United Nations.

The lethal action of transnational economic power in all spheres tries to vainly disguise itself –amongst many other ideological, cultural and propaganda media– under the shroud (increasingly ragged) of the Global Compact, whose Executive Director is a candidate for the Pinocchio Award of sustainable development, which is given to those who stand out the most in the recovery of the idea of sustainable development for radically different purposes.

"Prix Pinocchio du développement durable" –MARDI 18 NOVEMBRE 2014 : CEREMONIE DE REMISE DES PRIX PINOCCHIO – A PARTIR DE 19H00, RENDEZ-VOUS A LA JAVA, 105 RUE DU FAUBOURG DU TEMPLE, 75010, PARIS ENTREE LIBRE ET GRATUITE

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❖ **About the author:** Alejandro Teitelbaum is a Lawyer, Universidad de Buenos Aires, and a Postgraduate in International Economic Relations at the Institute of Social and Economic Development, Université Paris I.

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