

and who works out of Geneva, deals with the European countries. In North America, we started by dividing the continent into manageable chunks and putting on five big regional conferences on the NIEO themes: these were in Los Angeles, Seattle, Minneapolis, Atlanta and the last one in Denver in 1982. Each took up to two years to organize, and cost about \$250 000, but 90 per cent of that was raised in the community itself. The conference was only part of the exercise—an important part. There were speaking tours before and after, and lots of follow-up; and there was the end result of building NGO networks in the U.S. and linking them with Canada. Much research was done on the global-local links, and background kits and study materials were prepared.

“We went into Denver, for instance, and, it’s a strange role for the UN, but we in fact introduced the local representative of the American Friends Service Committee to the Denver Council of Churches! They had worked side by side, but [had] never really known each other. Afterwards we linked that group with the University of Denver, and then tried to bring in the corporate sector. The NGLS, as a neutral, catalytic lever, was useful in doing that.

“We weren’t of course neutral on the issues. But it was essentially the local community’s agenda that took precedence. The Denver conference, called ‘Hemisphere 82,’ is perhaps the best example. We tried to take the issues of the New International Economic Order, particularly the trade and food production and transnational corporations issues, and overlay them on the Rocky Mountain’s regional economy, saying ‘All right, you may not think it affects Denver and Phoenix and Cheyenne, and Calgary and Edmonton, but in fact it does. The price of your agricultural commodities depends on the world market; the aerospace industry is related to a lot of the ways in which transnationals function.’ We brought in as many issues as we could to the mix, but always tried to make the local-global connection.

“On the other side of the coin, we took to the Denver conference itself 25 to 30 UN people, including ambassadors and staff, for four or five days, to sit and work with those people and talk and be discussion leaders. This in itself was an educational process, for them to try to relate to the people there. There was a major effort in Denver to reach corporations and the political leadership. We ended up with a real coup, I think, in getting Coors Brewing Company to be a major co-sponsor of the conference, at a time when Joseph Coors was one of the most anti-UN conservative influences on the Reagan administration and [was] a founder of the Heritage Foundation. Whether we influenced him personally or not, I don’t know; but the company thought this conference was such a big thing in the city of Denver that they had better not be left out, [and] so they provided a young woman executive to be co-chairperson of the plenary committee.

“Minneapolis was another good example, where only with someone from outside coming in as a catalyst could you bring the farm and labour activists, who were totally anti-corporate in the agricultural debate, to sit down in the same room with Cargill and Green Giant and Pillsbury and General Foods and General Mills. Again, I’m not saying they solved all their problems or even