

# Book Notes: Coffee With Pleasure: Just Java and World Trade, by Laure Waridel

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*COFFEE WITH PLEASURE: JUST JAVA AND WORLD TRADE* BY LAURE WARIDEL (MONTREAL: BLACK ROSE BOOKS, 2002). Pp. xv + 173 pages. Appendices, photographs, bibliography \$21.99 paper.

BY NADINE BLUM

*Coffee With Pleasure*, written by Laure Waridel and with a foreword by Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and Director with the International Forum on Globalization, attempts to prove that fair trade is a feasible, sustainable solution to the social inequality and environmental degradation that our free trade, free market economy has left in its wake.

Waridel argues that free trade and globalization have led to the enslavement of workers in developing countries and to the degradation of the environment. The traditional free market route for goods leads to the purchase of products at a price that does not reflect their “true cost,” which would include social and ecological debt. The World Trade Organization and the North American Free Trade Agreement have removed the decision-making process from the jurisdiction of governments, and the power to regulate trade has been transferred to unelected bodies. These bodies have supported privatization, conglomeration, and a rise in “corporate rights.” The income of small producers is largely dependent on commodity exchanges that are subject to wild fluctuations. Ultimately, free trade has been to the detriment of human rights; workers in developing countries are forced to work in sub-standard conditions, for unfair wages, with no job security.

Fair trade, however, is an attempt to factor in the real value of goods through the restructuring of the commodity chain, from production, to distribution, to consumption. Waridel uses the example of the world coffee trade to show how traditional free market trading results in the unjust allocation of wealth and in environmental degradation. Waridel then focuses on how fair trade cooperatives in Mexico are successfully helping to improve the lives of hundreds of workers. These cooperatives, she argues, can serve as a model for reforming the trade of all goods. Waridel concludes with a chapter on the power of the consumer to “vote” for fair trade by demanding that retailers provide certified, sustainable, fair-trade products.

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