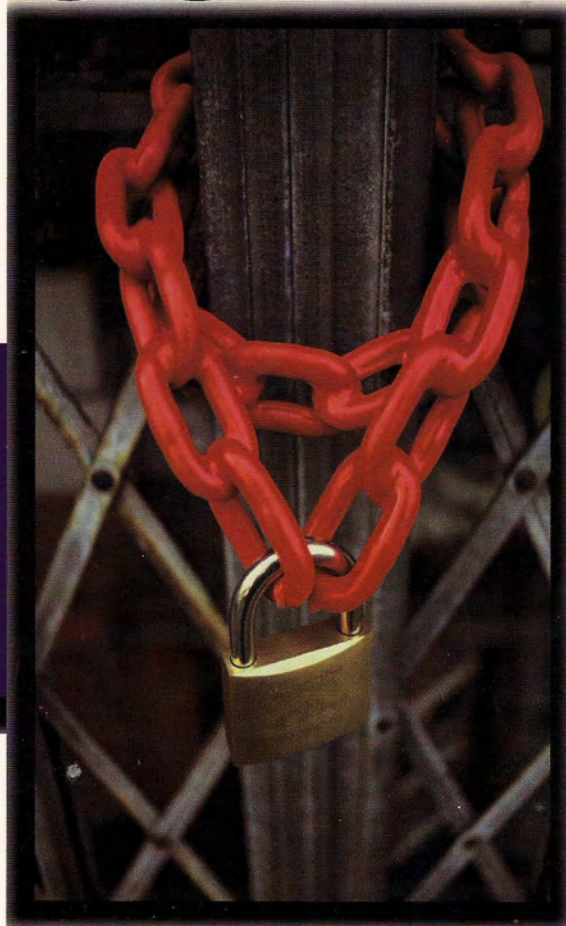


G **LOBALIZATION** **at What** **Price?**

Economic
Change and
Daily Life



Pamela K. Brubaker

FIVE

Can We Really Make a Difference?

The greatest single threat to the global financial system is the absence of public support.

— CHARLENE BARSHEVSKY,
U.S. Trade Representative, Clinton Administration, 1999

What is presented as an economic system governed by the iron laws of a kind of social nature . . . is in reality a *political system* which can only be set up with the active or passive complicity of the officially political powers. Against this political system, political struggle is possible.

— PIERRE BORDIEU, French sociologist and activist, 1998

We must look after our forests, our springs, our rivers and our wild animals; in fact all our natural resources. There is still time to fight for a new world, full of peace and harmony. Dear friends, we must not exchange the future of our children for a few coins. Let's be united, hand in hand with this new world that is for all of us.

— From a letter of the imprisoned environmentalist
peasant farmers of Mexico RODOLFO MONTIEL FLORES
and TEODORO CABRERA GARCÍA, 2000

In this final chapter the focus returns to the global dynamics and actors discussed in the first chapter. The devastating effects of neoliberalism documented there must be resisted and systemic transformation of the political economy advanced. Those of us who yearn for “a new world for all of us” must struggle together across borders of many kinds (race, gender, class, nation), a process called “people’s globalization.” Those who hold and benefit from concentrated political and economic power will not yield easily, but we have reasons to be hopeful. International movements of people committed to justice can make a difference.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the debt forgiveness campaign of Jubilee 2000, noting its successes and limitations. I continue with an exploration of the emerging movement against corporate-ruled globalization and for people’s globalization, evaluating its goals and strategies. I conclude with an ethic for just and sustainable community. This includes advocacy of human rights as a basis for establishing minimal levels of social justice, which we owe to each other as human beings and world citizens.

The various movements discussed in this chapter are vital instances of groups in “civil society” (as distinct from the nation-state and the economy) forming alliances to challenge the concentrated power of corporations and nondemocratic institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO in behalf of a common good. They include human rights, labor, women’s, environmental, and religious groups. An important religious group in this regard is the World Council of Churches (WCC), a fellowship of 337 churches (denominations) in more than one hundred countries. This body is a truly global institution that some think is positioned to challenge concentrated political and economic power, particularly in alliance with other groups that share a vision of people’s globalization.

Writing about the importance of these institutions in civil society, Benjamin R. Barber believes, “Sovereign nations remain the locus of democratic society and the only viable powers capable of opposing, subduing, and civilizing the anarchic forces of the global economy. International civil society, the emerging global alternative to world markets, needs the active support of sovereign states for its fragile new institutions to have even a modest impact.” Within democratic countries, progressive groups can enhance “the voice of civil society” in the organization and governance of the world.¹

Debt Forgiveness

Many of the world’s poorest countries and their citizens suffer under a burden of unsustainable international debt. The WCC maintains, “Children and women are forced to bear the full costs of debt repayment through reductions in health, sanitation and clean water programs. In addition, by concentrating on exports, poor countries

strip forests and overexploit land and non-renewable resources, further aggravating serious environmental problems. High levels of debt and economic degradation inevitably lead to social conflict and disintegration, in particular war." Most deeply indebted countries have not been able to resolve their debt problem. Although southern countries have paid their debt principal several times over, their debt has grown by 250 percent. "According to some estimates, from 1982 to 1998 indebted countries paid four times the original principal, yet at the same time their debt stocks went up by four times." This is because most poor countries experience trade deficits (only eleven of ninety-three low- and moderate-income countries currently have trade surpluses), which make it difficult to service their debt regularly. The service charges are then rolled over into new loans, dramatically increasing the outstanding debt.²

In 1996, the IMF and World Bank introduced an initiative to ease the debt burden of forty-one highly indebted poor countries (HIPC). The debt of these countries, when concessionary terms are taken into account, totaled about \$125 billion, nearly all owed to governmental agencies (others assess the total debt at closer to \$216 billion). The goal of the HIPC initiative was to bring the debt down to a sustainable level (based on a debt-to-export ratio). Countries eligible for debt relief would have to establish a record of good policy performance, as defined by the IMF and World Bank. These policies included privatization, removing public subsidies from health and education, liberalization, and other reforms.³ After three to six years, the country would reach a "decision point," when the IMF and World Bank would decide whether or not to reduce the country's principal and interest payments. After further compliance with these conditions, a country could arrive at a "completion point," at which time its debt principal would be reduced.

Jubilee 2000

About the same time as the HIPC initiative was introduced, faith-based activists launched a campaign of debt forgiveness called Jubilee 2000. They drew on biblical traditions of the Jubilee year, when slaves are set free and debts canceled (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61, Luke 4; 2000 was a Jubilee year in the Roman Catholic calendar).

In recommendations adopted by the WCC, this biblical background was given:

Through the sabbath-jubilee tradition, the Hebrew and Christian scriptures offer a critical mandate for periodically overcoming structural injustice and poverty and for restoring right relationships. In the earliest Hebrew sabbath traditions, consumption and exploitation of the land were limited by the sabbath and the sabbath year. People and animals were to rest every seventh day and the land every seventh year (Ex. 23:10–12). During the sabbath year, there was to be release from debts and slavery and during the jubilee year a restoration of all family lands (Lev. 25). These commandments are taken up in "the year of the Lord's favour" (Isa. 61:1–2a) and described in Isa. 65:17–25 as "new heavens and a new earth." In other words, justice brings peace for all God's creation. In the New Testament, Jesus extends the jubilee vision by proclaiming good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind and liberation of the oppressed. He taught his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of debts (as we forgive our debtors). Pentecost was characterized by the voluntary sharing of possessions, so that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34, cf. Deut. 15:4).⁴

The WCC declared, "The jubilee is a recognition that, left to its normal and uninterrupted course, power becomes more and more concentrated in a few hands, that without intervention every society slides into injustice."⁵ Jubilee 2000 called for a more generous and quicker write-off of external debts than the HIPC initiative offered. Its aim was to reduce poverty, not just make the debt more sustainable. It called upon leaders of the richest countries, the commercial banks, and other international financial institutions to write off, by the year 2000, the crushing international debts of impoverished countries burdened with a high level of human need and environmental distress. Debts were to be forgiven in a way that benefits ordinary citizens and facilitates their participation in determining public policy. Debt cancellation should also be done in ways that do not perpetuate or deepen poverty or environmental degradation. The process was to be transparent; a public commission, rather than

the IMF and World Bank, would direct the process. The goal was to avoid recurring cycles of indebtedness, as had happened in the past.

The Jubilee 2000 campaign is an international one, with affiliates in sixty-nine countries. Over forty U.S. business organizations support the campaign. The movement uses mass mobilization, direct action, and Internet organizing to work toward its goals. The campaign has had some positive effect on the HIPC initiative. After Jubilee 2000 demonstrations at the 1998 G7 meeting in Cologne, the G7 governments (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan) agreed to write off \$27 billion in debt to major creditors, which would have a leveraging effect that would result in about \$100 billion in debt relief to poor countries. They also agreed to cut the period for countries to reach the "decision point" to three years. Finally, they adopted Jubilee 2000's commitment to poverty reduction, but required that HIPCs present plans for poverty reduction as a condition for debt relief.⁶

Jubilee 2000 kept the pressure on governments to follow through on these commitments. Jubilee 2000/USA actively lobbied Congress in support of legislation authorizing \$435 million of the \$920 million the United States had pledged at Cologne; it barely passed in October of 2000. This represents a tenfold increase in the debt relief line item in the foreign operations spending bill from two years before. (Congress also made a statement opposing user fees for education and health care imposed by the World Bank and IMF, acknowledging that they are harmful to impoverished communities.) Jubilee 2000/UK, a coalition that includes over ninety organizations, realized similar results.

Twenty-two countries reached the "decision point" at the end of 2000. Together, their principal and interest payments have been reduced by about 30 percent. Uganda is the only country to have reached the "completion point." Its debt principal (\$2.3 billion) was reduced by 42 percent. This partial debt relief has brought some gain for Uganda. It was permitted to drop fees for school attendance (a usual condition for debt relief), which resulted in an 80 percent increase in enrollments. These improvements would not have been achieved as quickly without the pressure brought by Jubilee 2000. People working together can make a difference.

An Unresolved Issue

Although the debt crisis is being addressed, it has not been resolved. At the end of 2000, the total HIPC debt is \$219 billion—\$3 billion more than in 1996. Ann Pettifor, director of Jubilee 2000/UK, states, "The bulk of the unpayable debts are still in place. We have yet to achieve real justice for a billion people." Jubilee South challenged the movement to push for more effective and meaningful debt relief. Their concerns are reflected in the current goals of Jubilee 2000/USA, which demands that creditor governments and international financial institutions "immediately suspend debt service payments and the accrual of interest on loans from heavily indebted poor countries." They point out that "further accrual of interest merely makes it more expensive for the debts to be removed from the books while continued payments further harm the indebted countries."⁷

The conditions attached to both the loans and debt relief continue to place an enormous burden on poor people. In looking at the impact of World Bank loans, World Bank economist William Easterly found that "a lot of the countries that have gotten a lot of lending from the IMF and World Bank are worse off." In contrast, he found that countries such as India and China were better at poverty reduction during periods of economic expansion than countries under IMF control.⁸

Jubilee 2000 asserts that current World Bank and IMF reform programs increase poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. They condemn these destructive policies and call for "the establishment of some more neutral and open arbitration process, whereby nations can appeal for relief, and the terms and conditions of such arrangements are given open and due consideration." The campaign also wants to add substantial debt relief for heavily indebted middle-income countries. They challenge existing initiatives that do not appropriately address "odious" or illegitimate debts that are patently unjust in nature.⁹ The WCC points to military and corrupt dictatorships and those of the apartheid regime as having incurred the most unacceptable kind of debt, defined in international law as odious debts.

Jubilee 2000/USA is deeply troubled by the Poverty Reduction

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Congress

Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, issued by the World Bank and IMF in response to criticism about their failure to reduce poverty. "From the start the campaign questions the legitimacy of the IMF taking the role of judging countries in terms of poverty reduction, an area in which the IMF has no expertise." In many countries, citizen participation in the process was quite limited. Most disturbing is "the injustice that macro-economic reform conditions have not been subordinated to poverty reduction concerns or made subject to transparent, democratic and participatory decision-making."¹⁰ Activist Shalmali Guttal calls the PRSP little more than hurriedly worked-over versions of standard World Bank-IMF policy papers that are not likely to make a dent in poverty, given the failure of earlier policies.¹¹

The **Dakar Declaration**, issued by Jubilee South in the fall of 2000, is more uncompromising in its demands. It calls for the end of conditions for countries to participate in the HIPC process, no structural adjustment program for new loans, and immediate cancellation of illegitimate debts. It also calls for governments in the south to publicly investigate and audit the debt, suspend payments until investigations have been made, and withhold payment of illegitimate debts. The movement is planning for national people's tribunals on debt and structural adjustment programs, like the one held in Brazil in September of 2000. This was organized and supported by a coalition of religion, labor, and other groups, in which the results of a plebiscite were announced. The **Dakar Declaration** asks northern groups to increase the pressure on international financial institutions and governments for debt cancellation, and to move toward the abolition of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.¹² This links the campaign for debt forgiveness to the anticorporate globalization movement. Some in this group are also considering asking for reparations from northern countries for the centuries of exploitation carried out through enslavement and colonization.

Movement for a People-Centered Globalization

Kevin Danaher of **Global Exchange**, a human rights group that has taken leadership in the campaign against corporate globalization,

compares globalization from above with a bottom-up form. Globalization from above is controlled by wealthy elites and driven by a hunger for more wealth and power—greed. In contrast, bottom-up globalization focuses on meeting human need. John Powell and S. P. Udayakumar, writing in the journal *Poverty and Race*, describe the changes wrought by globalization:

People are now brought together as consumers but kept apart as citizens. The transformed role of government is not to protect citizens or the precious safety net of public space but to protect and facilitate the flow of capital. So today we speak of free markets but not of free labor. We speak of an expanding global market, but a diminishing public space, and we hardly speak at all of citizen participation and justice.

They conclude that this is an "authoritarian vision" in which "armies police nations and people, so capital might be free." The police response to nonviolent protestors during the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle fits this description.¹³

The WCC offers an alternative vision, one rooted in the struggles of African people for liberation from colonialism. This vision lives on "in the struggles of the people for daily livelihood, to sustain their community life, to be nourished by the rich traditions and values inherited from the past, to live in harmony with the earth, to find space to express themselves." People long "to live in dignity in just and sustainable communities." They note that people from all parts of the world resonate with this vision, because we experience the same yearnings.¹⁴

Limiting Corporate Power

The movement against globalization from above has had some victories in limiting the expansion of corporate power. A coalition of human rights, labor, religious, and other groups, including the Third World Network, the Council of Canadians, and the International Forum on Globalization, has been successful in delaying the **Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI)**. This agreement was negotiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and intended to restrict the power of any

top down
bottom up
global

of its twenty-nine member countries and other signatories to regulate foreign investment. In reality, this means that investors' rights take precedence over any member country's social or environmental policies, and that investors have the right to sue countries for "lost" profits. In the fall of 1998, OECD withdrew MAI in the face of opposition from activists in over ten countries who leaked the draft to the public. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* wrote that the high-powered OECD politicians were "no match for a global band of grassroots organizations, which, with little more than computers and access to the Internet, helped derail the deal."¹⁵ A broader coalition stopped a new round of negotiations by the WTO meeting in Seattle, which likely would have included an agreement similar to MAI.

A crucial struggle beginning in the spring of 2001 is working to stop the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which would be an extension of NAFTA to all the Americas, and to keep the U.S. Congress from giving fast-track authority to President Bush. Granting this authority would permit him to negotiate this treaty in a way that would prohibit any Congressional amendments, a clearly undemocratic approach. A current focus of the movement is a "right to know" legislative proposal that would require U.S. transnationals to collect and disclose crucial data on workplace conditions and environmental damage in their overseas production, including that of subcontractors and suppliers.¹⁶

Groups protesting globalization from above are not just objecting to proposals that would expand corporate-ruled globalization; they are also developing their own proposals. In one such proposal, Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith have developed a draft of an "Alternative Program for the Global Economy," whose aim is "to provide a win-win framework for the many constituencies converging into globalization from below." This program attempts to bring these groups interests, needs, and concerns into a complementary relationship, rather than a contradictory one. There are seven key elements to this alternative program:

1. "Level labor, environmental, social, and human rights conditions upward." The first step is to improve conditions for those caught in the race to the bottom. The ultimate goal is to in-

corporate minimum labor, social, environmental, and human rights standards into national and international law. The authors think that the first step would lead to an expansion of employment and markets, which would "generate a virtuous circle of economic growth."

2. "Democratize institutions at every level from local to global." The point here is to make institutions accountable to those they affect.
3. "Make decisions as close as possible to those they affect." The goal is "a multilevel global economy." Initiative and power are to be concentrated at as low a level as possible, with higher-level regulation established where necessary. This is articulation of the principle of subsidiarity, prominent in Roman Catholic social teaching.
4. "Equalize global wealth and power." The economic advancement of the most oppressed and exploited people, "including women, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples," should be a policy priority with the aim of increasing their power, capability, resources, and income.
5. "Convert the global economy to environmental sustainability." This requires that the current process of globalization be stopped and replaced with a focus on meeting human needs in ways that reduce the negative impact of the economy on the environment.
6. "Create prosperity by meeting human and environmental needs." A crucial goal is to "to create a new kind of full employment" based on satisfying these needs. The authors hope that this would lessen the need for the millions of rural people who are forced to migrate in search of work.
7. "Protect against global boom and bust." Neoliberal policies that insist on freedom of capital must be replaced with capital controls that aim to increase economic security for ordinary people.¹⁷

Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) has introduced the Global Sustainable Development Resolution to the U.S. Congress (H.R. 479), which

resonates with many of the principles in Brecher, Costello, and Smith's proposal. It would set up U.S. and UN Commissions on the Global Economy to investigate the effect of globalization on workers, industry, and the environment. It also includes provisions for shrinking the World Bank and IMF, as well as a tax on financial speculation. Although it is very unlikely that this resolution will be passed in the near future, it does provide a basis for progressive advocacy.¹⁸

There is growing support for some form of capital control. One such proposal is called the Tobin Tax, after economist James Tobin, who developed its details. Several cities around the world, as well as the Canadian Parliament, have endorsed resolutions in support of a Tobin Tax. In the summer of 2000, over three hundred economists from forty-two countries issued a statement in support. They noted that properly functioning financial markets might play a positive role in providing funds for socially beneficial projects, which can be liquidated by the investor if needed. But highly speculative financial markets may be exceedingly damaging to a society, as we saw in chapter 1. Financial markets can be destabilized, with impacts spreading across the society. The ability of governments to use effective countermeasures is diminished by expansion of these markets. Taxes on speculative financial activity make speculation more costly, reducing the volume of speculation. This contributes to stabler financial markets. "The historical record of financial transactions taxes, as well as long-standing evidence on the success of other forms of financial regulation, indicates that taxes on financial speculation can be successfully implemented." The Tobin Tax proposal includes provisions for using the proceeds to meet crucial social needs.¹⁹

Advancement of the Oppressed

There is also growing support for making the economic advancement of the most oppressed and exploited people a policy priority, as suggested in the fourth plank of the "Alternative Program for the Global Economy." Since the success of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in making small loans to poor women who used them to build income-generating projects that substantially improved their families' well-being, "micro-credit" programs like these are viewed

by some as *the solution to poverty*. Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus cautions that experience shows that unless *the poorest of the poor* are specifically targeted by these programs, "they will be excluded as they are from almost every other opportunity." He further cautions that micro-credit alone will not empower the poor or lead to any significant drop in absolute poverty; other programs, like girls' education and youth employment opportunities, are also necessary.²⁰

As noted above, the alternative program for the global economy aims to find complementary rather than contradictory relationships between the goals, interests, and needs of the various groups in the people's globalization movement. Widespread support for a Tobin Tax and for making the advancement of the poor a policy priority seems to indicate that the proposal accomplishes this aim. Are there, though, crucial debates that the proposals attempt to smooth over? Two important issues that need more exploration, in my judgment, are the status of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, and the issue of limits to economic growth.

Reforming Economic Institutions and Concepts

In the discussion of the Jubilee 2000 movement, I noted the debate over whether the IMF and the World Bank should be reformed or replaced. There is a similar debate about the WTO. Clearly, several of the points in the "Alternative Program for the Global Economy," if enacted, would dramatically reform institutions like these. However, a clarification of which types of reforms are useful and which are not is needed. An editorial in the *Multinational Monitor* just prior to the WTO's December 1999 meeting in Seattle provides this. The editorial called for the dismantling of the WTO, due to three fatal flaws. First, the WTO's trade rules purposefully prioritize trade and commercial considerations above all other values. Second, the WTO deliberately takes precedence over countries' decisions about how their own economies should be structured and corporations regulated. Third, the WTO does not just regulate global trade, but actively promotes it. The editorial realizes that citizen movements may not yet be powerful enough to shut down the WTO. It cautions, though, that "reforms that add new areas of competence to the WTO or enhance its authority go in the wrong direction." This

includes areas that may seem desirable, such as labor rights. On the other hand, "reforms that limit the WTO's authority," such as limiting application of its agricultural rules in the south, "are necessary and beneficial in their own right." These cautions are also appropriate in regard to any proposed reforms of the IMF and the World Bank.²¹

Walden Bello proposes radical reduction of the power of the WTO to make it simply another international institution coexisting with and being checked by other international organizations, like the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); agreements, including multilateral environmental ones; and regional groupings, like the evolving trade blocs in southern regions.²²

The need for economic growth is another area of debate that the "Alternative Program" seems not to fully address. As written, the proposal seems to support what is called "sustainable development." In its own recommendations on globalization, the WCC charges that this concept "does not question the underlying paradigm of continuous and unlimited progress and growth." A WCC study raised concerns about unlimited growth: because of the world's limited resources, permanent economic growth threatens ecological sustainability; its products are unevenly distributed; it increases inequality, with the rich minority "wasting a great volume of the earth's resources and living far above the level of human need."²³ Is the proposed alternative program's "virtuous" growth really different from unlimited growth?

The sustainable-development approach is similar to what is called the Human Development Consensus, advocated by the UNDP and UNICEF. This approach advocates what it calls "pro poor growth," which focuses on policies that are labor intensive and employment generating, and also encourage equity. It is one alternative to the Washington Consensus, a name for current neoliberal IMF and U.S. Treasury policies discussed in chapter 1. Another alternative is the "People-Centered" consensus, which is led by various citizen alliances. A primary difference between these two alternatives is that the Human Development consensus believes in economic growth through free markets.²⁴

Another important issue is not addressed by the "Alternative Pro-

gram" at all: what counts as economic activity? Current definitions limit economic activity, a basic factor in calculating gross national product (GNP) and economic growth, to market exchange or paid work. In her landmark 1984 book, *Counting for Nothing*, Marilyn Waring demonstrated that current GNP statistics include things that are bad for human health and the environment, such as carcinogenic chemicals in foods, pollution from factories, and preparation for nuclear war. Yet, the subsistence farming and unpaid domestic work that contribute significantly to human well-being are not counted. Much of this unpaid work is done by the world's women and is essential to their families' well-being. We saw in chapter 1 that this workload has increased with IMF structural adjustment policies. Yet, since it is not included in GNP, not only is its importance unrecognized, but also the negative impact on women's health of this increased burden will likely go unaddressed by public policy.²⁵

Economist Lourdes Beneria recently wrote of a continuing "resistance to the measuring of work and production of goods and services that sustain and enhance human well-being," although there is sophisticated methodological and theoretical work on how this activity can be included. In 1996, the Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life called for a redefinition of work "in a broad sense that encompasses both employment and unpaid activities." The Commission believes that this will benefit "society as a whole, families as well as individuals," and will help ensure more equitable distribution of the wealth generated. A fully adequate alternative economic program would include a redefinition of economic activity. As Beneria claims, the questions underlying this issue are "what is value and what is of value to society."²⁶

An Ethic for Just and Sustainable Community

As has been evident throughout this book, contrasting ethical visions are at the heart of the debate about globalization. Rapidly increasing inequalities between nations and within nations, and threats to ecological and economic sustainability, are central ethical issues. The Jubilee 2000 movement cautions that economic,

social, and environmental problems in some countries threaten the well-being of people everywhere. In today's world, none of us can prosper for long unless all of us have the things we need for lives of sufficiency and dignity.

Neoliberals believe that the solution to these inequalities is integration into the global economy, with openness to global capital and global competition. They are willing to accept what they see as "natural" inequalities created by capitalist globalization, rather than sacrifice the loss of freedom and economic efficiency that is involved when various governmental agencies intervene to remedy these inequalities. Neoliberals tend to downplay threats to ecological sustainability and trust in technological "fixes" to environmental problems that arise. Their position is challenged on both empirical and ethical grounds.²⁷

The WCC challenges this logic of globalization with "an alternative way of life of community in diversity." This is grounded in a life-centered vision that affirms God's gift of life to all creation. Four essentials for this vision need to be nurtured: (1) *participation*, the optimal inclusion of all involved at every level; (2) *equity*, basic fairness that extends to all life forms; (3) *accountability*, "the structuring of responsibility towards one another and Earth itself"; (4) *sufficiency*, a commitment to meet the basic needs of all life possible and to develop "a quality of life that includes bread for all but is more than bread alone." In this life-centered vision, basic human needs, individual and community rights, and environmental protection take precedence over debt repayment or economic efficiency. All the world's religions seem to share the belief that one is responsible for meeting another's needs.²⁸

Economic Rights

Basic needs claims can be translated into economic rights. Article 25 of the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of self and family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services." These are part of what is called the second generation of human rights, which includes economic, social, and cultural rights. Political and civil rights make up the first generation of human rights. First-generation rights are under-

stood as negative rights; the freedom of individuals is not to be unjustly interfered with. Second-generation rights are seen as positive rights; they presume a community that takes responsibility for the satisfaction of everyone's basic needs.²⁹

Although powerful rhetorically, the UN Declaration of Human Rights has no binding authority. There are two covenants that implement these rights: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Both covenants had to be ratified by thirty-six nations before they became legally binding on those nations; this happened in 1976. The United States ratified the first covenant in 1992, but is unlikely to ratify the second without a major shift in its thinking about rights. Ecologically minded readers might charge that this focus on human rights is anthropocentric, even if we include the right to a safe environment among the second-generation rights. David Korten addresses the relationship between the environment and basic needs when he develops criteria for the use of the earth's resources: "The appropriate concern is whether the available planetary resources are being used in ways that (1) meet the basic needs of all people, (2) maintain biodiversity, and (3) assure the sustained availability of comparable resource flows to future generations."³⁰ Korten notes that our present economic system fails to meet any of these three criteria. Ethicist Timothy Gorringer suggests, "If the standard of living enjoyed by the North cannot be generalized, then the issue of consumption has to be addressed by the wealthy nations."³¹

The international human rights movement, including the groups that concentrate on women's human rights, has focused primarily on civil and political rights. This focus does not speak adequately to the concerns of many of the world's women. Barbara Stark finds that of the two generations of rights, it is the second generation as articulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights that may well make the most difference for women.³² These second-generation rights are distinct from the "right to development," adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986. The development model underlying this document, according to Corinne Kumar-D'Souza, "has brought with it the dispossession of the majority of the people, the desacralizing of nature, the de-

1st generation rights

struction of the way of life of entire cultures, and the degradation of women."³³

Robust national and international movements for social and economic rights are crucial in this time of corporate globalization, with its emphasis on expanding trade rights, intellectual property rights, and investor rights. The challenge is to develop a normative vision and notion of community on which to base collective action for the realization of economic and social rights. The decent society is one such vision. Avishai Margalit defines a decent society as "one whose institutions do not humiliate its members." Dehumanization is a primary form of humiliation. The World Bank defines absolute poverty as "a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy and disease as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency." Decency is thus an institutional agenda grounded in universal responsibility.³⁴

Certainly, the notion of a decent society is a useful basis for realizing economic and social rights. So too is the notion of justice, especially if we move beyond liberal notions of procedural justice. Ethicist Beverly Harrison claims that a biblical sense of justice "focuses on concrete human need and is therefore substantive." We are required by our sense of justice to engage existing inequities and to critically analyze and protest against "institutional arrangements that pervasively perpetuate and deepen social inequities."³⁵ This sense is grounded in recognition of our common human dignity and a commitment to the common good.

We have learned from our experience with civil and political rights that legislation is only a first step. Persons need to be informed of their rights, and effective enforcement mechanisms established. I know of two quite different but equally effective approaches to informing people of their rights. One is the Los Angeles Garment Workers Center program to distribute booklets to workers (in their own languages), which include a summary of their newly won right to back wages from manufacturers and retailers, logs to record their hours, and information on how to make claims if their rights have been violated. The second is the use of street theater by an organization of Ugandan women lawyers to inform women of their newly gained rights to protection from domestic violence and to inheritance. They also provide free and low-cost mediation and legal

services. The challenge is to extend programs like this into rural areas.³⁶

A successful conclusion to the seven-year-old human rights struggle led by the indigenous people from the state of Chiapas in Mexico (popularly called the Zapatistas) seemed possible in 2001 when newly elected President Vicente Fox supported constitutional reform legislation that would recognize the economic and cultural rights of Mexico's indigenous peoples. At the January 1, 1994, launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) rose up against free trade and neoliberalism. (They were also protesting the loss of their communal land rights, which came about through a change in the Mexican Constitution as a precondition for Mexico's entry into NAFTA.) The Zapatista movement has made savvy use of the Internet to inform the world of its positions. "Instead of humanity neoliberalism offers us stock market value indexes, instead of dignity it offers us globalization of misery, instead of hope it offers us emptiness, instead of life it offers us . . . terror."³⁷ The movement stayed strong despite military repression and at least one massacre, buoyed in part by an international solidarity movement (see chapter 3).

Although the government has reneged on implementing a 1996 agreement on indigenous rights and culture (the San Andreas Accords), its central provisions were included in the proposed legislation. However, the legislation that passed the Mexican Congress in April of 2001 seriously compromised these provisions and was rejected by the Zapatistas as well as nongovernmental groups like the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center. Its critics charge it is a "counter-reform" because it excludes specific elaborations "of indigenous rights in regard to autonomy" and the right of indigenous peoples "to collective use and enjoyment of the natural resources found on their lands and territories." The law's supporters believe that it represents an advance in recognition of indigenous rights and culture since, when ratified, it brings the Mexican constitution in line with international conventions on indigenous rights. The legislation also includes provisions to ensure respect for the rights of indigenous women and girls. As of this writing, the legislation has just been ratified by a sufficient num-

ber of states for constitutional reform to be enacted.³⁸ Even though the Zapatistas and their supporters did not accomplish their objectives at this point, they were effective in raising awareness of crucial prerequisites for building just and sustainable communities.

The Need for Solidarity

Building just and sustainable communities around the world will continue to demand solidarity from those of us who are committed to a new world that is for all of us. **Effective solidarity requires participation in communities that nurture dialogue across difference, critical consciousness and compassion, and practices of resistance and accountability. Solidarity also requires heart.** I like to call the ethic that I have attempted to develop in this book an “ethic of heart.” When I think of people practicing solidarity, I think of people with hearts that are tender, warm, caring, passionate, strong, brave; of people who hearten each other in the face of heartbreaking realities; of many hearts beating in rhythm with the heart of the universe. “Heart” is a good symbol for some of the distinctive contributions that feminist ethics brings to an ethic for just and sustainable community: emotion, relationality, and care. Stout hearts, clear eyes, open ears, dirty hands—all are essential for our common task.³⁹

In this chapter, we have seen that there are movements that are challenging the dehumanizing logic of neoliberalism. There have been some significant successes: improving the HIPC debt-relief program, and stopping both the Multilateral Agreement on Investments and a new round of WTO negotiations. The movement is developing its own vision and program for a people-centered globalization. The elements of an ethic for just and sustainable community are becoming clear.

Even so, the task before us is daunting. In spite of our best efforts so far, the debt of poor countries increases, as does the gap between the world’s wealthy and poor, with unbearable human and ecological costs. At the same time, more and more people are joining together to say “No!” to a dehumanizing form of globalization and to build a world of just, sustainable communities. “Let us learn to find joy in the struggle,” Muneer Ahmed, a young attorney and activist, challenged us at the opening of the Los Angeles Garment

Workers Center. May we indeed find joy in our many struggles for a world with enough for all.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you agree with the goals of the Jubilee 2000 campaign? What, if anything, is missing from its program?
2. Discuss each of the seven planks of the “Alternative Program for the Global Economy.” What are the strengths and weaknesses of this program?
3. Discuss the WCC’s four essentials for an alternative way of life of community in diversity. Do you see other essentials? What is your vision of the common good?
4. Discuss the differences between first- and second-generation rights? Do you agree that we need economic, social, and cultural rights to establish just, sustainable community?
5. What comes to your mind when you hear the term “ethic of heart”? How else might one characterize an ethic like the one developed in this book?

Additional Resources

- Boff, Leonardo, and Virgil Elizondo, eds. *Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995. A useful discussion of the connections between poverty and ecology.
- Catholic Voices on Beijing: A Call for Social Justice for Women*. Washington, D.C.: Catholics for a Free Choice, 2000. A critical Catholic feminist discussion of Catholic social teaching.
- de Gaay Fortman, Bastiaan, and Berma Klein Goldewijk. *God and the Goods: Global Economy in a Civilizational Perspective*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998. A fruitful collaboration between one of the commissioners of the WCC Program Unit on Justice, Peace, and Creation (Fortman) and a member of the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (Goldewijk).
- Ringe, Sharon H. *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. A scholarly discussion of the Jubilee tradition.
- Schroyer, Trent, ed. *A World That Works: Building Blocks for a Just and Sustainable Society*. New York: Bootstrap Press, 1997. A useful discus-