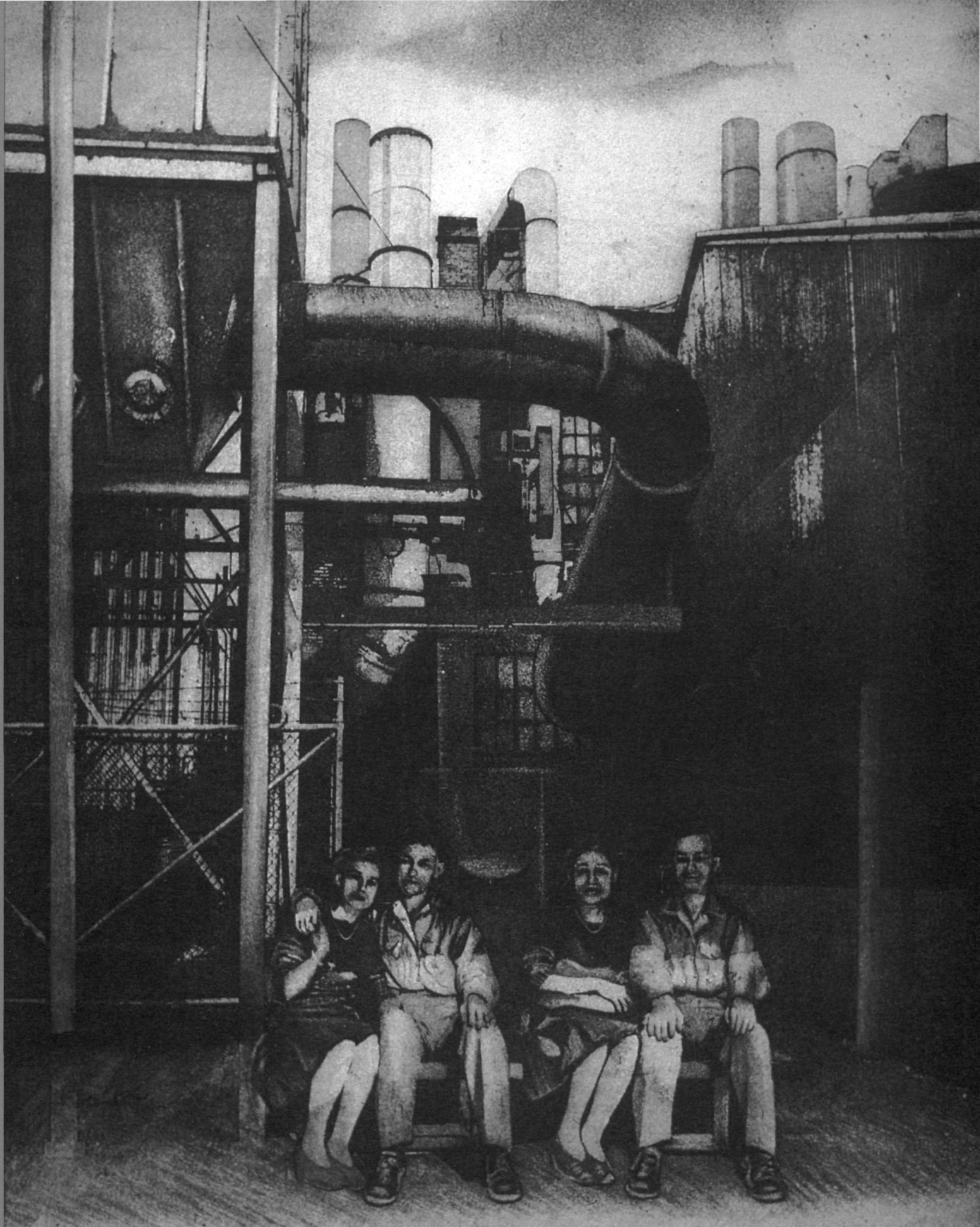


The Witness

Volume 77 • Number 5 • May 1994



Economic justice

The left

YESTERDAY, I completed the poem for James Boggs. I had been carrying around the draft for some time. Yesterday, the mail carrier delivered *The Witness* article by Grace L. Boggs.

I'm sorry that I let my subscription lapse and was happy to receive this copy. I will be renewing my subscription. I was glad to find that it continues to be an excellent thought/spiritual provoking magazine.

The letters that call you the "lunatic fringe" are humorous. This past week at the Lenten mission that our family attended, Rev. Eddie Bernal reminded us how Jesus and his followers were also considered the "lunatic fringe"!

Keep up the great work that you're doing. I enjoyed catching up on some good reading material.

**Trinidad Sanchez, Jr.
San Antonio, TX**

I'D LIKE TO COMMENT on the letter in the March *Witness* from a reader who feels that a gay person's coming out is manipulative.

He says that when a gay person comes out, "what wasn't relevant before hovers over the friendship" and "what was perhaps genuine friendship" is compromised. Interesting new definitions of words! If his friend's gayness is a problem for him now, it always was relevant — he just didn't know it before. And I can assure him that it was always relevant to his friend. Every closeted gay person looks at his friends and wonders "would he like me if he knew?" When I came out, I lost some friends and gained some — gay and straight in both categories. It's clear to me that the "perhaps genuine" friends I lost weren't genuine in any normal sense of the word.

He feels that we crave approval of a lifestyle about which we ourselves feel shame and guilt. Probably — but who taught me the shame and guilt? He did. And when I begin to see that what I've been taught is bogus, who

wants to manipulate me back into hiding? Right! The writer's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy implies that I'm hid-

ing something shameful. While there are things that I'm ashamed of, being gay isn't one of them.

He claims to value people for character and gifts, not for sexual activity. I do sometimes tire of saying it but I rarely discuss sex — it's usually not appropriate. What I do is have my boyfriend's picture on my desk at work — as my coworkers do; I tell friends at work and at church about a vacation or a great movie that we saw — exactly as they do; we participate in the life of the church as a couple — as heterosexual couples do. If that is manipulative, well, he'd better get used to it.

And his grouching over being forced to talk nicely about gay people to avoid being thought ill of — that's right up there with his "perhaps genuine" friendships.

**John Scherer
Lincroft, NJ**

I WOULD LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY to respond to the letter Michael Davis wrote in the March 1994 publication of *The Witness*. It seems Mr. Davis and I have very different experiences concerning the coming out of gay people, and I would like to share mine with him.

I will say now that I am a lesbian, and I can't deny that at times my coming out has been out of manipulation; it has been done in order to challenge the anti-gay beliefs of many of my "friends" within church circles. However, the bulk of my coming out has been quite the opposite; it has been done because I don't want to hide myself from the people I love.

In contrast to what Mr. Davis suggests, none of my coming out has ever "forced" anyone to say they loved me regardless of my sexuality. In fact, it has been rare that I have experienced acceptance by those people who have been given the opportunity to know the real me. I am the one who is judged as "non-Christian," and while I may chalk up their disapproval to homophobia, I have yet to see homophobia cause a person problems with employment, housing, adoption rights, or any other society-based privilege of the like. I won't address the privileges extended to heterosexuals in the church.

Mr. Davis next goes on to explain that in his experience, when a gay person comes out to a friend, "suddenly what wasn't relevant

before, now hovers over the friendship, always the dominant reality. What was perhaps genuine friendship is now compromised ..." My sexual orientation is relevant in our friendship simply because it is an important part of me; it is relevant regardless of whether or not I choose to come out to you. Would you consider the marriage of a heterosexual friend to be irrelevant? I consider all the life experiences of my friends to be an important part of who they are, and I question the quality of any friendship where those can't be openly shared. Maybe we have a different definition of "friendship."

The next point in Mr. Davis' letter is that while gay people are applauded for their courage to come out, people who speak out against

ECPC Dinner Alert!

The date of our General Convention dinner has been changed to August 31! Steve Charleston, bishop of Alaska, will speak. And we will still offer ethnic food for \$30 a ticket.

Witness subscribers who wish to promote books, tapes, cards or similar items (which they authored, crafted or produced) are welcome to display them on a designated table during dinner. Please let us know you are coming. It will be wonderful to see each other during this Convention honoring women's ministries.

Ad Opportunity

A special Convention supplement to *The Witness* will be distributed to everyone at Convention and Triennial. It will include advertisements. Ads will cost \$400 for a whole page; \$200 for a half page; \$100 for a quarter page; and \$50 for an eighth. (For long ads, these rates are cheaper than classifieds.) Ads must be received and paid for by June 15. Send them to the attention of Marianne Arbogast.

Letters

"homosexual behavior" aren't applauded despite the fact that they too face rejection. Yes, all people face rejection for stating their beliefs. Personally, I would really like to experience an environment where gay people are applauded for their courage. Where I live, it is the billboard-carrying right wing speaking out against homosexuality which more commonly receives recognition and acceptance, particularly within Christian groups.

Finally, Mr. Davis states that we should not be pressured into forming and expressing opinions on this subject by gay friends who come out. I too reject pressure; I advocate prayer and a personal search for the Truth of God. Just don't forget that we're all a part of the body of Christ. God's Truth exists in each and every one of us, and it is only through sharing stories and experiences that these truths become known. Thank you for listening to some of mine.

Gay in Fairbanks, AK

YOUR MARCH ISSUE ARRIVED Saturday as I was preparing the first real sermon I ever gave. The one-page essay by Erika Meyer was very helpful — I quoted it at length today in my sermon to the Episcopal Church at Cornell (the chaplaincy), which was about our trip with the Episcopal Peace Fellowship to Cuba in January. You figure it out.

Actually my point was that the Christians we met in Cuba knew exactly what the revolution was about, and had put up with oppression from the Castro regime until recently, when the Cuban government realized they were part of the solution, not part of the problem. They are Christian Socialists, and have engaged and apparently won over the secular left in Cuba.

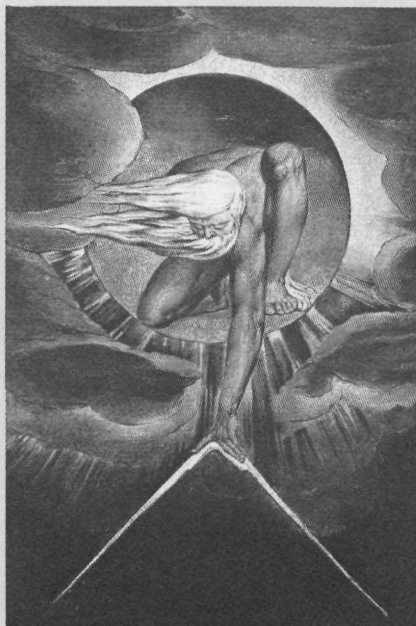
I mentioned that your main source of advertising was the offer of a free issue, because one issue was enough for most Episcopalians to either love you or hate you. The following list signed up in the Coffee Hour. They would like to get this March issue, if possible. There is a good chance you will gain a couple of subscribers from the list.

Chris Pottle

[Ed. Note: Thank you a thousand times for taking the initiative to find out which people in your parish might like *The Witness*! Initiatives from readers are the best way for our circulation to grow.]

THE WITNESS

Witness/Trinity video available



One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, our video series from the forum we held at Trinity School for Ministry, is now available!

The series provides, in living color, a glimpse into the hearts of two radically committed groups within the Epis-

copal Church who often find each other suspect regarding interpretations of scripture, issues of morality and commitment to social justice.

The series features a conversation between Bill Frey, dean of the school and former bishop of Colorado; Virginia Mollenkott, a lesbian theologian and professor in New Jersey; Mary Hays, a pastoral theology professor at Trinity; and, Chester Talton, suffragan bishop of California.

The panel discussion can be used alone or, in a class series, each of the ten-minute workshop sessions which follow can be explored. These include the authority of scripture; sexuality, feminism and faith; the traditional way; conversations behind the wall; and the multi-cultural challenge. Each session is marked by a serious attempt to listen to one another and to be honest.

The tape costs \$79.95 plus \$4 handling and is available from the Episcopal Radio & TV Foundation, Suite 230, 3379 Peachtree Rd., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30326; (404) 233-5419.

Classifieds

Assistant publisher sought

THE OTHER SIDE, A CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE of peace and justice issues, seeks a full-time assistant publisher to conduct financial management and planning, plus provide support services. Experience in magazine publishing and/or financial management desirable. Excellent benefits. Deadline for application: May 15, later inquiries appropriate. Contact Hiring Team, *The Other Side*, 300 W. Apsley Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144 (215-849-2178).

Classifieds

WITNESS CLASSIFIEDS cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance, items received January 15 will run in March.

When ads mark anniversaries of deaths, ordinations, or acts of conscience, photos — even at half column-width — can be included.

THE WITNESS

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Cover: *Pepsi Cola and Moon Pie*, by Ellen E. Moore, intaglio, 24" x 18", 1993. Artist Ellen Moore lives in Fredricksburg, Va.

Back cover: *Physical Limitation* by Irene Duffy of Pullman, Wash.

Banking on community

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Even as the U.S. becomes a unilateral superpower, it is teetering on the brink of losing its empire.

Some economists expected that the European Common Market would have surpassed us by now. Whatever the mythology, we have to recognize that the powers that built this nation (on the blood of the Indians, the slaves and the immigrant laborers) are now cannibalizing American workers while they expand overseas.

In this issue, Noam Chomsky writes that the U.S. debt (bequeathed to us — some say calculatedly — by the Reagan administration) has paralyzed the nation (page 8). Should the president decide to institute social programs, Chomsky says the international lending community will call in U.S. debts and disable the administration. In essence, the austerity programs that we watched the International Monetary Fund impose on third-world countries are in effect now for us.

It's easier to see the brutality of the powers in Detroit than it may be in Minneapolis or San Francisco. We have minimal social services, dangerous schools, youth with nothing to lose and violent crime on a phenomenal scale. We have lost the high-wage manufacturing jobs that drew people to Motown.

When I moved here in 1980 everyone seemed to be connected to an alphabet soup of radicalism. People were publicly (or clandestinely) affiliated with the RSL (Revolutionary Socialists' League), the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party), the CPA (Communist Party of America),

the IS (International Socialists), DSA (Democratic Socialists of America), WWP (Workers' World Party), DARE (Detroiters for A Rational Economy), or, nostalgically, the IWW (International Workers of the World).

After the insurrection in 1967, many parties believed the revolution would start in Detroit, so the vanguard moved in. And while there was arrogance in planning to lead a revolution and while there was considerable in-fighting, there was something exciting and hopeful about being surrounded by people who had such a clear take on the failings of capitalism. The alphabet-soup contingent had a grasp on class allegiances and power broking. And, actually, most other Detroiters did too — several decades of union activism had worn deep recesses in which people *knew* that the rich have, and have always had, a clear agenda to further their own affluence and power no matter which charities or public television broadcasts they may support.

As a one-industry town, Detroit's capital is easy to track. Henry Ford's agenda and the cozy relations between GM and the Nazis (one Senate committee reported that had Hitler won the war, GM would have been "impeccably Nazi") did not surprise people who came from Europe with socialist ideals and from the south with slavery in their nightmares. Change would take vision and it might take blood.

In the 1930s and 1960s, there was courage and vision, but in the 1980s the collapse of the left was also easy to track.

The United Auto Workers, once legitimated in the 1950s, exchanged grievances (even environmental) for money. By the 1980s, they showed little interest in the newly unemployed. The tens of

thousands who lost auto jobs in Michigan could have been mobilized. Empty plants could have been taken over. Groups of former workers — with little to lose that wasn't already being stripped from them by creditors — could have worked together like the workers in Pittsburgh who prevented evictions and house foreclosures during that same period.

Instead we had televised demonstrations of auto workers smashing Japanese cars and isolated instances of unemployed people taking shotguns to the Edison office or killing their families and barricading themselves in their homes.

Part of the left's silence sprang from a realization that the industry is not in a cycle of depression — it is radically altering the way it does business. It's losing a share of the market and what it retains it is manufacturing across the globe — in Mexico, Brazil, Korea.

No question it's time for an international union. Organizing Chinese youth who are working 12-hour days making the baubles that sell in U.S. dollar stores won't be easy. Labor will find it hard to cross national and cultural boundaries. The ethnic fights that the corporations depended on in the first half of the century (accomplished by hiring one ethnic group to replace another during strikes) are now acted out with states and nations competing with one another for the favor of a corporation which will demand every tax abatement, every benefit and every leniency on environmental standards.

More promising, however, may be refusing to allow U.S. military services for international conglomerates. Is it in our

continued on page 6

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.



editor's note

The war against black youth

by Manning Marable

Although we measure the impact of poverty, unemployment, and economic exploitation upon the family and community, we should focus our attention more specifically on the social devastation among our young people. In terms of education, health care, the criminal justice system and other criteria, what is happening in our cities is nothing short of a war against black youth.

Let us examine the statistical evidence provided by New York City and New York state. In the area of health care, six out of 10 preschool children in New York City are not immunized. There are currently only 96 nurses for 600 elementary schools in the city; nurses no longer regularly visit middle schools and high schools. Every day in New York City, as estimated 70,500 children use drugs. Each day, 35 babies are born at low birthrates, and four babies die before their first birthday. Over 160,000 children, mostly black and Latino, have no health insurance. Since 1987, TB cases in New York City have doubled. And today, AIDS is the leading cause of death in New York City for children under the age of five.

In 1979, 82 percent of New York's African-American children under the age of six lived in households headed by one or both of their parents. By 1989, that percentage had dropped to 69 percent. This means that thousands of our children are being raised increasingly by their grandparents, or by individuals who are not related to them at all.

The war against black youth is strikingly apparent within the criminal justice


system. In central Harlem alone, 2,500 young people were arrested in 1992. Ninety-five percent of those in jail in New York City are Latinos and blacks. Who is this prison population? Ninety percent do not have a high school diploma; more than one-half have under a sixth-grade level of educational ability. About two-thirds of all young black people who are in jail are awaiting trial, at an average cost of \$150 per day. The average pretrial detention in New York City is 50 days — *costing \$7,900 per prisoner*. Instead of spending tens of millions of dollars warehousing black youth, we should spend that money educating and training them to be productive human beings.

In the area of housing and homelessness: There are about 90,000 homeless people in New York City today. On a typical evening, 24,000 people, including 9,700 children, will sleep in a city-run shelter. About 90 percent of the homeless are black and Latino. In a five-year period, about one out of 12 black children in New York will live in a homeless shelter.

The war against black children is most clearly demonstrated in education. New York City has 37 percent of the state's

children in its public schools, but the city receives only 34 percent of the state aid. That shortfall amounts to an underfunding to the public schools each year by \$400 million. In the suburbs of New York, the average suburban school spends \$9,236 per pupil; New York City spends \$6,326 per pupil, nearly \$3,000 less per child.

The basic factor which underscores the dynamics of oppression for black children and youth is economics. Between 1980 and 1992, New York City lost 87,000 private-sector jobs. During the same years, the number of African-Americans living below the poverty level in the city grew from 520,000 to 664,000 people. The average black family in the city earns \$24,000 annually, compared to more than \$40,000 per year for whites. Black men have unemployment rates of 13 percent, compared to under six percent for white males. As the economic situation for black households declines, the status of our children and young people also deteriorates.

At Columbia's Institute for Research in African-American Studies, we are planning a national conference, to be held in April, 1995, on the theme: "The Crisis of Black Youth." The greatest challenge for African-American leadership is finding solutions to reverse the war against our young people. Our children are the future of the black community. 

continued from page 1

national interest to protect GM's investments in Korea? What if we don't send the marines to Brazil or Mexico? Would corporations hire their own military forces? Would they bring their capital back to the U.S.? As U.S. cities brink on the realities of Detroit, Americans may have a different attitude toward the purpose of the Pentagon.

In the meantime, activists are taking two approaches. The first includes efforts to control the beast (pages 10 and 22).

The second explores ways to pursue sustainable communities without the aid or interference of the beast (page 18).

Either way, we can expect a change in our standard of living. As the top six percent of the world's population, we will not always manage to consume 40 percent of the world's resources. But what we're promised is a chance to bring the powers into right relationship to God (page 14) and the strength and grace of community.

Manning Marable, a *Witness* contributing editor, is director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University.

February Thaw

by Skip Renker

Beethoven on the radio insists
on our hearts.

Who can take this
rush of yearning,
snow melting off roofs,
gutters churning

out twigs and leaves,
the month's first sunlight
slanting down the eaves,
when this year's bombs
have a mind of their own?
They hone in on palms

the pilgrim plants.
They strike at roots.
Someone, somewhere, wants
this. Next year's crop,
the newsbreak
reports, won't stop

until they find cell
and molecule, ring
the subatomic bell
in the target's heart.
The musicians are live
now, playing Mozart,

a man of another
mind. We barely listen,
as if to smother
hope, but blue water
shines in puddles,
someone's daughter

slides her delicate foot
across a tree's reflection,
leaps lights over. Root
and branch, something
animates this
beauty, sings

to spirit and flesh.
We refuse
this song, this fresh
infusion, or embrace
its astounding demands,
treat it like grace.

Skip Renker lives in Midland, Mich.



How bad is it?

by Noam Chomsky

About 20 years ago there was a big change in the world order, partly symbolized by Richard Nixon's dismantling of the postwar economic system. He recognized that U.S. dominance of the global system had declined, and that in the new "tripolar" world order (with Japan and German-based Europe playing a larger role), the U.S. could no longer serve — in effect — as the world's banker.

That led to a lot more pressure on corporate profits in the U.S. and, consequently, to a big attack on social welfare gains. The crumbs that were permitted to ordinary people had to be taken away. Everything had to go to the rich.

There was also a tremendous expansion of unregulated capital in the world. In 1971, Nixon dismantled the Bretton Woods system, thereby deregulating currencies. That, and a number of other changes, tremendously expanded the amount of unregulated capital in the world, and accelerated what's called the globalization of the economy.

That's a fancy way of saying that you export jobs to high-repression, low-wage areas — which undercuts the opportunities for productive labor at home. It's a way of increasing corporate profits, of

course. And it's much easier to do with a free flow of capital, advances in telecommunications, etc.

Becoming third world

There are two important consequences of globalization. First, it extends the third world model to industrial countries. In the third world, there's a two-tiered society — a sector of extreme wealth and privilege, and a sector of huge misery and despair among useless, superfluous people. That division is deepened by the policies dictated by the West. It imposes a neoliberal "free market" system that directs resources to the wealthy and to foreign investors, with the idea that something will trickle down by magic, some time after the Messiah comes.

You can see this happening everywhere in the industrial world, but most strikingly in the three English-speaking countries. In the 1980s, England under Thatcher, the United States under the Reaganites and Australia under a Labor government, adopted some of the doctrines they preached for the third world.

The second consequence, which is also important, has to do with governing structures. Throughout history, the structures of government have tended to coalesce around other forms of power — in modern times, primarily around economic power. So, when you have national economies, you get national states. We now have an international economy and we're moving towards an international state.

To quote the business press, we're creating "a new imperial age" with a "*de facto* world government." It has its own institutions — like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, trading structures like NAFTA and GATT (the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), executive meetings like the G-7 (the seven richest industrial countries — the US, Canada, Japan, Germany, Britain, France and Italy — who meet

regularly to discuss economic policy) and the European Community bureaucracy.

As you'd expect, this whole structure of decision-making answers basically to the transnational corporations, international banks, etc. It's an effective blow against democracy. All these structures raise decision-making to the executive level, leaving what's called a "democratic deficit" — parliaments and populations with less influence.

Not only that, but the general population doesn't know what's happening, and it doesn't even know that it doesn't know. One result is a kind of alienation from institutions. People feel that nothing works for them.

There are serious issues here.

Herman Daly and Robert Goodland, two World Bank economists, circulated an interesting study recently. In it they point out that received economic theory — the standard theory on which decisions are supposed to be based — pictures a free-market sea with tiny little islands of individual firms. These islands, of course, aren't internally free — they're centrally managed. But that's okay, because these are just tiny little islands on the sea. We're supposed to believe that these firms aren't much different than a mom-and-pop store down the street.

Daly and Goodland point out that by now the islands are approaching the scale of the sea. A large percentage of cross-border transactions are within a single firm, hardly "trade" in any meaningful sense. What you have is centrally managed transactions, with a very visible hand directing them.

You could say that one alternative to the free-market system is the one we already have. Our actual economic policy is a mixture of protectionist, interventionist, free-market and liberal measures. And it's directed primarily to the needs of those who implement social policy, who are mostly the wealthy and the powerful.

Noam Chomsky, a professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the author of more than 30 books on contemporary issues. This article is drawn from *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many*, copyright © 1993 David Barsamian; all rights reserved; published by Odonian Press, Box 7776, Berkeley, CA., 94707; phone (510) 524-4000 or (800) REAL STORY. Chomsky's reflections were offered in response to questions posed by David Barsamian.

The U.S. has always had an active state industrial policy, just like every other industrial country. It has been understood that a system of private enterprise can survive only if there is extensive government intervention. It's needed to regulate disorderly markets and protect private capital from the destructive effects of the market system, and to organize a public subsidy for targeting advanced sectors of industry, etc.

The Pentagon

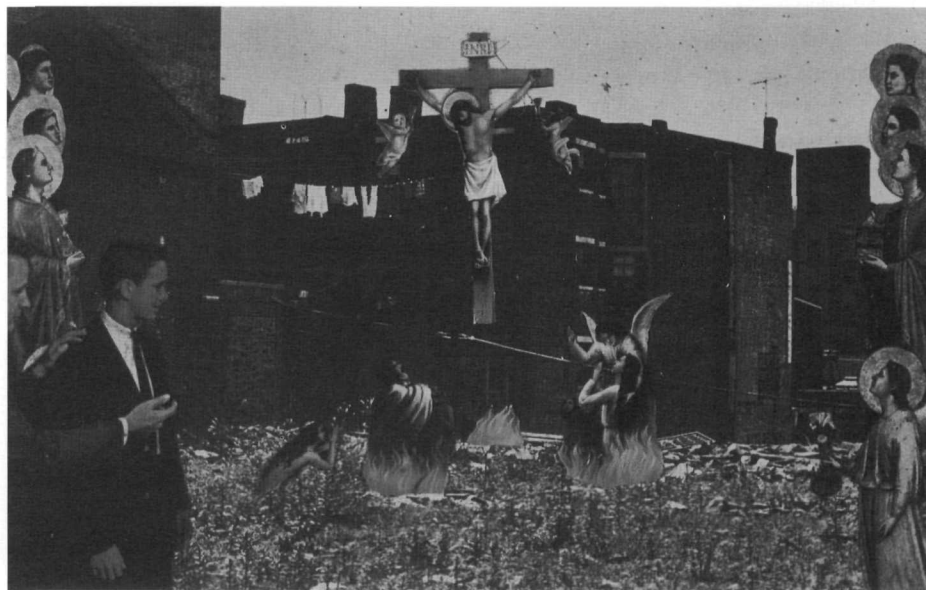
But nobody *called* it industrial policy, because for half a century it has been masked within the Pentagon system. Internationally, the Pentagon was an intervention force, but domestically it was a method by which the government could coordinate the private economy, provide welfare to major corporations, subsidize them, arrange the flow of taxpayer money to research and development, provide a state-guaranteed market for excess production, target advanced industries for development, etc. Just about every successful and flourishing aspect of the U.S. economy has relied on this kind of government involvement.

But they can't maintain the Pentagon-based system as readily as before. The mask is dropping. So the system is in trouble. Economists and bankers have been pointing out openly for some time that one of the main reasons why the current recovery is so sluggish is that the government hasn't been able to resort to increased military spending with all of its multiplier effects—the traditional pump-priming mechanism of economic stimulation. Although there are various efforts to continue this (in my opinion, the operation in Somalia is one such effort), it's just not possible the way it used to be.

The *Wall Street Journal* was the most extreme advocate of Reaganite lunacies for 10 years. They're now publishing articles in which they're bemoaning the consequences—without, of course, con-

ceding that they're consequences.

They had a big news article on the collapse of California's educational system, which they're very upset about. Businessmen in the San Diego area have relied on the state system to provide them with skilled workers, junior managers, applied research, etc. Now the system is in collapse.



Marek Czarniecki

The reason is obvious—the large cutbacks in social spending in the federal budget, and the fiscal and other measures that greatly increased the federal debt (which the *Wall Street Journal* supported), simply transferred the burden of keeping people alive and functioning to the states. The states are unable to support that burden. They're in serious trouble and have tried to hand down the problem to the municipalities, which are also in serious trouble.

Now businessmen are complaining. They want the government to get back into the business of providing them with what they need. That's going to mean a reversal of the fanaticism that the *Wall Street Journal* and others like it have been applauding all these years.

One problem was kindly pointed out

to the Clinton administration by a front-page article in the *Wall Street Journal* the other day. It mentioned what might happen if the administration takes its own rhetoric seriously—like spending money for social programs. The United States is so deeply in hock to the international financial community (because of the debt) that they have a lock on U.S. policy.

If something happens here—say, increasing workers' salaries—which will cut down the bondholders' short-term profit, they'll just start withdrawing from the U.S. bond market. That will drive interest rates up, which will drive the economy down, which will increase the deficit. The *Journal* points out that Clinton's \$20-billion spending program could be turned into a \$20-billion cost to the government, to the debt, just by slight changes in the purchase and sale of bonds.

So social policy, even in a country as rich and powerful as the United States (which is the richest and most powerful of them all), is mortgaged to the international wealthy sectors here and abroad. Those are issues that have to be dealt with—and that means facing problems of revolutionary change. **TW**

Controlling the beast

by Camille Colatosti

“Corporations cause harm every day,” write Richard Grossman and Frank Adams in *Taking Care of Business: Citizenship and the Charter of Incorporation*. They pollute the air, contaminate the land and destroy neighborhoods. In their drive to increase profits, they demand wage concessions from their workers and tax abatements from communities. And, in the end, corporations often close up shop and relocate to low-wage countries. In their wake, many companies leave behind abandoned plants — and poverty.

“In the last 15 years, the traditional economic anchors of most working-class communities have become unstable,” says Jim Benn, the executive director of the Federation for Industrial Retention and Renewal — a national coalition of more than 30 community and regional organizations fighting to win a U.S. industrial policy that is responsible to working-class communities. Plant closures and capital flight, explains Benn, “have not only resulted in a rise in poverty. They have led to a complete collapse of the institutions that have traditionally helped people rise out of poverty.”

The low-paid service jobs created today don’t lessen the poverty. The city of Cleveland, often touted as a model of how a community can recover from the economic loss of its manufacturing base, presents a telling example. From 1979 to 1989, the so-called “Cleveland Miracle” brought scores of service jobs to that city. Unemployment fell during that period from 11 to six percent. Yet, at the same

time, poverty increased 35 percent. Why? People work harder and earn less money than ever before.

In fact, a study released in March by the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that the share of Americans working full-time and earning poverty-level wages increased by 50 percent between 1979 and 1992. One in five full-time employees belongs to the working poor.

How did a self-governing people let this corporate irresponsibility come to pass? wonder Grossman and Adams. And what can be done about it now? Pointing to the history of corporations in America, the authors remind readers that states originally designed corporate charters in order to ensure that businesses served the common good. It’s time, say the authors, for communities to again make sure that corporations “cause no harm.”

Grossman and Adams aren’t alone in their thinking. As unemployment, underemployment and poverty reach new heights, a growing number of community and workplace activists — from auto workers in Detroit, to steelworkers in Pittsburgh, to garment workers in El Paso — are developing strategies that take on corporations at a number of points. Some fight plant closing; others transfer ownership of factories to workers; some oppose corporate tax abatements; still others use their power as shareholders to pressure corporations to make socially responsible choices; and some struggle simply for fair wages.

While the battles are difficult, people are winning. But even when unsuccessful, the fights reveal what’s needed to prevent future decline.

Fighting plant closings

From the late 1970s to the present, as

factories attempted to lock their gates and move their plants to low-wage countries, unions and communities resisted. Workers, and especially union members, learned important lessons about building local coalitions, enlisting governments and community organizations if they hoped to win.

Pennsylvania’s Steel Valley Authority (SVA) provides a model. Composed of trade unionists and religious and community activists, it is a state-chartered agency with the power of eminent domain. Essentially, the SVA turns a corporate strategy on its head. (State and city governments have worked with corporations to use the power of eminent domain to demolish neighborhoods where factories plan to locate.)

The SVA, says founder Mike Stout, “has the legal authority to acquire abandoned but viable manufacturing facilities, raise funding for their purchase and renovation, sell them to new owners or operate the renovated plants itself.”

But raising funds has been the SVA’s largest barrier. Paying “fair market value” for factories worth millions often proves impossible. “Most communities who belong to the SVA are bankrupt,” says FIRR’s Jim Benn. “The closure of plants has left them virtually no tax base. It’s a vicious cycle.”

The battle to save Dorothy Six, the last blast furnace at the Duquesne Works of U.S. Steel, near Pittsburgh, provides an example. In December 1983, U.S. Steel announced not only the mill’s shutdown, but its demolition. As Stout explains, “It was as though lightning had struck a sleeping giant. All of a sudden, the boroughs and workers woke up one day after being married to U.S. Steel for half a century to discover that the company had filed for divorce, packed its bags and said, ‘By the way, I’m taking the house and furniture with me too.’”

Union, community and religious ac-

Camille Colatosti, author of *Stopping Sexual Harassment: A Handbook for Union and Workplace Activists* directs the Working Women’s Project in Detroit.

tivists fought back. The demolition was stalled twice. A feasibility study confirmed the fact that a market existed for the mill's product — semi-finished slabs. But the SVA was, in the end, unable to raise the \$200 million needed to pay U.S. Steel. The mill was destroyed.

Employee ownership

Another Pittsburgh example, the story of City Pride Bakery, reinforces the need for new strategies to capitalize businesses that are important to the community.

It began in 1990, when Continental Ralston-Purina, the dog food conglomerate that owned the 100-year old Braun Bakery, the largest bakery in Pittsburgh, decided to close shop.

Tom Croft, executive director of the SVA, tells how Braun workers, members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers Union Local 12, fought the shutdown with a region-wide boycott, demonstrations and eminent domain action. "When the plant closed anyway," says Croft, "workers developed a strategy to finance a new bakery in Pittsburgh."

The union, the SVA and the community joined together to build the first worker-owned factory to be created from the ground up. They raised close to \$10 million from individual, community and business investors. "The project had phenomenal political support," says Croft. "Pittsburgh Mayor Sophie Masloff, the entire Pittsburgh City Council, the County Commissioner, and other state and congressional legislators, the AFL-CIO, the neighborhoods, some savvy lawyers, FIRR and church leaders were all behind the effort."

Before opening, the workers won a contract for eight million loaves of bread a year from local supermarkets. In its first

year, it employed 175 people, three-quarters of whom were former welfare recipients. Benn explains that for many City Pride workers, this was their first full-time job. The bakery established literacy and child care programs. Representatives from neighborhood organizations were placed on its board of directors.

But after one year, the fairy tale nearly ended. Under-capitalized from the start, the company went bankrupt. An investor

percent of all new businesses fail in the United States anyway, it's no surprise that employee-owned ventures, that have no capital with which to make mistakes, don't make it. For the employee-owned business, each error is almost always terminal."

For Benn, the City Pride example points to the need for greater public involvement in employee-owned companies from the startup.

Opposing tax abatements

One of the first steps towards greater public involvement, and towards holding corporations accountable, involves demanding that companies who do accept local, regional and state tax abatements fulfill their obligations to those communities.

Kary Moss, executive director of the Detroit-based Maurice and Jane Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice, a project of the National Lawyer's Guild, sees promise in a district court decision in a suit against General Motors. General Motors had pitted its Ypsilanti-based Willow

Run plant against an Arlington, Texas plant, to see which union local would offer the greatest concessions, which community would offer the largest tax breaks. After General Motors announced that it would keep Arlington open, Ypsilanti took the corporation to court, arguing that GM had not fulfilled promises made when it accepted over \$1.3 billion in tax abatements.

The court ruled on the community's side. And while the February, 1993 decision was eventually overturned, County Judge Donald Shelton wrote, "There would be a gross inequity and patent unfairness if General Motors, having lulled the people of the Ypsilanti area into giving up millions of tax dollars which



David McLimans

bought it from the workers and he kept the City Pride workforce and most of the company's innovative programs. But, in January 1994, with four days notice, the bakery closed again. Still, says Benn, "all is not lost. City Council is looking into new investors and hopes to start the bakery going again soon."

For Benn, the story of City Pride is the same as that for many employee-owned companies. "They are almost always undercapitalized. The companies aren't attractive to the private sector. If they were," says Benn, "they wouldn't have been up for sale, or employee takeover, in the first place. Bankers will give only the bottom line and are unsparing in their payment requirements. When you realize that 70

they so desperately need to educate their children and provide basic governmental services, is allowed to simply decide that it will desert 4,500 workers and their families because it thinks it can make the same cars a little cheaper somewhere else."

For Moss, this decision "advances the notion that workers have a right to a job. It also reinforces the idea that the auto industry has an obligation to the people who have produced its cars, and made its profits, for so many years."

Currently, Moss and the Sugar Law Center are developing a model contract to be used by communities who are considering offering tax abatements. The contract would clarify the corporation's obligations if an abatement is given.

Some communities are joining together across county or state lines to oppose corporate demands for tax breaks altogether. Together, two Indiana communities saved 350 jobs at the LaSalle Steel mill in Hammond, Indiana.

In the summer of 1990, LaSalle Steel, owned by Texas-based Quanex Corporation, planned to close and move to Frankfort, Indiana, just 100 miles away. LaSalle claimed that Frankfort offered reduced taxes and other incentives that made the offer too good to refuse.

But the independent Progressive Steelworkers Union and the Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs — an organization of unions, churches, and community members which was formed in the early 1980s in response to the loss of 40,000 industrial jobs in northwest Indiana — convinced the two city governments not to enter into a bidding war.

As Calumet Project leaders Bruce Nissen and Lynn Feekin explain, "The Hammond City Council and mayor wrote to their counterparts in Frankfort requesting that no public subsidies be given to LaSalle. The letters pointed out that a bidding war between the two towns would

only benefit the company. Expressing sympathy with Hammond officials, Frankfort Mayor Don Snyder responded favorably in his local press: 'I can't see us offering incentives for them to come here because I wouldn't want that to happen to any of our companies.'"

In the face of this pressure and unfavorable publicity, LaSalle reversed its decision. In late 1991, the Hammond plant even expanded its operations, employing additional workers.

Investing responsibly

Public pressure can also be exerted by shareholders. Starting in the early 1970s with Episcopal Presiding Bishop John Hines' call for divesting South Africa, church and community groups have pursued socially responsible investments. According to Tim Smith, director of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), some \$700 billion is currently invested with an eye to social responsibility. ICCR provides lists of corporations that pollute excessively, are involved in weapons production or which market hazardous products. ICCR works with groups which become members to consider appropriate portfolios.

Smith suggests that shareholders vote their proxies, initiate shareholders' resolutions and write letters to companies' boards of directors. "If you think a corporation shouldn't have an all white, male board, you can write to the company and let people know," he explains.

"We're very proud of the role we played to put pressure on corporations with investments in South Africa," says Smith. The ICCR endorsed a "Code of Conduct for Businesses Operating in South Africa" that was put forward by the South Africa Council of Churches..

"Our goal was to help force the South African government to come to the table," says Smith. "And they have."

Victories

While victories to hold corporations ac-

countable are rare, they aren't impossible. Many communities — especially closely knit towns which take on small to mid-size corporations, those without the resources of General Motors — have experienced success.

The Committee Against Schlage Plant Closing, in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, is a good example. Located in the heart of North Carolina's industrial expansion — the state has enticed more than 1,400 companies in the past 15 years — Rocky Mount is a primarily African-American community. It is also the home of the Black Workers for Justice, a statewide organization of workplace activists who struggle to unionize the South and to win African-American representation.

Schlage Lock Company operated a plant in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, between 1972 and 1988. At its height, it employed 800 workers, 80 percent of whom were African-American women. A subsidiary of the multinational Ingersoll-Rand, Schlage decided to relocate to Tecate, Mexico in 1987.

The decision was important. It demonstrated that corporations, which often move to the South because of the low-wage nonunion workforce, will stop at nothing to find cheaper labor. Rocky Mount workers averaged \$7 an hour. Tecate workers earn just \$3.50 a day.

The Committee Against Schlage Plant Closing lost the battle to keep the plant open, but they continued to fight for back pay and health benefits. Hourly workers had been denied severance and given only one month of health insurance, while management received severance pay, six months of extended health care, life insurance and bonuses. The Midwest Center for Labor Research — a Chicago-based research, organizing and educational service organization for labor unions and working-class communities — conducted research for the workers and found the cost of the shut-down to the

community to be \$10.5 million in lost taxes and unemployment insurance.

In the process of fighting for back pay, the Committee Against Schlage Plant Closing discovered some shocking news: 17 workers had died in a four-year period while scores of others suffered from chronic respiratory, liver, kidney and skin diseases linked to the use of lead, nickel and chrome at the plant.

The Schlage workers organized a May Day march and rally, drawing 300 people. And the workers won. The company agreed to severance pay for 500 workers employed at the time of shutdown. Schlage released pensions, and conducted health screening at company expense to all workers suspecting job-related illness.

Joan Sharpe, a leader of the Committee, explains how this victory made workers feel. "Most of us came right out of high school to work for Schlage. This was our first experience ever at educating ourselves about workers' rights. I learned that even in a non-union workplace, people can fight back."

The Schlage workers went on to establish a workers' association that helps people in other communities form similar organizations. Perhaps most significant, North Carolina Schlage workers visited their counterparts in Tecate, Mexico, warning them of the dangers of the chemicals they used and trying to establish links of international solidarity.

In El Paso, Texas, an organization of women garment workers, *La Mujer Obrera*, is making similar, international connections. Joining with their counterparts on the Mexico side of the Texas border, they use civil disobedience and hunger strikes to demand improved working conditions in the region's garment shops. On the most basic level, their work has ensured that workers are paid.

The garment industry today is overrun with subcontractors. Large companies, based primarily in New York, contract

work to small jobbers. These jobbers subcontract production to sweatshops like those in El Paso. The sweatshops employ primarily immigrant women, many of whom are unfamiliar with their rights. Owners promise payment when the contract is filled. But when the work is completed, women have trouble collecting. Often, workers arrive on payday to discover that the gate is locked and the employer has gone out of business.

La Mujer Obrera discovered that small employers often declare bankruptcy only to reopen a few weeks later, under a new name with a new contract. *La Mujer's* strategy involves pressuring the subcontractors, as well as the larger garment companies who award the contracts.

Just recently, for example, 14 workers won back wages of \$3,000 from Just-In-Time, a garment sweatshop that closed in July, but owed workers two weeks of back pay. To win, workers organized picket protests and press conferences against the sweatshop owner and the jobber who awarded the contract. *La Mujer* also reached out to union members across the country and convinced many to write letters to JonBil Manufacturing, the New York firm for whom the work was done.

Finally, to prevent future problems, *La Mujer* created a Garment Industry Commission, made up of labor, business and government officials. Its goal is to shape an industrial development strategy for the city.

National industrial policy

La Mujer's efforts demonstrate how important it is for communities to demand responsibility from the businesses they support. But economic development, in the end, requires national solutions.

The Sugar Law Center has been instrumental in winning laws to protect workers against plant closures. The most significant victory to date is the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN), the federal law that re-

quires companies with 100 or more workers to provide 60 days notice of a plant closing or massive layoff. It took effect in February 1989 and, though it is by no means perfect, it has given millions of workers advance notice of shutdowns and it has enabled state dislocated worker programs to assist more people than they could have reached before.

Kary Moss hopes to improve the legislation to, as she explains, "lower the employer threshold." That is, she wants the law to apply to all employers. And she wants to lower the threshold for the number of people a company must lay off before the WARN act goes into effect. Currently, an employer must lay off one-third of its workforce within a 30-day period in order to be subject to WARN. "Many companies simply manipulate this limitation," says Moss.

Eventually, Moss, like FIRR's Jim Benn, would like to see a national industrial policy. As Benn explains, there must be parity for all communities. This means that one state doesn't try to underbid another, promising greater and greater tax reductions, to woo companies. Also, economic anchors for communities must promote justice and be supportive of national sectoral strategies, such as steel and auto. They must have an international perspective and be linked to training and educational programs. Perhaps most important, though, there must be a national commitment to fund economic development. "We need loans and grants to shape business plans to educate workers, managers and directors," says Benn.

As Benn sees it, the country doesn't have time to waste arguing about the future. "We face the most severe economic crisis of the past 60 years. We are witnessing the destruction of our production capacity. Our cities are in decay. Poverty increases. We must respond with vision and determination. And we must respond now."

RAY

Spiritual warfare and economic justice

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers — all things have been created through Christ and for Christ.

— Colossians 1:15-16

Among the biblical resources for Christian economic thinking, there is none more important (nor more neglected) than the theology of principalities and powers.

When William Stringfellow, who must be credited with the theological and political discernment which has since awakened so much of the recent practical interest in the powers, first began in the early 1960s to speak on the topic, he had a strange encounter. He was slated to give two identical presentations in Boston, one at the Harvard Business School and another at a nearby seminary. He debated with himself about excising, from the business-school version, any explicit biblical reference or language, but de-

cided in the end to let it stand intact. The business-school students, it turned out, engaged him thoroughly, bending his ear with numerous examples from their own experience of corporate dominance, of distortion and possession by the commercial powers. Their experiences verified his own observation.

Later at the seminary, with the identical speech, he was ridiculed and written off. Ruling authorities, principalities, world rulers of the present darkness! Come now! These were but the incidental vestige of a quaint and archaic language, an esoteric parlance now obsolete, with no real meaning in history or human life. Such was the debasement and neglect of the biblical understanding then current.

Stringfellow's insight from scripture — the one which rang true with the business students — was that economic institutions were creatures with a life and integrity, even a vocation, of their own. He recognized them, however, as creatures utterly fallen and in bondage to death. If we can comprehend this alone, it will alter substantially the character of our economic practice.

There is a certain public acknowledgment of some of this in the legal convention which considers corporations as "persons" before the court. More is here

than anthropomorphic fiction; they are treated whole, as living entities. And as often in such matters, that whole is something more than the sum of its parts. The whole has a life and a momentum, almost a will of its own, transcending or overshadowing, directing as it were (so the business students confirmed), even the wills of those who presume to direct the corporate body. Here is an experience not far from Adam Smith's notion of the market's "invisible hand" moving in a pattern which no individuals completely control.

It is perhaps with respect to the "invisible" aspect of economic life that Christians may make the greatest contribution. As the Colossian hymn attests, the powers are both heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. Walter Wink is the theologian who has most developed this understanding of the "spirituality of institutions" — recognizing their invisible, interior dimension. (See *Engaging the Powers*, Fortress, 1992 — reviewed in *The Witness* 3/94). Beginning from the biblical record, he has inferred that "every Power tends to have a visible pole, an outer form — be it a church, a nation, or an economy — and an invisible pole, an inner spirit or driving force that animates, legitimates, and regulates its physical

manifestation in the world."

General Motors, let us say, has a particular spirit (as does the food co-op down the block). Anthropologists brink on understanding this when they speak of "corporate culture." To join the corporation fully is to enter into that spirit and identity.

Conventional economic analysis, whether of the left or the right, is notoriously materialistic, which is to say blind to fully half of social reality. We must be alert that real, substantial, systemic change entails a spiritual transformation as well.

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And because of this common spirit, one could replace the executives, shuffle personnel, even modify the product line, but little of substance would actually change overall. The institution's interior gyroscope maintains the direction and fundamental character of its values.

We are only just beginning to surmise the implications of this for the work of economic transformation on scales both large and small. Conventional economic analysis, whether of the left or the right, is notoriously materialistic, which is to say blind to fully half of social reality. We must be alert that real, substantial, systemic change entails a spiritual transformation as well. A big question for us must be: How can the church bring the gift of discernment to economic change, naming and addressing the assorted institutional spirits, hand in hand with the work of material restructuring?

The creatureliness of the powers also means that they stand as "persons" not only before the courts, but before the judgement of God. As with human creatures, they are accountable for fulfilling their God-given vocations, for being who they are uttered in the Word of God to be. As Colossians puts it, they were created in and through and for Christ — which is to say for humanity in its fullness. Stringfellow used to say that the primary vocation of the principalities was to praise God and serve human life. We might amend to say: serve creation as well. Imagine General Motors or General Dynamics (or even the local co-op) held to such an account. Of course each power has a more particular and concrete calling. The vocation of the commercial media, for example, might be to serve human beings by getting the truth out; the vocation of the health care system is to nurture and heal; the vocation of an auto company, I suppose, is to serve creation by facilitating transportation.

As a tool of analysis and discernment,

"vocation" is at once a simple and radical idea. It means Christians begin by asking about root purposes. What is a bank for? What is a health care system for? What, even, is an economy for?

pretty sure the vocation of the media has nothing to do with turning a profit by the repetition of lies or official disinformation. As Jesus once put it (in loose translation), "I may not be sure what a House of Prayer



Franco, © 1981, *The New Yorker Magazine*, Inc.

To some these queries will seem naive or simple-minded, because certain purposes are assumed beyond question, or threatening because certain vocations have been forgotten or even inverted. For example, contrary to popular assumption, the purpose of an economy is not "to grow" or to centralize or to globalize. If I remember correctly, Florence Nightingale is reported to have quipped, "I may not be sure what a hospital is for, but I'm pretty certain it's not for the spread of disease." I'm not sure what a defense industry is for, but I'm pretty sure it's not domination and annihilation. And I'm

is for, but I'm pretty certain it's not to be a den of thieves."

What is suggested here is the radical confusion of vocation from which the assorted economic principalities suffer. It is part of their fallen character. They forget who they are called to be. Instead of praising God and serving human life, they imagine they are gods, dominate human life and assault creation. They become literally demonic. Were economic institutions made for humanity, or humanity for the institutions? The bumper sticker logion, "People before profits," is a theological affirmation.

In Detroit there is a bank which ran an ad campaign some years back averring itself to be the bank “where the bottom line is you.” This of course is a bold-faced lie, as could be demonstrated in court, human or divine. At that financial institution, it is the bottom line which is the bottom line. (Though it must be granted there remains in the ad some vague notion, a haunting commercial memory, of what the vocation of a bank ought to be).

The simplest confusion, the initial act of forgetting a creaturely vocation, stems from a power making its own structural survival the first and final priority. In the institutional realm of economic powers this leads to a deadly “ethic of survival” — and becomes virtually the *only* morality which governs among them. It sets the powerfully self interest above every other. We witnessed it in the clash of competing economies in the Cold War era which, arming themselves to the nuclear max, were prepared to incinerate half the planet for the sake of “survival.” It was plain in the deadly and death-dealing bureaucracy of eastern-block command economies (ironically where Marxist eschatology had envisioned their benevolent withering away). We see it in the predatory combat of corporate takeover with its contempt for human consequences in the devoured corporation. It is attested where companies move their operations (south of the border, for example) blithely abandoning communities to which they are truly indebted. It is plain in the famous “war” of capital against labor — the exploitation of human beings as workers. It is apparent in the production and aggressive marketing of commodities known to be harmful to human beings — from cigarettes to handguns to Pintos and Dalcon Shields. It is exposed in the contempt for the ecosystem, pouring toxic by-products into rivers and airstreams. In these and endless examples which might be named, the willingness to spoil creation and to domi-

nate human beings, for the sake of corporate survival, is manifest.

The principalities’ radical anxiety about survival is in fact their homage to death. It signifies at once a worship of and a bondage to the power of death, in Stringfellow’s view. Wink’s term for the ethic of death, its spirit and logic, is the “domination system.” Both are apt and accurate.



Helen Siegl

I think of an incident in Detroit a few years ago, replicated in many places, where one teenager was killed by another over a pair of gym shoes. The event could be analyzed in terms of their family and social histories, but it is edifying just to identify a few of the economic principalities hovering about, at work in the deadly moment. There is, of course, the international shoe manufacturing conglomerate, paying women in Korea, say, the barest wages to make the shoe. There is the ad agency, virtually indifferent to the actual product, whose work is to make the “name” of the shoe a household desire. They certainly had a billboard just up the street. “Name” incidently in the

biblical scheme may itself be considered a principality — as in “above every power and name.” Then there are the principalities of commercial sports and in particular the “image” of the sports personality which has been associated with the shoe to inflate its value and meaning. The “image” also is a distinct principality — often incorporated itself (and thereby having the standing of a person before the courts!). There is the handgun manufacturer, probably based in Connecticut, muscling for a share of the \$16 billion annual market. Here again there is a chain of marketing and distribution principalities — including some 4,000 licensed dealers in the Detroit area, and of course one of the most powerful political lobbies in Washington, the NRA [National Rifle Association], to keep the product flowing. Finally, there is the general spirit of consumption, in which false needs are rendered virtually an addiction. All of these, and more, are at work in the shooting. This is not to say the boy pulling the trigger and running is not personally responsible, but merely to acknowledge and name the powers, visible and invisible, who play an aggressive and predatory part in the death.

The spirit of consumption merits further comment. In America it is like the air we breathe, an “atmosphere” which is polluting the entire globe. It functions like a generalized spirit of addiction. From the insights of the therapeutic community we are coming to see that the addictive process itself is deeply entrenched in, indeed intrinsic to, our culture. Therapists like Anne Wilson Schaef are speaking of the “addictive society.” Just as the alcoholic invariably is part of a dysfunctional family, or a *system* of relationships which are all co-operating and co-dependent with the addict, so these same patterns operate on the broader scale of culture. Within an array of common mechanisms people are addicted to consuming

in its endless variety. There is a shock of recognition in seeing writ large in culture the patterns of the individual addict and family system: pursuit of power and control, deception, amnesia, scarcity as the model, confusion and projection, and at a deep level, fear — these permeate the system. The mechanisms of addiction are endemic to the culture of consumption and synonymous with its spirit. They comprise the consuming spiritual matrix in which our economic practice is formed.

Jesus spoke of the spirituality of “Mammon.” His ministry included a number of instances of naming and rebuking the principalities in a concrete and demystified sense. The action at the temple currency exchange was surely one of them. None, however, was more explicit and forthright than tagging money or wealth as Mammon. He literally named it for us. This is more than a quaint or archaic synonym; Jesus identifies Mammon’s aggression in competing with God for human allegiance. You cannot serve both, he says.

Jesus points to money’s invisible power. We are deluded to imagine that it is a mere passive medium of exchange, an abstract reference or token of balance. Mammon itself is a spiritual power which acts with a kind of autonomy, directing and controlling, and finally possessing, human life. We must not be naive in this regard if we are to imagine and create new economic forms.

Actually, Karl Marx had a related idea about money as a spiritual power. He wrote of it as alienation, naturally. Specifically he recognized the projection of human labor and human life onto money, in such a way that it takes on “life” of its own. (See Franz Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death*, Orbis, 1981.) It takes on a religious aura and is made sacred. This is his theory of “fetishism” in which money (or commodities or capital) is “personified” and human beings

are “commoditized.” (A familiar inversion or reversal, no?) He even identified it with the Anti-Christ, with the mark of the beast in Revelation 13! Money becomes an autonomous power determined not by the will of human beings, but instead by the logic of exchange itself.

How do we break the grip of this idolatrous power onto which we project our lives? In *Money and Power* (IVP, 1984), Jacques Ellul writes of a certain freedom as the very thing which profanes the sacred power of money:

“Now this profanation is first of all the result of a spiritual battle, but this must be translated into behavior. There is one act par excellence which profanes money by going directly against the law of money, an act for which money is not made. This act is *giving*. Individuals as well as authorities know very well that giving attacks something sacred. They know full well that it is an act of profanation, of destruction of a value they worship.”

Where this happens liturgically, albeit

A biblical understanding of the powers authorizes action which confronts and rebukes commercial principalities. It nurtures in us a freedom from the spirit of consumption, and the grace to break the law of money by creating a culture and economy of gift.

unbeknownst and unrecognized, is in the Sunday morning offering. We are accustomed to imagining (often as a thin guise for moneygrubbing utilitarianism) that money brought to the altar is thereby set apart as “sanctified.” Let the profane be made sacred — so go our prayers. To the

contrary, says Ellul, exactly the opposite transpires: it is desacralized. I suppose money’s vocation to praise God and serve human life may also be restored in the context of worship. There is something wondrous in imagining a new economy beginning at the altar, beginning literally in eucharist.

Stringfellow thought the church had a unique vocation to be the “exemplary principality,” the one which was not to be caught up in the survival ethic because it was not to be anxious about its own death. The church was to be the institution which knew the freedom to die — and thereby was the institution free to risk everything, all its resources, even itself. One smiles at bitter ironies. But also at wondrous possibilities. It may yet prove that churches are indeed the very place that a new and renewed economy can begin. If we are willing to risk.

A biblical understanding of the powers invites us to discern the invisible dimension of economic power. It encourages radical questioning about the vocation of economic institutions, and their confused inversions. It authorizes action which confronts and rebukes commercial principalities, calling them to repentance — which is to say, to the restoration of their creaturely vocations. It nurtures in us a freedom from the spirit of consumption, and the grace to break the law of money by creating a culture and economy of gift.

Perhaps lastly and most importantly, it may grant us the wisdom to recognize that our new efforts will not escape the fall. Our land trusts and co-ops and neighborhood entrepreneurial projects will become petty principalities, will forget where they began, will be tempted by a survival mentality. It is, alas, even so with exemplary powers. They too, we pray, will be summoned now and again and always to praise God and serve human life.

TW

Beyond corporate bondage

by Grace Lee Boggs

In the last five years companies like IBM, Xerox and Sears have been “shedding” technicians, management and sales personnel by the tens of thousands. In January 1994, even as the economy was growing, 108,949 people were laid off. PhDs and MBAs can’t find jobs in their professions, and a recent cartoon depicted university graduates being given “Will Work for Food” signs instead of diplomas.

Having been shed by corporations whom they had begun to think of as family, millions are making their own jobs as “consultants,” utilizing their skills as mechanics, desktop publishers, financial advisers, etc. to keep a roof over their heads. Often this self-employment is in addition to a more traditional job at minimum wages. The administration boasts of the millions of new jobs that have been created but glosses over the fact that most of these pay too little to live on. “I know why there are so many new jobs,” one man commented. “My wife and I hold four of them.”

At the same time Americans, particularly in our inner cities, have become increasingly conscious that we must find ways to rebuild our communities which have been falling apart over the last 50 years, not only because of abandonment by global corporations, but because so many people have been pursuing the American dream of individual upward

mobility out of the community.

Until the 1960s, segregation and discrimination limited the mobility of blacks, but in the wake of the civil rights and Black Power movements, the black middle class has followed the same path



John Willens

of individual upward mobility out of the inner city, shattering the multi-class and multi-generational diversity which in the midst of poverty and blatant racial oppression once nurtured the cultural vitality of the black ghetto.

That is why so many people in our inner cities now talk so passionately about building community-based local econo-

mies, using our human skills which require little capital investment and learning how to do more with less, as blacks have done down through the years.

As incomes shrink, they say, we have to change the way we think about economics, not only to meet our material needs for food, clothing and shelter, but also to recreate the ties with one another across class and generational lines which once enabled us to survive as a people. In Detroit, for example, an informal group of elders, calling themselves “The Gardening Angels,” plant community pesticide-free gardens, not only to produce healthier food for themselves and their neighbors, but so that they can impart to young people a sense of respect for nature and for process. People are utilizing their artisan skills to start small local enterprises, not only to keep money from leaving the community, but because they are determined to maintain and pass on these skills to young people.

Buying our needs at neighborhood stores to which we can walk or bike, and taking our clothes to the corner laundromat rather than each household buying its own washer and dryer, will not only be more economical; it will discourage criminals because it will mean more people on the streets looking out for one another. Locally produced goods and services will be of better quality because they will be produced for folks we know rather than for faceless consumers thousands of miles away. Producing goods and services on a small scale may cost a little more, but in the long run the social and environmental benefits are incalculable.

Quietly but unmistakably, a new American dream, a better reason to work and a new concept of economics-as-if people-and-nature-matter are taking shape.

Where will the financial support for this new economics come from? We can no longer depend upon traditional meth-

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ods of financing. Over the years local governments have depended for jobs and economic development upon outside investors and profit-making corporations, attracting them with an educated work force and infrastructural improvements, roads, sewers etc. The theory has been that what benefits these absentee owners, whose goal is to make a profit out of producing goods for export to other localities, also benefits local communities because of the jobs they provide. Most local administrations, regardless of race, are still operating by this theory, although even a fool can see that in this period of transnational capitalism it makes us hostage to corporations who extort tax abatements and other concessions with promises of jobs which rarely materialize, while they continue to blackmail us by threatening to relocate.

The strategy for financing community-based economies has to be based on different principles because the goals are different. The emphasis has to be on development of the community and the people in the community, on local control and local ownership, and on production chiefly for local/regional consumption rather than for export. Instead of a few big projects promising thousands of jobs, our aim should be to develop a variety of small local projects.

The main sources for financial support must be institutions which are part of the community and have a stake in the community: churches, local credit unions, local pension funds, co-ops, community land trusts, and community loan banks.

However, long before contacting these sources for funding, we need to build the human infrastructure for the new economy by encouraging the *organization on a voluntary basis of relatively simple activities which meet the practical needs of peoples' daily lives*.

For example, support networks to look out for each other; community gardens

and neighborhood markets to sell the produce from these gardens; community recycling projects; community repair shops; community daycare networks; community mediation centers; skills banks and exchanges in churches, workplaces and neighborhoods; programs (like

Detroit Summer) which engage young people with community groups on community-building projects. We need to enter into covenants with our friends, families, neighbors, fellow workers and church members; e.g., pledge with one another to buy locally produced food and

In the third world

It is women of color all over the world who are beginning to create the new dreams of the 21st century. Over the last 20 years people are finally waking up to the fact that women are not only the poorest section of the population but we do most of the world's work.

In the third-world countries women grow most of the crops, fetch most of the water, collect most of the fuel, feed most of the animals, weed most of the fields. And when their work outside the home is done, they light the fires, cook meals, do the cleaning and shipping, wash the clothes, bear and care for the children and for the old and the sick.

As this truth is dawning on women of color, they are transforming themselves from victims into activists and in the process creating the seeds of a new economy based more on community self-reliance than on technology, and social relationships based more on co-operation than on competition and domination.

For example, in Subsaharan Africa there are thousands of groups, ranging in size from 20 to 200, of villagers who have recognized that they cannot depend upon their governments or the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for economic development.

So they are working to end hunger through collective self-reliance, planting fields, diversifying cereal, fruit and vegetable crops, creating village granaries, bartering food between regions.

These groups, mostly led by women, are also changing centuries-old social relationships, not only encouraging women and young people to speak up but regulating dowries and other costly ceremonies celebrating baptisms and deaths.

In Bangladesh, *Grameen* banks have been organized in thousands of villages. *Grameen* is the Bangla word for rural. These banks have over a half-million members — the majority of them landless women. They are based on the principle that people's participation — and not technology — is the single most important force in generating socio-economic development and that the best way to combat poverty is to act as a group.

So *Grameen* members are organized into small groups of five members each who borrow money from the bank for economic activities, ranging all the way from manufacturing fans, boats or umbrellas to peddling or raising milk cows. The loanees are not just individuals: the groups collectively make the decisions as to who gets a loan and how much. Only after the first two member recipients have demonstrated that they will make regular payments are the next two members eligible. In this way the members together uphold and nurture the four principles of *Grameen* banking: discipline, unity, courage and hard work. There are now *Grameen* banks in half of Bangladesh's 68,000 villages.

— G.B.

products rather than food and goods produced thousands of miles away, most likely by low-paid workers under unsafe, unhealthy conditions.

The possibilities are endless. Many of these activities are already taking place. As corporations continue to downsize and more people realize that the era of “better jobs” is over, we will be forced to depend more on one another, creating the conditions for a self-developing movement towards collective self-reliance.

At the same time, we need to make our schools into an integral part of the community, and stop viewing them as institutions to prepare young people for upward mobility out of the community. The best antidote to youth violence is providing opportunities for children and young people to play meaningful and productive roles in their families, schools and communities: child care, small repairs and maintenance in the home, community and school, planting gardens, keep-

ing the school grounds and the neighborhood clean and attractive, organizing health demonstrations in the community, etc. We need more youth credit unions and economic development programs for young people like the one at Joy Middle School in my neighborhood, which was organized a couple of years ago to combat gang violence. Another model is the Occupational Skills Training Academy on the east campus of Wayne County Community College, where residents learn construction and maintenance skills chiefly in order to help rebuild the community rather than to get a job.

As we carry on and expand such community-building activities, we will discover that we are beginning to create an informal and collectively self-reliant economy which operates outside of the market economy. At the same time, we will be learning how to work together and make decisions together, how to empower and develop leadership capacities, espe-

cially of young people and women, how to learn from our elders, and how to make the best use of our human and natural resources.

The economy we will be creating will not be self-sufficient; it is not likely to replace the capitalist economy in the foreseeable future — although it is worth remembering that long before the word “capitalism” was invented, its seeds were being planted by merchants operating in the interstices of European feudalism. However, in the course of becoming collectively more self-reliant, we will also be transforming ourselves into the kinds of human beings who can make more informed and thoughtful choices and who are therefore better able to resist the blandishments of capitalist advertising.

Creating community-based economies has become a necessity for our material and social survival, as well as a means by which we can become better people. **TW**

Environmental justice

In this country African-American, Chicana, Native-American and Asian-American women are in the forefront of the environmental justice movement at the neighborhood level. This movement is not only fighting against the pollution and toxic wastes which are disproportionately killing people of color and poor people in this country. It is also struggling to create a new vision of equity and sustainability for our devastated cities.

Over the last few years the environmental justice movement has changed the meaning of the word environment so that it now not only stands for air, water and land but for what is going on in our cities: poverty, violence, unemployment, poor housing and inadequate education.

The movement not only includes thousands of grassroots housewives and mothers but hundreds of women lawyers, scientists and doctors who have come from the community and are now eager to use their skills and positions to empower community groups.

It has taken the introduction of the terms “environmental racism” and “environmental justice” to spark indigenous organizing around what is actually happening to people locally: water and soil poisoning by toxic waste, uranium tailings, pesticide and lead poisoning, epidemics of cancer and lupus, etc. The result has been the emergence of groups like Jesus People Against Pollution and MUSES (Mother United to Stop Environmental Suicide).

Paradoxically this has also created a new dynamic between ethnic groups which was not present in Jesse Jackson’s

Rainbow Coalition (mainly, I think, because it was black-led and predominantly black). The beautiful thing about these people of color gatherings is that they are not racial. You don’t feel the polarization which is always an undercurrent in black/white gatherings because of the 400-year history of racist oppression and struggle.

Also, because people of color do not have the same mobility as whites (not only because of discrimination but for their own cultural reasons) you get a sense of commitment to the places and communities where families live, often for generations. And mainly because of the powerful presence of Native Americans in the movement, the scientific rationalism which has dominated western thought all these years is constantly being challenged.

— G.B.

Bringing the cost to light

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

The trillions of dollars that the United States spent to fight the Cold War are usually condensed into images of high-tech aircraft and missiles, or reports of \$600 military hammers. But it is easy to forget that many of these expenditures were, and still are, buried away in secret programs and black budgets out of the public view. Others have been camouflaged within remote or unremarkable landscapes: the midwestern farm fields that harbor missile silos, Washington's Hanford Reserve — or Colorado's Rocky Flats, a scrubby stretch of mesa land between Denver and the Rocky Mountains. Most people drive by the unimpressive industrial buildings with hardly a second glance.

For six months during 1990-91, however, artist John Craig Freeman's five garish red billboards helped call significantly more attention to this now-closed nuclear processing facility. Standing near its entrance gate and proclaiming "Today we made a commitment for 250,000 years," they reminded people that this piece of Colorado landscape was thoroughly saturated with plutonium, the radioactive poison that had been produced in Rocky Flats' factories for over 40 years. In fact, the main production building alone was discovered to have more than 62 pounds of plutonium dust scattered throughout its nooks and ventilation systems. (Scientists have estimated that a few micrograms of plutonium breathed in by a person could be enough to cause cancer.) The 250,000 years to which the billboards refer represents the

period it will take for this plutonium to decay into a relatively harmless state — quite a long time indeed, Freeman points out, since the entire history of human farming spans only about 12,000 years.

What did it cost to produce this plutonium in the frenzy of the Cold War? What

designing the images on a Macintosh computer, and then printing them out — one letter-sized piece of colored paper at a time — on a laserprinter, and assembling them onto the boards that would cover the five 20-by-30-foot billboards.

With support from Greenpeace, Freeman was able to secure leases on the billboards and get the posters put into place. Ironically, a local environmental group opposed the project, arguing that the billboards were ugly and detrimental



Operation Greenrun II North Installation, northbound Hwy. 93 at Rocky Flats, Colorado, November 1990 to April, 1991, John Craig Freeman.

Bill Stamets

will it cost to clean up and contain it during the next decade? What will it cost to secure it during the next 250,000 years? What did it cost many unknowing Americans who were experimented upon without their knowledge or consent, in terms of lost health and income, or pain? Similarly, what did it cost the thousands of soldiers who were positioned near atomic-bomb explosions — many fueled by plutonium from Rocky Flats?

These were the kinds of thoughts that motivated artist Freeman to convert a previously blank set of billboards into a potent communication tool. Freeman undertook the entire project on his own,

to their surroundings, even though the message they carried was noncommercial and ecologically crucial. Ultimately, it was this conflict on the political left that attracted tremendous media attention to Freeman's project, bringing its message to an even wider audience than originally had been envisioned.

TW

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz, Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society Section of *The Witness*.



Harnessing church funds: an interview with Doug Theuner

Douglas Theuner, Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, is outspoken on questions of proactive investment of money in socially constructive ways. He is responsible for helping his diocese and several of the agencies of which he is a board member, including the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, owner of The Witness, to reinvest some of their funds in creative ways.

Julie Wortman: How have you gotten involved in discussions in the faith community about socially responsible investments?

Douglas Theuner: My involvement goes back to a general concern for stewardship which began when I was concerned about the use of church property, both when I was rector of St. Paul's in Willimantic, Conn., from 1968 until 1974, and then when I went to St. John's in Stamford, Conn., where we were property rich. In more recent years, as bishop, I've been working with the trustees of the Diocese of New Hampshire to try to find responsible ways to invest our money. That, in turn, has led me to a concern about the investments of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

The church has been pretty good in recent years about concern for what it does with its income, but where does it invest its assets? There is what I call "negative" or "passive" investment, which has to do with not putting money into anything bad, but the step beyond that is "active" or "positive" investment, which has to do with asking, "Where should we put our 'working' money to accomplish the goals coming out of the Gospel imperative?"

J.W.: What kind of vehicles do you have in mind for that kind of investment?

D.T.: Until recently, my experience has



Doug Theuner

been limited to something called the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund, one of the original community loan funds in the country. When the Episcopal Church's economic justice initiative was passed by the 1988 General Convention in Detroit, we decided that in New Hampshire our focus would be affordable housing. And so we got involved big-time in the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund, which was organized to assist low-income people in obtaining housing. At this point the diocese has given, loaned or leveraged over \$500,000. And now we're becoming active in trying to get other denominations to become involved.

J.W.: These days there is a lot of talk throughout the church about financial crises, but I've heard you say that the church is sitting on a pot of gold.

D.T.: The church is sitting on *pots* of gold! I don't have any hard statistics available, but by doing some projections I've estimated that the agencies of the Episcopal Church, U.S.A., probably have between \$35 and \$45 billion invested and that is *not* counting non-income-produc-

ing real estate.

J.W.: And an "agency" would be like a diocese?

D.T.: A diocese, a hospital, a social-service agency, a convent, a seminary ... In New Hampshire, if I look at the private schools in this state plus the diocese, the amount is probably about \$250 million dollars in invested funds. Now, granted, most of that is St. Paul's School, which the church doesn't control in any way, but, nevertheless, it's Episcopal Church money.

J.W.: What would it look like if the church and its various agencies were to make some concerted effort to get organized about this?

D.T.: You can start simply, as I said, by divesting bad stock and then investing in loan funds and other things of which you approve. Then you can move on to establishing your own loan fund, your own community development corporations. There's no reason in the world why the church couldn't start its own bank! Churches or a consortium of churches — it doesn't have to be the whole denomination — could start a bank. You could start an investment service. You could start a mutual fund.

For instance, the Vermont National Bank has a socially responsible investment fund that in a 10-year period has developed about \$19 million in assets. People who invest in that fund understand that their investments will be used only for five areas of relatively local concern — agriculture, small business, housing, environment and education. And that's the fastest growing component of the Vermont National Bank. Now, there's no reason churches couldn't go to their own local banks and say "Hey, local bank, why don't you do this if you want to use our money?"

J.W.: What obstacles do you see to the church being willing to do that?

D.T.: Well, the basic obstacle is the old

bugaboo about fiduciary responsibility. There's the mistaken assumption that you cannot do socially responsible business and make money. In other words, you *can't* put your money in good things and have it grow. And that simply is not true. There are whole funds — like Franklin Research and Development Corporation (Boston, Mass.), into which the Episcopal Church Publishing Company is probably going to put its money — that have a very good rate of return and invest only in what they consider to be socially responsible investments.

J.W.: You consider this a watershed time for the socially-responsible investment movement?

D.T.: Yes. At the beginning of the 1970s Presiding Bishop John Hines filed the first church shareholder resolution on behalf of peace and justice — he asked that General Motors Corporation stop doing business with South Africa. That marked the beginning of the corporate responsibility movement, which has now grown to nearly \$700 billion in total in-

vested portfolio worth.

The engine that drove that movement was South African divestment. But now, with the ending of divestment in South Africa, I'm concerned about where all the energy that went into South Africa is going to go.

J.W.: Do you have a strategy for putting this before the church?

D.T.: Not really. I'm putting it to as many people as I possibly can and I'm finding a lot of interest everywhere. Our diocese has gone to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and asked them to become partners with us in setting up a pool of socially screened and socially responsible community development investments in New Hampshire, so that we can go out to institutions — primarily schools and churches and colleges — and say, "Hey folks! Why don't you put some of your endowment capital into this." So that's a way that we're trying to use the church's leverage to get to a larger group of investors. If we can have an Episcopal Church Publishing Company, I don't

know why we can't have an Episcopal Church Investment Company.

J.W.: Speaking of ECPC, you mentioned that the board is considering reinvesting with Franklin Research and Development. Do you have anything else to say about ECPC's commitment?

D.T.: My concern is that we don't discharge our responsibility by just taking our money from one money manager and placing it with another money manager.

We need a concerted strategy. ECPC has under \$3 million. If we get together and take our \$3 million and somebody else's \$3 million and someone else's \$3 million, before you know it we'd have enough money to really exercise some clout somewhere. The Episcopal Church — like some others — not only has the money, we have people with the investment expertise, we have everything we need to release this incredible amount of money. Yes, we have shortfalls, we have operating problems, but a church that sits on that kind of wealth cannot say we're poor, because we're not. **TV**

ECPC and socially responsible investing

In mid-1970s the Episcopal Church Publishing Company went public with its commitment to using investment funds for justice. It joined the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, divested all stock in companies doing business in South Africa and dedicated ten percent of its endowment to low-return loans for domestic and international community development.

Twenty years later, ECPC board members were shocked to learn that they had accumulated stock in a number of companies that the ICCR considered problematic. ECPC owned shares in companies with terrible environmental records and defense contractors.

Now the finance committee is recommending that the board remove the endowment from Brown Brothers Harriman, a major investment firm, and place it in the hands of a socially responsible investment corporation. These firms are sensitive to justice concerns. In some cases, they are even proactive — investing in companies with good employee, environmental or community track records. They identify companies with commitment to the CERES principles, concerning the environment, and the MacBride principles, concerning economic justice in North Ireland. There are similar efforts to secure humane conditions for workers in China, Taiwan, India and the Philippines.

Board members will also consider placing money in the McGehee Fund, a revolving loan fund named for Coleman McGehee, retired bishop of Michigan and former ECPC chairperson. This fund allows investors to set a rate of return, which can be below market value, and to put their money in the hands of community development advocates. [For more information, contact John Hooper at the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, 4800 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Mich., 48201.]

Lastly, the board will consider whether it can help facilitate creation of an Episcopal Church or Ecumenical Mutual Fund which invests church money proactively, becoming a stronger force in the finance community for social justice.

Indianapolis '94 Can we avoid this budget quicksand?

by Julie A. Wortman

The folks at the Appalachian People's Service Organization (APSO) in Knoxville, Tenn., first got wind of the fact that the church's Executive Council was proposing to eliminate all future national church funding for their agency's social justice work this past February, when a Virginia reporter called for their reaction to the plan, made official at the council's meeting in Norfolk, Va., only hours before.

"We expected reduced funding, but not this," APSO's Sandy Elledge said when she called *The Witness'* office in frustrated search of a copy of the suddenly "hot" budget document a few days later.

APSO was not the only group blindsided by the council's proposal for a dramatically downsized and revamped national church program and budget — a plan precipitated by a projected shortfall of \$5 million in diocesan support for 1995. "None of the agencies or individuals involved have been consulted about these proposed changes," bristled a fax sent directly to the Norfolk meeting by the Episcopal Church's Joint Commission on AIDS/HIV. The commission decried, in particular, the elimination of national staffing for AIDS ministry.

Suspect 'listening process'

A few weeks later, participants at the annual assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus in Charlotte, N.C. — a grassroots coalition which since its formation in 1980 has played a critical role in the creation of the Jubilee Ministries program and in lobbying for economic justice initiatives — frowned as the national church's peace and justice officer, Brian Grieves, justified the council's cuts to national social action

ministries by pointing to the results of a "listening process" in which teams of national church staff and Executive Council members had visited dioceses to find out what "excited" and "concerned" local church members about their mission and ministries — and what kind of help they'd like the national church to provide. The teams heard a lot about "lifelong spiritual formation and faith development," youth ministry and "local outreach in mission and evangelism," but not much about making connections with either the ecumenical community or the larger Anglican communion. The listeners also heard little about dealing with "the hard issues, like racism," Diane Porter, the national church's senior executive for program, acknowledged during the Executive Council's Norfolk meeting. This raised the uncomfortable question, she said, of how "we remain true to the 'listening process,' and continue to bring forth the prophetic voice of the church regarding the unpopular issues?"

"Did we ask the right questions?" Grieves asked rhetorically at the Urban Caucus assembly in Charlotte. "Not really," he admitted.

So why, many caucus activists wondered, had the "listening process" become so sacrosanct?

"The 'listening process' was not an open process," the Episcopal Peace Fellowship's (EPF) Mary Miller pointed out, noting that only persons invited by the diocesan bishops could participate in the consultations. "Lots of voices were left out," conceded Judy Conley, former national president of the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) and a current member of the 38-person Executive Council. Conley attended four of the diocesan visitations, only two of which, she said, seemed "broadly representative" of diocesan membership and ministries.

Other caucus members wondered why the listeners had not paid more attention to the 1988 General Convention's emphasis on a national economic justice strategy or the 1991 General Convention's commitment to making anti-racism efforts a nine-year, national church priority.

"There's a disconnect between what General Convention decides and what the Presiding Bishop's national staff does," said Mike Kendall, an archdeacon in the Diocese of New York.

Flawed operating assumption

Almost universally, too, caucus reaction was skeptical of the budget proposal's principal operating assumption — that if dioceses have more money to spend, they will spend their money on the same things that the national church did. Even Executive Council members had seemed uncomfortable with this expectation. After adopting the budget proposal in Norfolk — along with a new sliding-scale apportionment formula that would permanently reduce total diocesan contributions to the national church — several council members urged passage of an additional, somewhat plaintive-sounding resolution expressing the council's "hope and desire that provinces, dioceses and local congregations continue and increase their support of those ministries which during the Diocesan visits they indicated could be more efficiently carried out at provincial, diocesan and local levels and as a result of which, although it still considers them critical ministries, the Executive Council is recommending receive reduced support in the national church budget for the next triennium." To avoid confusion, the accompanying explanation spelled out just what those "critical ministries" were, namely, "the Episcopal Black colleges, foreign missionaries, Native American ministries, AIDS ministries, Jubilee ministry, social action and social welfare grants and independent Episcopal agencies."

Scott Allen, social missionary for the Diocese of Bethlehem (Penn.), was one of those who was dubious about the effectiveness of such a plea, particularly in connection with APSO. "I doubt whether the dioceses and parishes are going to change a hundred-year pattern and start giving money to advocacy groups which threaten the old coal-field social structure," he said. "The Episcopal Church was, and in many places still is, the church of the

Vital Signs

coal operator and management. Most parishes and dioceses are supported by or feel an allegiance to those same oppressive forces which APSO actively tries to contend against. The irony of this is that local Appalachian congregations were perfectly willing to send the money off to a larger pot where it came back as having been given by someone else so that they didn't have to hold the 'smoking gun' of direct funding."

Emerging wisdom: don't beg

But although many social justice activists would like to see funding restored to certain ministries or more prominence given to others, the emerging wisdom is that it will be futile to lobby for change. People could organize to beg the national church for a piece of the more than \$500,000 designated for undefined "partnership models," but that would require attempting to play a patronage game in which one or two staff people seem to have all the control.

In fact, although the Executive Council's budget is described as a "proposed budget," it appears to be a done deal — some of the 35 or so national church staff members affected by the cuts and consolidations have already left the national church's employ, while many, if not all, of the others have already accepted severance agreements that will take effect before the end of this year.

"A lot of people are counting on us to spend the next six months complaining about what we cannot change," Diane Pollard, a veteran General Convention deputy and member of the Standing Commission on Program, Budget and Finance, pointed out to her Urban Caucus colleagues in Charlotte.

In addition to advising that concerned social justice people not make the mistake of wading into this budget quicksand, representatives to the Consultation — an umbrella organization that periodically brings a variety of progressive organizations around the same table to talk about matters of mutual concern — are inclined to suggest that this summer's General Convention go the Executive Council one step further and eliminate *all*

national staff and programs.

It would be a show-stopping move that could force church decisionmakers to re-examine their assumptions about the church's mission and how best to support it. Developing a budget around financial shortfalls is just plain wrong-headed, according to Katie Sherrod, a member of the EWC who is working on a Consultation "platform" for General Convention based on a progressive view of church structure developed by Ed Rodman, a longtime Massachusetts urban-ministry activist (see the March 1994 *Witness*). "We should be working out of a theology of abundance," Sherrod stressed.

What's a national church good for?

Apart from questions about whether specific cuts seem fair or logical, the proposed 1995 budget is problematic largely because, as a whole, it fails to offer an acceptable answer to the critical question of what dioceses and parishes can do better working together as a national church than they can accomplish either individually or regionally.

The building of Christian community, the essential task of the church, requires an up-close-and-personal local, congregation-by-congregation focus on community life through worship, education, stewardship and social/economic outreach. Local (within dioceses) and regional (among dioceses) alliances are particularly effective in stretching limited resources, providing technical assistance (a diocesan administrator I know says that a lot of problems in local churches could be solved by teaching folks how to facilitate meetings and small-group activities), and, most critically, in fighting the seemingly unavoidable myopia that accompanies localism and fosters exclusion and blindness to the larger economic, social, political and environmental eco-systems of which every community is a part.

Enthusiasm and concern for the benefits and challenges of community building is much of what the "listening process" uncovered (except, in most cases, for fighting the myopia). But it is not clear that staff and resources focused

on "congregational ministries" (as some of the budget language reads) or on youth ministry should be based in and deployed from a national church office (this is a major piece of the proposed 1995 budget). Locating full-time, itinerant experts at the regional level makes more sense for frequent, personal and ongoing follow-through. Likewise, support, both technical and moral, for fighting racism, heterosexism, sexism and economic injustice, should also be based as close to local congregations and dioceses as possible.

Regional (not necessarily provincial) offices of the Episcopal Church, in this light, make a lot of sense. A national budget might provide for these (this budget only beefs up, slightly, a field office in Oklahoma), or dioceses could pool resources to create them on their own (current provincial structures might be a vehicle, but smaller regional collaborations seem more appealing, especially if based on bio-regional boundaries).

What can dioceses and parishes do better in a national alliance? Operate nationally and internationally — as a mutually accountable denominational entity able to wield collective clout; participate in national and international conversations on church and social affairs and access the deepest reservoirs of resources, both human and economic, for mission. This ranges from record-keeping to internal standards of accountability (professional standards for church workers is an example); from Anglican and ecumenical relations, including missionaries (an exchange, not a one-way deployment), to disaster relief; from advocacy for the poor and disenfranchised (a wide assortment of persons) to pooling resources for the most effective communication link-ups and economic justice efforts possible.

While there are pieces of this what-we-can-do-better-nationally piece in the Executive Council's proposed 1995 budget (the Washington office has been enlarged a little; the Presiding Bishop's Fund for is still in place; and, remarkably, there is a provision, finally, for computer

networking of all parishes and dioceses), much that should be there has been dumped or reduced — most notably, the entire missionary program (the proposed leave-it-to-the-private-missionary-societies solution is unacceptable because unaccountable), the economic justice program, AIDS, and the women's office (barely visible any longer — despite the fact that the most innovative and successful work the women's office has done in recent years has been international and ecumenical in scope, the single remaining staff officer will now be part of a "congregational ministries" cluster).

These things don't necessarily require national staff positions or programs. In fact, the more movement-oriented we keep things, the better, because then we are talking about the need for passionate commitment to realize mission. Let grassroots groups persuade the General Convention of the importance — and need — of banding together nationally to accomplish a specific objective. But require every sponsor of a new "national" program to build performance standards and other accountabilities into the enabling legislation — it is difficult to defend programs and staff persons from being cut if people are unhappy with their performance, if not with their original *raison d'être*.

In the end, perhaps the most important provision of the proposed 1995 budget is the one that provides for electronically (via computer, at a cost of \$350,000) linking up all the church's congregations and dioceses. In keeping with the proposed budget's recognition of the importance of regional and national "networking," Episcopalians need, desperately, to communicate with one another about mission and the resources needed to accomplish it. Maybe this will be the national church of the not-so-distant future — an electronic super church that, despite the computerized foibles of the present age, might impress on church members more clearly than ever before, that in thinking locally there's a larger world of which to be a part.

Church Reaganomics

by John Hooper

The economic justice resolution passed unanimously by the 1988 General Convention in Detroit called for the church's very serious and substantial participation in community economic development. The resolution "urged the Church at every level to utilize, where possible, its buildings, properties, personnel, financial resources and moral power in support of this ministry." It authorized a national Economic Justice Implementation Committee (EJIC) and established a goal of raising \$4 million per year for six years "for the economic empowerment of the disadvantaged."

Five years later, in October of 1993, at the church's first national economic justice conference, representatives from the EJIC reported to participants from 34 dioceses that during its first four years, despite problems of insufficient staffing and difficulties in raising new money, the committee had prepared a manual, offered a series of eight regional workshops, worked intensively with some dioceses and provided grants and loans for local implementation. The committee expected to recommend that the EJIC continue for three more years, in order to make the national economic justice program self-sustaining.

While participants at the Chicago conference were appreciative of the hard work and important results the committee achieved, they were critical of the lack of communication between the national committee, dioceses and local projects. They were disappointed that the EJIC was already planning its demise, since the program was hardly off the ground. Still needed, participants said, were a national organization or network of persons involved in economic justice work and regionally-based technical support.

Many of those engaged in economic justice ministry are even more disturbed by recent proposals by the Episcopal

Church's national Executive Council: to reduce national staffing to a desk of one-and-a-half persons coordinating three other programs besides economic justice; to abolish the EJIC after one year; and to cut out all grants from the national level to local groups.

In my more pessimistic moments, I see an analogy between the action recommended by the Executive Council and that taken by the federal government in the 1980s: Reduce the social programs of the federal government (housing monies for low income people were cut by 80 percent) and let the states and local governments pick them up. They were not picked up.

I fear that these recommendations succumb to the desires of many to silence the prophetic voices in the church. The economic justice program *does* challenge some of the assumptions of our economic system. It *does* place a priority on the right of every individual to a job, to a living wage, to property ownership — to be, in summary, a significant *actor* in the economy. It calls upon the church to assume a significant role in bringing about a more just society.

The economic justice program was not imposed on dioceses and parishes by the national church. It was developed as a response to concerns about the economy expressed in a 1987 paper adopted by 80 bishops. The economic justice proposal adopted by the 1988 Convention was a plea addressed to the national church by the local church and lower-income communities.

The economic justice effort in the church needs to be, minimally, a 20-year program to allow long-term collaboration with others in the rebuilding of our cities and rural areas. The EJIC has identified only \$7 million of the \$24 million they were challenged to find. We have only just begun.

John Hooper heads the Diocese of Michigan's economic justice program.

Condemning arms sales, Manifest Destiny

The Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Peace with Justice began its work for this triennium with a mandate from the 1991 General Convention to deal directly with the issue of U.S. involvement in international arms sales. The commission's report states that "arms sales of any sort are morally unacceptable." The commission will also present a resolution calling on the President and the Congress to "strictly enforce the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act in order to curtail international arms sales; expand the 30-day period to bar a weapons transfer to at least '30-days-in-session,' to allow more time for Congress and the public to consider the long-term consequences of each arms deal; and to end taxpayer and other government subsidies for arms bazaars."

Most of the rest of the commission's work has focused on the Episcopal Church's historic connection to this country's era of "Manifest Destiny" and the countries "deeply entangled" in that policy — the Philippines, Panama, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua.

The U.S. Episcopal Church's presence in the Northern Luzon area of the Philippines is a direct result of U.S. military, economic, and political influence in Manila, according to commission chair William Rankin. Likewise, Anglican and Episcopal clergy came to the Caribbean and Central America on the coattails of U.S. fruit companies and other business interests. Episcopalians' first loyalty must now be to the people, not the power structures, the commission believes, a stand apparent in a number of the resolutions it will offer to the 1994 General Convention:

- For the Philippines, the commission asks that General Convention urge the U.S. government to adopt a foreign policy which "promotes the protection of human rights, supports the reduction and/or restructuring of debt owed by the Philippine government to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, terminates direct and indirect military aid, discourages the 'total war' policy of the current Philippine government against the insurgency, and supports land reform."

- For Panama, urge the U.S. government "to complete reparations payments to the Panamanian people (appropriated by Public Law 101-302) for the damage

and destruction caused by the December 1989 invasion."

- For Cuba, urge the U.S. government "to re-examine its foreign policy with respect to Cuba, in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent human deprivation incurred by the withdrawal of Soviet support, and the continuing U.S. embargo."

- For Nicaragua, urge the U.S. government "to honor its commitment to the Nicaraguan people by releasing the monies appropriated in 1990 under Public Law 101-302 to assist in the peaceful rebuilding of Nicaraguan society."

The commission is also putting forth a resolution on refugee policy that urges the U.S. government "to reformulate its refugee policies, abiding by the internationally accepted definition of 'refugee,' particularly as these policies pertain to persons from Central America and the Caribbean Basin."

Other resolutions will delve into Muslim-Christian relations and affirm the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993.

— Jan Nunley
(Jan Nunley is a deacon who lives in Rhode Island and works for National Public Radio.)

Addressing conscience

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF), the church's national grassroots organization of persons committed to justice through non-violence, will be offering four resolutions to this summer's 71st General Convention, all of them directed at personal conscience.

The first is aimed at entering Paul Jones into the church's calendar of saints. The church's bishops forced Jones, elected Missionary Bishop of Utah by the House of Bishops in 1914, to resign his office in 1918 because of his persistent public contention that war — the U.S. was then firmly involved in World War I — is "unchristian."

Jones became one of the founding members of the EPF in 1939, a period between world wars when members of

many religious communities were calling their denominations to affirm the practice of conscientious objection to military service as a norm for church members.

Fifty-five years later, EPF is still pursuing the same campaign. A second resolution asks that the church declare its support of "selective conscientious objection as a legitimate exercise of individual conscience, allowing all people in civilian and military life to discern for themselves whether or not a war is just or unjust and to choose to take part in or withhold participation from each war."

The group's third resolution asks deputies and bishops to move beyond "simply reiterating the Episcopal Church's abhorrence of and opposition to violence" to instigating "a sense of personal responsibility for reducing violence,"

including active support for state and federal legislation which limits the sale, manufacture, exportation and licensing of weapons.

Finally, mindful of this society's triumphalistic tendencies, EPF is directing its last resolution at upcoming 50th anniversary commemorations of the ending of World War II, asking that church members take pains to avoid "Japan bashing" and that the church "designate Sunday, August 6, 1995, which is both the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the 50th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of the city of Hiroshima, Japan, by the United States, as this church's official observance of the end of World War II and the beginning of the bondage of the nuclear age."

— Julie A. Wortman

EcuTakes: Church Budget Mennonite Church

Robert Hull is the Secretary for Peace and Justice of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

We do have a budget crisis. In the past five or six years we've seen a continual downward spiral. More money is being kept locally. We question whether a significant part of it is going into mission, or into building new buildings and upgrading the comfort level of buildings.

Nationally our peace and justice ministries have been cut back considerably. Five or six years ago my office had a budget of \$27,000 - \$30,000. This year it is \$16,000 and next year it is scheduled to be \$12,000.

Concern over the decline of members and churches leaving the Conference creates an atmosphere that as a church we can't really tackle the controversial issues.

Our Conference does not do any federal tax withholding for employees who ask for that [in order to resist military taxes]. That was voted on in 1983, so for 11 years we've been in violation of federal law. I seriously doubt that any resolution like that could pass now.

When our budget was \$30,000 we had a poverty grants program that made small grants to congregations all across the country. That was cut completely.

We can participate in cooperative ventures (like New Call to Peacemaking and the anti-death penalty campaign) only by having a representative there; we're not in a position to contribute financially.

I think what we're seeing nationally is a real move away from denominational structures. We have to look at different organizational structures that are much smaller. More of the real work would go on in the provincial districts.

I think social justice ministry will be greatly dissipated. There won't be the opportunity to come together and develop a nationwide or North American thrust on something. I'm not terribly in favor of centralization, but unless we build in a

real accountability to the Gospel, we are going to lose things.

[Two days after we spoke with Robert Hull, he learned that his position had been eliminated due to budget constraints. Hull says that in a national priority-setting process, peace and justice work on a national level was given the lowest rating.]

Baptists

Ken Sehested is Executive Director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Of the more than two dozen Baptist denominational bodies in the U.S., only six give any appreciable amount to justice and peace work. Four of these are African-American bodies and still radically decentralized, with funding authority still controlled on the local level. Typically, funds offered to justice and peace organizations go directly from congregational coffers to traditional black-led organizations like the NAACP.

Of the two predominantly white bodies — the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the American Baptist Churches, USA (ABC) — the funding pictures are images in contrast.

The SBC, now fully controlled at the national level by leadership loyal to the Religious New Right agenda, has actually increased in recent years the budget of the agency which includes social justice ministries, the Christian Life Commission (CLC), mirroring the rise in political awareness occurring generally in conservative Protestantism. Its portfolio — opposition to abortion, gay rights, and changing gender roles, and support of prayer in public schools and "family" values — commands bigger budget allotments than previously, when the agency took more progressive stands.

The ABC has for several years operated under the constraints of a budgetary freeze at the national level. Given the impact of inflation and rising program costs, purchasing power has ebbed.

It can be demoralizing and overburdened staff can become more cautious. Yet another question arises as

to whether such denominational "right-sizing" does in fact cripple the Body of Christ's life-leavening power. No doubt good and worthy influence is being lost. But might there be even better, more worthy power to be discovered with the diminishing of Christian empire? If not silver and gold, then what?

United Methodist Church

Jim Winkler is Seminar Designer/Program Director for United Methodist Seminars on National and International Affairs, General Board of Church and Society.

There's definitely a budget crisis. We sometimes feel like the bottom is falling out of the connectional system in the United Methodist Church.

Of the Church's four major national programs, the General Board of Church and Society, which deals with peace and justice issues, is by far the smallest. When the money comes up short we are really hurting.

We have just restructured our seminar program in the hopes of saving \$40,000. It was gut-wrenching; this is a program that for 40 years has brought people from all over the country to New York and Washington for seminars on justice issues.

My own feeling is that the first programs that get cut are not just those that deal with social justice, but those dealing with ordinary, out-of-the-pew Church members. What gets protected is administration and the top level of the Church.

There is a feeling of persecution. We wonder if we have been punished because of the stands we have taken. There are other factors. More and more people cross denominational lines, and there is less loyalty and commitment to the larger church.

My concern is that at the local level, there is not much emphasis on trying to impact policy at either a local or state or national level, or on trying to ensure racial and ethnic diversity. There is more emphasis on band-aid work. I'm convinced that an emphasis on root causes would be lost if social justice ministries were ceded to the local churches.

Resisting sales talk

by Sandy LeJeune

Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community, by Wendell Berry, Pantheon Press, N.Y. 1993

“**A**ll I ask of the author,” Edward Abbey once wrote, “is to appoint himself a moral leader, wanted or not.” Wendell Berry — poet, novelist, and, in Abbey’s view “the best essayist now working in America” — clearly agrees. “This is a book about sales resistance,” he admonishes us from the get-go of his new book of essays, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*. “When technologies and ideas are adopted in response not to need but to advertising, salesmanship, and fashion ... the first duty of writers is to resist this ubiquitous sales talk, no matter from whose mouth it issues. But, then, this is also the first duty of everyone else.”

Take note, dear reader: these are your marching orders. For while Berry is definitely on the same trajectory as in earlier

Sandy LeJeune lives in southern California.

Other resources

Our writers this issue recommend the following:

Severyn T. Bruyn and James Meehan, Ed. *Beyond the Market and the State*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, Penn., 1987.

Paul Ekins, Ed. *The Living Economy: A New Economics in the Making*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and N.Y., 1986.

David Morris, *The New City-States and Self-Reliant Cities*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Washington D.C., 1982.

P. Pragervand, *Listen to Africa: De-*

works such as *Home Economics* and *What Are People For?* this new book takes even sharper aim at some of the disturbing questions facing post-industrial society.

Example: Berry has long championed agriculture’s duties to farm in appropriate scale, self-sufficiently; to help preserve diversity, to renew, not destroy, the topsoil. That’s fine — if you happen to be a small farmer. But what about us urbanites? The essay “Out of Your Car, Off Your Horse” offers his clearest suggestions to date on how to redress the imbalance between city and countryside. A sustainable city “would live off the net ecological income of its supporting region, paying as it goes all its ecological and human debts.” How? Buy more locally grown food, thus encouraging smaller, more diverse, more productive farms. To reduce expenses on both ends, truck organic wastes from the cities to local farms for fertilizer. Diversity and productivity would also require more labor. The key result is “changed minds ...

veloping Africa from the Grassroots, N.Y., 1989.

J. Andy Smith, III, *God’s Gift, Our Responsibility: Biblical Reflections on Creation, Christian Stewardship and Corporate Accountability*, Box 851, Valley Forge, Penn., 19842-0851.

Marc J. Cohen, Ed. *Hunger 1994: Transforming the Politics of Hunger*, Bread for the World, 1100 Wayne Ave., Suite 1000, Silver Spring, Md. 20910.

Corporate Examiner, the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 566, New York, N.Y., 10115.

City people would assume an agricultural responsibility [prompted by] the wish for a dependable supply of excellent food and by the fear of contaminating that supply.”

Sound a bit anachronistic? Well, Berry has an answer for you: the *status quo* isn’t working. The title essay traces patterns of society’s sexual and economic disorder to their source, the destruction of thriving local communities. A community is destroyed “when its economy is made ... *subject* to a larger external economy,” he says, citing eastern Kentucky’s absorption by northern-based coal industries as example. The outcome “speaks for itself: if you are dependent on people who do not know you, who control the value of your necessities, you are not free, and you are not safe.”

Berry tackles some big-ticket items this trip out, too: how recent changes in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade threaten democracy, here and abroad; the real root of the Persian Gulf war (“military power fighting for the security of petroleum power ... and for the power, ease and wealth that come from [its] exploitation”); even a dreamt-up dialogue on the complex role tobacco plays in our national, and his private, life. There is an incisive, biblically studious look at how organized Christianity has ignored

book review

its mandate to nurture, not malign, the created order. Throughout, he encourages us to respect the land and all its inhabitants, and to rebuke the powers — whether global, national or personal — that don’t. It’s a resistance movement more of us ought to join.

TVV

John Perkins says he received his “first lesson in economics” at the age of 11 or 12. After a full day’s work hauling hay on a white farmer’s plantation, expecting to be paid at least a dollar and a half, Perkins was handed a dime and a nickel. Angry, but feeling powerless, Perkins left with a clear understanding of the dynamics of injustice.

Today, Perkins is recognized internationally for his expertise in community economic development.

“I developed a real understanding that our oppression as blacks was not social first, but economic,” the 64-year-old evangelical church leader says. “Continuing economic oppression is part of slavery.”

Perkins’ mother died of a protein deficiency when he was seven months old. He grew up laboring on a Mississippi plantation, the demands of sharecropping superseding school attendance for all but three months of each year. At age 15, he dropped out with less than a fifth-grade education.

When Perkins was 17, his older brother was shot and killed by a sheriff’s deputy. Concerned that he might react to his brother’s murder in a way that would provoke retaliation, his family packed him off to stay with an aunt in Jackson. Shortly afterward, he boarded a train for California, planning to leave Mississippi forever.

Perkins took a job at a steel foundry, and before he turned 20, had helped to unionize workers and organize a strike.

In 1951, he was drafted into the army, and married a woman from his Mississippi home town that same year. Two years later, he returned to California to work and start his family.

Though he had earlier rejected Christianity as a tool of oppression, Perkins found himself on a spiritual search that

“Our political system ought to be encouraging cooperative development. But they’re still so imperialistic, they think the only hope for black folks is that they come over and be integrated.”



John Perkins

Re-allocating ownership

by Marianne Arbogast

led to a deep conversion in his late 20s. He was soon preaching, teaching Bible classes, and visiting prisoners. Contact with young black men in prison convinced him that “the roots of many of the problems in the ghetto were really the unsolved problems of the South I had left,” and he felt a compelling call to return home. Leaving behind his house and the economic security he had struggled for, Perkins took his family back to Mississippi.

“The church as it existed in Mississippi was not related to economic development,” Perkins recalls. “The pastors exploited the people instead of helping them; they had a king-type mentality. They saw me as a basic threat. I taught the Bible, and they saw that people liked my teaching.”

Young people, especially, were drawn to Perkins. In Mendenhall, Miss., his ministry rapidly expanded. Responding to the “felt needs” of the community

around it, the Voice of Calvary Bible Institute gave birth to a day care program, a tutoring program, and housing, food, farming, marketing and health co-ops.

After 12 years in Mendenhall, Perkins moved on to establish similar ministries in Jackson, Miss., and then Pasadena, Calif.

He has been called the “godfather” of the Christian Community Development Association, a national coalition of churches seeking to foster community and economic development in their neighborhoods.

“What people need most of all is basic economic education,” Perkins says. “Poor people in urban communities own so little. Churches should be educating their people, offering models, credit unions or investment corporations where people begin to make small investments. Churches need to be investing more in neighborhoods, education, tutoring, small service enterprises.”

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

Perkins is a forceful critic of the welfare system.

"Our political system doesn't do much to encourage economic development among the poor," he says. "They ought to be encouraging cooperative development. But they're still so imperialistic, they think the only hope for black folks is that they come over and be integrated. Consequently, black folks don't have a community."

He acknowledges the impediments to a new model.

"It's very difficult. The area we have the most skill in as black people is education itself. Yet most black people would be against the voucher system. They would see it as undermining their stable job with the school system. They don't think about the possibility of creating independent schools to educate our people and provide economic skills. Folks are being damaged by the welfare system. We need to organize small, creative alternatives."

Perkins teaches "three Rs" of Christian community development: relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution.

Relocation demands that "if you're going to work in a neighborhood, live there.

"People want to change the first 'R' right away," he says. "Even some of the best of black leaders want to do it *for* the people. They talk about doing it *with* people, but they won't live among the people they're trying to work with. That's offering them a false model: You're bet-

ter off if you leave this community."

"Reconciliation" encompasses both racial reconciliation and the ongoing labor of honesty and forgiveness within a church community. Perkins knows the road well. After leading a civil rights march in 1970, he was ambushed by white sheriff's deputies and highway patrolmen, then beaten and tortured throughout the night. As he recovered physically, he entered into a spiritual struggle, tempted to turn his back on white people and his convictions about Christian unity. Finally, horrified by his memory of faces twisted with hate, he emerged with a strengthened commitment to work against racism, for the sake of white and black Christians alike.

The third "R," "redistribution," can happen if we "use the basic free enterprise system to empower people," Perkins believes.

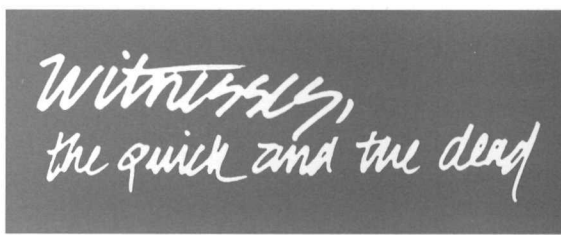
"Why don't communities say, if McDonald's is going to come in, then we're going to have an investment corporation, and buy 15 percent of the ownership?" he asks. "Churches have not been informed they could do that. If we could bring the churches alive! They ignore the theological mandate to liberate their people from oppression. They haven't developed a philosophy of economic development over the pulpit."

It's more than teaching someone how to fish, Perkins frequently says; it's helping them own the pond.

And it needs to be grounded in faith. "I believe people need to come to

know Christ," he says. "That becomes the focus and the base for creative development.

"I'm not just trying to change the world through simple economic development. The world will be changed by people who have experienced the love of God and who love others."



Greatly in demand as a speaker, Perkins has taken his message to cities across the nation and around the world. His audiences include political and business leaders as well as church members. Despite wide acclaim for his achievements, he laments that "none of this is successful enough." But he seeks to "hold up models of hope.

"I was reading Reinhold Niebuhr — he says nothing is worth working for if you think you will achieve it in your own lifetime," Perkins says. "We're laying a foundation."

TV

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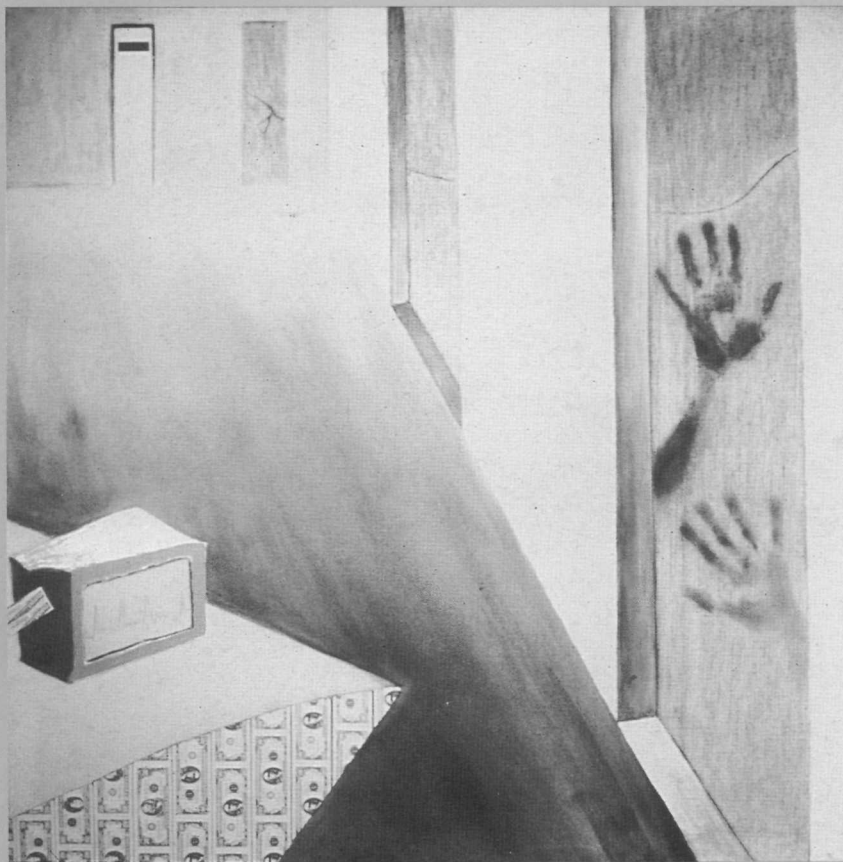
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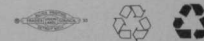
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