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ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

Blessed are those who mourn

The Great Reversal

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted (Matthew 5:4).

This is the second in our series looking at policy issues through the lens of the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes jar us because they applaud values and practices which we do not usually associate with being happy or “blessed.” In verse 5, the Greek word for *mourn* refers to grief for lost loved ones or deep sadness at the condition of things. In what possible sense can mourners be blessed? According to Jesus, it is because they will be comforted.

In Luke 6:25, Jesus contrasts these blessed ones with “those who are laughing now.” The latter are “rich” and “well-fed.” Their future is not so bright. They will “mourn and weep.”

The reign of God is bringing a new order of things! Society will be turned upside-down. Those who are happy with the present state of injustice will lose everything. But those at the bottom will be lifted up and filled (Luke 1:51–53).

In concert with the upcoming MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar on April 1–3, this *Memo* issue focuses on economic globalization. Globalization involves dissolving national barriers to trade and investment and reducing the role of national governments in regulating commercial activity. In contrast to the re-ordering in God’s reign, many elements of globalization benefit the wealthy

and harm people living in poverty in many parts of the world. While new technologies have made globalization possible—some would say, inevitable—public policy decisions have determined its current shape.

Accordingly, we examine some of these policies: upcoming congressional decisions on trade, the global arms trade, and the relationship between globalization and migration. Linda Shelly writes about globalization’s impact on communities in Latin America. Not everything about globalization is destructive. We note, for example, how an interconnected world strengthens the moral imperative for U.S. policy makers to abandon support for capital punishment.

One thing is certain. There is something terribly wrong with economic relationships and policies as they currently exist. There are too many mourners in the global economy. Each day 34,000 children die of preventable and treatable poverty-related illnesses. Many deaths are due to malnutrition, yet there is more than enough food produced for everyone. God’s provision for our world is abundant, yet tremendous preventable suffering exists alongside of astounding selfishness.

If we want to be in the company of the blessed in God’s Great Reversal, we do well to live and work for greater equality and justice now. ■

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BY J. DARYL BYLER

Weapons have become wares of trade as if they were food or clothing or some other necessary commodity.

Comfort for All Who Mourn

It is chilling to see the label of our country on the shells used to destroy [Palestinian] homes,” laments Donella Clemens, former moderator of the Mennonite Church and current MCC Executive Committee member. Clemens was part of a group of U.S. religious leaders which made a pastoral visit to Israel/Palestine last December in response to growing violence in the region. More than 400 Palestinians and Israelis have been killed in fighting since late September 2000.

In addition to visiting with church leaders and government officials, the delegation visited Palestinian homes that had been smashed by U.S.-supplied Israeli arms.

The heavy trafficking of U.S. weapons to Israel is only the tip of the U.S. arms trade iceberg. Annual sales have averaged more than \$14 billion for the last eight years. Indeed the United States, which prides itself as a champion of democracy and human rights, leads the world in arms exports. During the last two years, Uncle Sam sold or approved the sale of weapons to more than 150 countries.

According to the Center for Defense Information, even though the United States already dominates the global arms trade, the Clinton administration “supported major reforms making it even easier for both the government and private industry to export U.S. weapons.”

In the global economy, weapons have become wares of trade as if they were food or clothing or some other necessary commodity. In the increasingly less-regulated U.S. arms market, profits outweigh principles.

This constant flow of weapons causes untold pain and mourning. Many have suffered the loss of loved ones killed in violence that escalated with the introduction of U.S. weapons. Others suffer because their government’s scarce resources are spent on guns and tanks instead of food or health care. Many U.S. sales are to developing countries.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promises comfort to those who mourn (Matthew 5:4). But can there be any comfort for a nation who freely markets weapons to the world?

The prophet Isaiah—speaking of God’s suffering servant—declares that God’s Spirit has anointed him to “bring good news to the oppressed . . . and to comfort all who mourn . . .” (Isaiah 61:1–2).

Amazingly, God’s promise of comfort extends to *all* who mourn.

To the powerful like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)—who mourn when they realize that they have acted in unjust and oppressive ways—God offers the comfort of new hope and a fresh start. This is the good news for a powerful nation like the United States, the arms supermarket for the world.

And to the humble poor who look to God for strength in the midst of their suffering, God offers the comfort that comes from God’s presence and promise of deliverance.

The biblical vision affirms that God is moving history toward a time when: “Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Until that welcomed day, God promises comfort for all who mourn. Comfort for the powerful who repent of their hurtful ways and to the poor who cling to God for strength and hope. ■

WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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More Than A War

BY RACHELLE SCHLABACH

In November 2000, then-President Clinton visited Vietnam. As he and Hillary worked their way through shops looking for souvenirs, they were mobbed by Vietnamese fans hoping to grab an autograph.

The scene was markedly different from the graphic images of 25 years before, as American helicopters evacuated the last remaining U.S. personnel before the North Vietnamese took over Saigon.

For many Americans, the war is all that comes to mind when they hear "Vietnam." But Vietnam is much more than a war, and its resourceful people have rebuilt much of their country since the devastating war years. MCC has worked with the people of Vietnam throughout this process, formally re-opening an office in Hanoi in 1990.

As time goes on, relations between the governments of the two countries have been slowly improving. In 1994, the United States lifted the post-war trade embargo, and re-established diplomatic relations a year later.

Yet Vietnam still does not have normal trading privileges with the United States, a status withheld from only five other countries. Currently, products imported from Vietnam are subject to a steep tax. This affects Vietnamese businesses of all sizes, including the cooperatives which create weavings, baskets and pottery for Ten Thousand Villages.

Last year, the U.S. and Vietnamese governments signed a trade agreement which grants normal trade relations and removes many of the discriminatory trade barriers. The agreement must be approved by both the U.S. Congress and the Vietnamese National Assembly.

Clearly, many issues have yet to be resolved between the two countries. While the United States has begun to devote more funding to landmine removal, it has yet to take responsibility for the long-term effects of spraying Agent Orange during the war. Religious freedom in Vietnam remains a concern. And even as the Vietnamese people eagerly await the opening of economic ties with the United States, questions of labor and environmental standards will need to be addressed.

None of these are easy issues. And they are complicated by the imbalance of power between the two countries. But the Vietnamese people remain committed to the path forward, modeling forgiveness and reconciliation far beyond what might be expected. We can do no less than to return the favor. ■

CAPITAL QUOTES

"It is not necessary to have hunger at all because there is enough food for all."

—U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization official Hartwig de Haen, on World Food Day 2000.

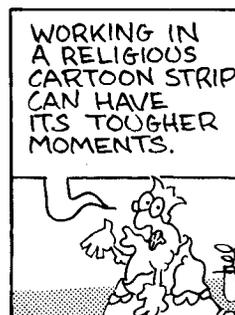
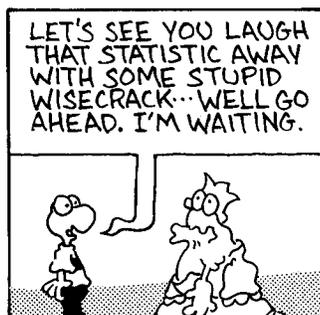
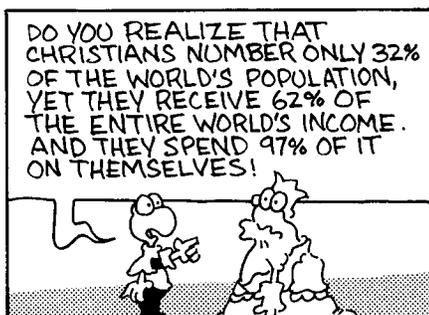
"I call it disgraceful, I call it obscene, \$750 million a year to General Electric and Boeing to sell weapons, which they do not even sell, the State Department and the Defense Department arrange the sale of weapons. Yet we give them a reduction of \$750 million a year? That is a subsidy, pure and simple."

—Rep. Fortney Stark (D-CA), opposing "corporate welfare" legislation.

"I am one who believes that the drug problem is probably overwhelmingly a demand problem, and that . . . if the demand persists, it's going to find ways to get what it wants, and if it isn't from Colombia, it will be from somebody else."

—Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, at his Senate confirmation hearing in January.

Pontius' Puddle



The Underside of Economic Globalization

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

The U.S. government has been the leader in fiercely promoting the unfettered “free market/free trade” version of globalization throughout the world.

Economic globalization has battered poor communities throughout the global South where MCC workers live and serve. Linda Shelly, MCC’s director for Latin America and the Caribbean, says that “in the 1980s people in Central America were being killed by bullets and bombs. Now they are dying from global economic policies.” A joint report by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labor Organization indicates that IMF-imposed free market/free trade structural adjustment programs have increased unemployment and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. Many Asians experienced plummeting standards of living after the financial crises of the late 1990s.

I observed this impact personally while serving with MCC in Mexico City in the early-to-mid-1990s. Almost all our neighbors worked as street vendors and taxi drivers because economic globalization had eliminated their regular jobs. Unemployment and poverty got even worse after the globalization-induced collapse of the Mexican economy in 1995.

Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. government has been the leader in fiercely promoting the unfettered “free market/free trade” version of globalization throughout the world. President Clinton and Congress established the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada; joined other nations in creating the World Trade Organization (WTO); began negotiations toward a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas; legislated the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act; granted China permanent normal trade relations status; and required indebted countries to implement Structural Adjustment Programs.

President Bush promises to advance this same agenda. Advocates have spotlighted several important policy decisions related to economic globalization that may come before Congress and/or the Administration this year:

- Congress will have the opportunity to vote on International Right to Know legislation. This law would require U.S.-based corporations to provide detailed information on labor conditions, human rights violations and environmental impacts of the activities of their overseas operations.
- Congress may consider giving the president “fast-track” trade negotiating authority. This would lessen congressional and public oversight by relinquishing Congress’ power to amend trade agreements. Congress would only be able to approve or disapprove them in an “up or down” vote.
- A “Liberate the Text” campaign is calling for public disclosure and scrutiny of the draft texts being worked on in the ongoing negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.
- Last year President Clinton issued an executive order prohibiting U.S. retaliation against African countries who utilize lawful WTO provisions to acquire HIV/AIDS drugs at the cheapest price. President Bush has said he may rescind this order. If so, Africans would have to purchase these medications from U.S. pharmaceuticals at prohibitive prices—or face U.S. penalties.
- Another controversial “intellectual property rights” issue involves the corporate patenting of seeds in ways that can undermine the livelihood of small farmers in developing countries.

Current trade and investment policies seem to be crafted in favor of big business and finance, with little concern about poverty reduction, justice and equity. Now, more than ever, people of faith have a vital role in calling for public policies that advance economic activity in ways that strengthen local communities, protect human dignity and serve the common good. ■

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Stop the War on Economic Migrants

BY ELISABETH T. HARDER

In a recent meeting with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), a Mennonite college student asked who may most easily enter and settle in the United States under current immigration law. “We want the best and the brightest,” was the answer.

And indeed, relatively generous laws grant high-tech and professional work visas, ensuring that many of the world’s best and brightest immigrants are welcome on U.S. land. But for economic migrants with few job skills, the welcome is considerably less enthusiastic. This attitude helps explain why this group comprises the bulk of the undocumented U.S. population.

What a stark contrast to the attitude found in the Beatitudes! Jesus’ message is just as countercultural today as it was in his time: Those who are least welcome are the very ones who are called blessed. In today’s global economy, this “upside down kingdom” approach is a hard sell.

As Christians, we sympathize with easily recognizable refugees of the global economy. Income and wealth disparities, widened by globalization, force many people to literally move toward better opportunities in order to survive.

But there are economic migrants who come temporarily, and sometimes repeatedly, to the United States under less dire circumstances—also in search of a more certain and dignified livelihood. Many come precisely because free-trade expansion has put U.S. jobs within easier reach. Transportation and communication networks created for the movement of goods and capital facilitate the cyclical movement of workers as well.

U.S. immigration laws tend to criminalize this migration fueled as much by structural forces as by individual impetus. Punitive *immigrant* policies, such as cutting off immigrants from social services and militarized deterrence in the U.S.-Mexico border zone, are poor substitutes for a comprehensive *immigration* policy informed by new trends in the global economy.

Solutions are not easy. Easing migration restrictions for economic refugees is a critical humanitarian response. But doing so can turn our attention away from structurally

unjust economic situations. People should, ideally, have the option to stay home and earn livable wages. Appropriate legislative responses must somehow strike a balance between the immediate and the long-term.

Both President Fox of Mexico and President Bush have given thought to addressing the root causes of undocumented migration. Both believe that greatly expanded trade will strengthen Mexico’s economy. But President Fox, who recently launched two national job creation programs, envisions a future in which people can move more freely across the border, a vision not shared by Bush.

In the meantime, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX) has suggested a plan to minimally legalize economic migration through a temporary work permit program. Undocumented Mexican workers already living and working in the United States could apply for one-year renewable work permits that would grant them minimum wage and labor protections and emergency health care eligibility. Such permits would be useful for those workers who have no desire to reside permanently in the States but who have been deterred from entering or leaving the country by harsh border control conditions.

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has identified key principles which must be included if this is to be a good short-term response to economic migration. These include:

- Availability of work permits to workers from countries besides Mexico.
- Longer work-permit duration, with the possibility of eventual permanent status.
- Permission to work in any sector, for any employer.
- Worker access to public benefits for which they pay taxes.
- Ending sanctions for employers so that they will not have to be enforcers of immigration law.

Let us reclaim the world-changing attitude of the Beatitudes. The “best and the brightest” in the eyes of our country will continue to be blessed with favorable laws. May those who mourn because of the closed border be comforted by equal opportunity. ■

Punitive *immigrant* policies are poor substitutes for a comprehensive *immigration* policy informed by new trends in the global economy.

Global Witness to the U.S.: Abolish the Death Penalty

BY DAVID M. WHETTSTONE

The groundswell of objections to the death penalty reflects long-standing feelings prevalent around the world.

During the last year, the Washington Office received dozens of letters—usually from Amnesty International members in Europe—requesting that we do everything we can to abolish the death penalty.

The groundswell of objections to the death penalty reflects the long-standing feelings indeed prevalent around the world.

The United States now competes with only a few nations for the “distinguished” status of frequently applying capital punishment—state killing. A number of states are even willing to sentence juveniles and the mentally impaired to a tragic fate.

Listening to others—through community or history—informs our convictions and empowers our actions. Will the American public, its churches, and government listen to our global sisters and brothers in their plea for us to abolish the death penalty?

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It proclaims each person’s right to life, and further stipulates that no one shall be subjected to cruel or degrading punishment. A later U.N. document—the “Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”—commits signers to abolish the death penalty.

In 1990, the Organization of American States adopted the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty. Signatories include Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Some Caribbean nations and the Philippines now have moratoriums.

Concerns regarding the death penalty are pervasive throughout Europe. Their news media frequently focuses on executions

with more intensity and frequency than our own reports; the death penalty was the subject of the recent fictitious film, “Dancer in the Dark”; the Colosseum is lit when progress is made against the death penalty; and the Pope has made repeated pleas against executions.

Last year the European Union sponsored a Resolution on the Death Penalty during the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Felix Rohatyn, the U.S. ambassador to France, has commented: “You hear opposition to the death penalty . . . everywhere [in France]. When I speak to audiences, the question always comes up. And I don’t believe this is just a French phenomenon. I recently spoke to . . . our ambassador to Germany, and he told me the death penalty is the single most recurring question there” (*Newsweek*, May 29, 2000).

When U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan received a petition in December 2000—signed by more than three million people from 130 countries—calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions, he said, “I wish it were in my power to grant their wish, and by so doing to save the lives of thousands of men and women.”

Walter Schwimmer, secretary general of the Council of Europe, echoes Anabaptist and restorative justice themes when he says: “People can come to realize that it is possible for society to be tough on crime and attentive to the concerns of victims’ families without resorting to this inhumane punishment. But this presupposes that the public is made aware of the fundamental issues and facts surrounding the death penalty.”

Indeed, blessed are those who mourn with us and for us. We can follow mourners’ global witness and enhance concern regarding the death penalty here at home, perhaps leading the mourning to cease. ■

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Amnesty International USA Death Penalty Project:
www.amnesty-usa.org/abolish

Death Penalty Information Project: www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

The Globalization Siren and a Call to Justice

IN OTHER'S WORDS

BY LINDA SHELLY

Linda Shelly directs MCC's Latin America and Caribbean programs.

Antony Sanchez, director of the Colombian Mennonite development organization *Mencoldes*, tells the story of globalization's impact on the Uwa indigenous people in the eastern part of his country. Four or five years ago oil was discovered on their land. The government and the oil companies gave priority to profits over the way of life of the people. Although the Uwa continue to resist moving, the government is attempting to relocate them onto a smaller tract of lower quality land at some distance from their homeland. Similarly, in the northwestern part of the country are strong economic interests to build a new canal. Doing so would result in the displacement of the Embera Katio people, and the loss of their culture and identity, as well as environmental diversity. Already this struggle has claimed more than one hundred lives.

Antony also reports that hunger is increasing in Colombia not only as a result of civil war, but because of economic globalization and U.S. anti-drug efforts. Colombia imports 5 million tons of food that could be produced locally. This undermines local farmers. In addition, the government is exporting some crops that are needed for domestic consumption in order to bring in dollars. According to *The New York Times*, the U.S.-promoted coca eradication program is also destroying food crops and will likely leave many Colombians hungry.

In October I was privileged to participate, along with a hundred Central Americans, in a regional course offered by SEMILLA, the Central American Anabaptist seminary. The course was taught by Hugo Zorrilla, a Colombian Mennonite and Fresno State University professor. He examined the current era of globalization in light of the biblical message of respect for all people and our call as Christians to holistic service and justice. A few of his key thoughts, translated below, should challenge all of us:

The world, in the hands of the seven most industrialized nations, finds itself at the start of the 21st century immersed in a sweeping process of globalization. This globalization sounds like the song of a siren, and has enchanted, or dazzled more than one government. There exist great expectations of solidarity, cooperation and world peace. But also great fears and concerns because this process is unchaining a new form of dependence and exploitation in countries like those in Latin America. With a "neoliberal" [unfettered free market/free trade] ideology, the economic process and the financial markets operate . . . without giving importance to human values or respecting dislocated cultures. What matters is the success of the great investment capital. . . . The attempt is to homogenize all cultures within the western model of well-being and free commerce. In this process the winners are few—multinationals, capitalists, financial speculators; and the losers are many—exploited and impoverished peoples.

It is up to us, in this era of globalization, to be in pilgrimage with a total testimony, to seek a full and biblical testimony. We are to be concerned for the whole person, and not the soul only. One cannot, if one wants to be faithful to Jesus and his message, do missionary and evangelism work while leaving to one side the justice of God. For we know that every act of justice . . . is at its root an act of evangelization, that any integral evangelization demands all of life. ■

"In this process the winners are few—multinationals, capitalists, financial speculators; and the losers are many—exploited and impoverished peoples."

SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
Nuclear De-alerting	Some 5,000 U.S. and Russian nuclear missiles are currently on hair-trigger alert and can be fired in just three minutes. This tight launch time is fraught with possibilities for disaster. In 1995, Russia came within minutes of firing nuclear missiles at U.S. cities when it mistakenly identified a scientific rocket as a nuclear missile headed for Moscow. U.S. nuclear command centers have made similar errors. De-alerting would increase preparation time by removing warheads from missiles and storing them separately, or by locking their triggers. This process would extend launch time to hours or even days, buying a critical margin of safety.	Urge President Bush to take the first step toward abolishing nuclear weapons by working with Russia to remove all nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert.
National Forests	In January, the Clinton Administration announced a plan to protect roadless areas in national forests. Nearly 1.6 million Americans participated in last year's public comment periods, overwhelmingly in favor of conservation. The plan is considered by many to be the most significant forest protection measure in decades.	Some members of Congress and the Bush administration have said that they will try to overturn or weaken the roadless plan. Please ask your representative and senators to uphold the current plan.

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