

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

the reason to go on

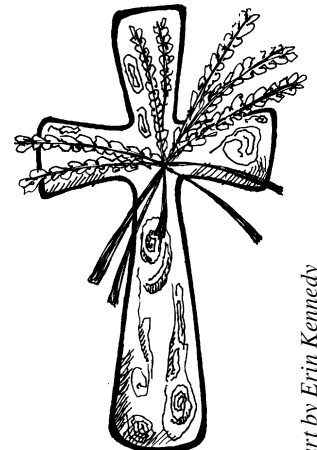
“The spirit
is breathing.
All those with
eyes to see,
women and men
with ears for
hearing detect a
coming dawn;
a reason
to go on.
They seem small,
these signs
of dawn,
perhaps
ridiculous.
All those with
eyes to see,
women and men
with ears
for hearing
uncover
in the night
a certain
gleam of light;
they see
the reason
to go on.”



—from “It’s Midnight, Lord” by
Dom Helder Camara, former Archbishop
of Recife and Olinda, Brazil.
Photo by Matthew Lester.

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art by Erin Kennedy



Famine Stalks Southern Ethiopia

By Paul Jeffrey

BORENA, ETHIOPIA—As the world scrambles to provide food for millions of hungry Ethiopians, Yatani Dalayo can barely stand, and knows he'd never make it walking to Dubuluch, a small village three kilometers away. So he sits in his simple grass hut, staring at the cold ashes of a fire that hasn't heated food for days.

Yatani is a pastoralist, an animal herder who roams the arid landscape of southern Ethiopia with his cattle and goats, leading the animals through grasslands watered by seasonal rains. Yet the rains haven't come for three years, so he has slowly sold off his cattle and used the proceeds to feed his family. Today, the lean times have become impossible times, and Yatani has nothing left. The last five of his cattle died after his band of pastoralists arrived here a few weeks ago.

Hundreds of cattle skeletons lay baking in the hot sun around their encampment. The animals that died most recently have their skin intact; pastoralists like Yatani don't even have the energy to skin the dead animals in hope of selling the hides.

In addition to the animal carcasses littering the desert, the landscape around Dubuluch has changed in other ways. A new cemetery has been established just east of town, with more than 100 new rock cairns marking the graves of pastoralist family members who've fallen victim to the drought.

As he sits quietly alone, his emaciated body covered by a shawl, Yatani says his wife and children walked to the town in hopes of selling a few pieces of firewood they gathered. Asked how he feels, he replies in a barely audible voice that he's fine, he's not sick, just hungry. He doesn't complain. He just waits.

Will Yatani still be alive by the time relief assistance arrives from the outside world? That's a question being asked today

throughout the drought-plagued Horn of Africa, where some 16 million people are at risk of starvation. Half that number lives in Ethiopia. The international community has promised to help, yet to many here the time lag between promises and food deliveries has seemed inordinately long.

"It will be a crime against humanity if we let hundreds of thousands of people die because there's not enough food here," declared Christian Balslev-Olesen, general secretary of DanChurchAid, during a visit to Ethiopia. Balslev-Olesen met with Yatani and other drought victims throughout the Borena region.

"Ethiopia has the infrastructure in place, a very good monitoring system, experienced nongovernmental organizations, and a very organized society at a local level. There's no excuse for the international community to let people die here," Balslev-Olesen said.

DanChurchAid is a member of Action by Churches Together (ACT), a worldwide alliance of churches and aid agencies responding to emergencies. In early April, the Geneva-based ACT issued an appeal to its members to come up with \$32 million in relief supplies for Ethiopia, including food, seeds, and tools.

Balslev-Olesen came to Ethiopia to participate in talks aimed at creating an even broader international response to the drought. ACT, which brings together mostly Protestant and Orthodox churches and agencies, is soon expected to join with the Rome-based Caritas Internationalis, the main relief and development network of the Roman Catholic Church, in issuing a new joint appeal for Ethiopian relief work carried out by the Joint Relief Partnership (JRP), a national organization formed by several faith-based organizations which began coordinating their relief work during the 1984-85 famine.

The ACT-Caritas joint appeal would support relief programs of JRP members, which include the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Mekane Yesus Ethiopian Evangelical Church, and the Lutheran World Federation, all members of ACT. The Ethiopian Catholic Church and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the overseas development and

relief arm of the U.S. Catholic bishops conference, are also JRP members.

The JRP announced early this year that its members planned to provide food assistance to about one-tenth of the 8 million Ethiopians that were then expected to go hungry this year.

Yet because of worsening drought conditions, relief officials here now predict that another 2.6 million people will soon be added to the rolls of those needing assistance. Church-related agencies are beginning to plan how to expand their relief role even further.

Although JRP members and others in the ACT and Caritas networks have been sounding the alarm about an impending famine for months, much of the world didn't seem to notice until April 3, when the BBC aired dramatic video images of starving children near the town of Gode in the Somali region of eastern Ethiopia.

The emotional scenes were shot at a feeding center run by the Ogaden Welfare Society, a local Ethiopian organization supported in part by Christian Aid, an ACT member from Great Britain. Within days of the BBC broadcast, the rest of the world started trekking to the site.

By April 20, more than 250 foreign correspondents had registered with the government to travel to Gode, and the Ogaden Welfare Society was inundated with visits by representatives of funding agencies looking for where they could provide funds to help feed starving children.

While the situation at Gode and other nearby villages is definitely critical, the now well-televised scenes from there don't tell the whole story. "That pocket of Ethiopia has been severely hit by the drought, but it's not representative of the whole country," said Anne Bousquet, the Catholic Relief Services country representative in Ethiopia, who visited Gode on April 15.

Bousquet warned that there are "many areas that are at high risk, however, so if aid doesn't come in a timely manner, we're going to see a lot more Godes."

Aid officials agree the Borena region is next in line for the drought to turn into a full-

blown famine. In some areas of Borena, more than 90 percent of cattle and 65 percent of sheep have already died. Many farmers are using drought-resistant camels to plow their fields as their oxen are dead or too weak to work.

With many pastoralists selling off their remaining animals to buy food, livestock prices have plummeted. A cow that cost 400 Ethiopian Birr in February 1999 cost only 100 Birr in February of this year. Today it's hard to find a buyer at any price. "No one wants to buy skinny cattle," said Gollo Huke, director of integral development for the Southern Synod of the Mekane Yesus Ethiopian Evangelical Church.

If rains return to normal, aid workers say it could take many of the pastoralist families in this area as many as five to seven years to replenish their herds. Even for those

animals that have survived until now, high levels of stress will prevent female animals from getting pregnant very soon. That means no milk, an important part of pastoralist diets, especially for children.

Not surprisingly, when Mekane Yesus staff conducted a survey in February and March in several areas of Borena, they found that more than one-third of children under five in the region were malnourished. In several villages, schools have closed as children lacked the energy to study.

Stein Villumstad, the assistant general secretary for policy and human rights of Norwegian Church Aid, another member of ACT, said it is important in Borena for aid agencies to provide animal fodder as well as food for people.

"Distributing food is relatively easy, but dealing with the long term effects of the

drought will be much harder, and much more difficult to get funding for," said Villumstad. He claimed that only 15 to 20 percent of food-for-work relief programs have any significant impact on long-term production and survival strategies among the pastoralists. "It won't be sufficient for aid agencies to just provide food for a few months. We've got to help people increase their ability to cope with drought over the long run."

—from *Church World Service, a member of Action by Churches Together (ACT)*. Paul Jeffrey is an international photojournalist. For more information about the situation in Ethiopia, see the CWS web site at www.churchworldservice.org.



art by Kathy Manis Findlay

Looking for Hope in the Ethiopian City

by Jimmy Dorrell

WACO, TEXAS—I just returned from eight days in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital city. The firsthand glimpses of poverty, slums, unemployment, HIV/AIDS orphans, and beggar children still burn in my memory.

I already knew that 31,000 children under the age of five die every day of hunger-related causes. This experience brought home to me that the children in East Africa will experience most of those grim statistics. A drought this year has put more than 8 million Ethiopians at risk for severe food shortages. A border war with Eritrea to the north has exacerbated the famine-related problems in the south.

A number of relief organizations recently announced that emergency food was on its way to the Ethiopian ports. However, even as aid arrives, transportation of the food to famine-stricken areas will be a problem. Ethiopian trucks that would normally take the supplies to areas in need will be tied up by the war effort. And if it doesn't rain in September, things will go from bad to worse.

But my experience was in the city.

As I walked with my friends down the narrow slum *kebeles*, despair was the easiest response for the moment. My typical American "gloom and doom" mentality took over,

and then was followed by numbness. There were too many in need and not enough resources available to "fix" the problems, so a physical and emotional retreat would be my only protection from the horrific realities. Like many returning from a developing world mission experience, I would show my pictures, tell my stories, but little more.

I believe that poverty is demonic. I believe that God never intended this suffering. But because of the world's sin and reasons beyond our control, some 1.2 billion (25 percent) of the world's population are labeled "absolute poor." And while the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. What kind of hope can we find in the midst of this reality?

Such poverty and the hopelessness that goes with it often creates a fatalism among the people. Their goal for each day is survival, not progress. Thus, many efforts among the poor of the world take many years to implement, and have to overcome significant challenges to work.

"Quick fix" strategies that do not include the local people rarely survive. But "bottom-up" approaches—which empower local slum dwellers to become partners—become self-sufficient and have long-term impact.

An example of this is Jember Teffera, the widow of a former mayor of Addis Ababa. Jember was imprisoned for three years after the 1974 coup. However, upon her release, she began serving the poor in the city slums. She founded and piloted 52 community development projects in Addis Ababa. Now these projects have been handed over to a neighborhood organization in order to encourage local ownership and governance. Because of Jember and people like her, there is hope in the *kebele*.

—Jimmy Dorrell is the founder and executive director of Mission Waco, a multifaceted ministry that serves the poor in Waco, Texas. One of the key mission purposes of Mission Waco is that of educating churches of "the biblical call to stand for the poor and oppressed of our local cities and the world." Thus, in addition to creative programs designed to alleviate poverty and homelessness, Mission Waco offers, for affluent Christians, "poverty simulations" within the city and "cross-cultural" trips to poverty-stricken countries. Ecumenical groups from all over the country participate in these programs. For more information, e-mail him at jdorrell@missionwaco.org.

A Profile of the U.S. Working Poor

from America's Second Harvest

In the last decade, hunger-relief agencies have found that the greatest increase in hungry Americans has been among the working poor. Despite the strong economy and their own hard work, they cannot always make ends meet. Increasingly, they are turning to charities for hunger relief. Taken from recent studies, the following is a statistical snapshot of the working poor who seek emergency food assistance from the local soup kitchens, food pantries, and emergency shelters served by America's Second Harvest food banks.

- 14,812,000 people in the U.S. are members of "working poor" families.
- 39 percent of emergency food recipient households (those served in soup kitchens, food pantries, and emergency shelters) have at least one adult working.
- Of emergency food recipient households with at least one person working, 49 percent are employed and working full-time (40 hours or more per week).
- According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 37 percent of people requesting emergency food assistance in U.S. cities are employed.
- Of the 21 million people seeking emergency food assistance in the U.S., more than 8 million are children.
- 70 percent of poor families with children in the U.S. include a person who works.
- 8,659,000 children in the U.S. live in "working poor" families.
- Over the past two decades, the poverty rate among working families has increased by nearly 50 percent.
- In U.S. cities, 61 percent of people requesting emergency food assistance were members of families with children.
- Two-thirds of parents with low earnings work in retail or service trades.
- Nearly half of all employed emergency food recipients work in unskilled occupations.
- One-fifth of employed emergency food

recipients work in skilled occupations (clerical/secretarial, skilled craftspeople, skilled workers, and the self-employed).

- Between 1973 and 1988, families headed by high school dropouts increased their annual work effort (hours worked) by nearly 12 percent and ended up with 8 percent less annual income.
- 40 percent of emergency food recipients have less than a high school diploma or the equivalent, including 16 percent who completed grade school or less.
- According to the Census Bureau, average yearly earnings for high school graduates in the U.S. was \$22,154 in 1996.
- 60 percent of emergency food recipients have a high school diploma, compared to 80 percent of the general U.S. population.
- 43 million Americans have no health insurance, even in an emergency.

- Nearly half of all parents in "working poor" families lack health insurance.
- 81 percent of emergency food recipient households have no private medical insurance.
- 29 percent of emergency food recipient households delayed getting medical treatment or filling a prescription in order to buy food within a 12-month period.

—compiled by America's Second Harvest from "Poverty Despite Work Handbook," the 1999 report of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; "Hunger 1997: The Faces and Facts" from America's Second Harvest 1998 National Research Study; "A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities 1998: A 30-City Study" from the United States Conference of Mayors; "Overworked and Underemployed: Unraveling an Economic Enigma" by Barry Bluestone and Stephen Rose; the 1997 update of the U.S. Census Bureau; and the 1999 report of Aetna US Healthcare.



Almost anyone who has read the Bible with any seriousness will note the recorded love affair that God has with the poor. In the Old Testament the believers are admonished over and over again to take care of the widows, the orphans, and the poor. In the New Testament Jesus gives emphasis to the love affair through his teaching and by his living with the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and the heavily laden. In fact, he makes the test for the entrance to the Kingdom of God what you do for the "least of these my brothers and sisters."

—Eugene F. Jud, former director of Caritas of Waco

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

The Hunger News & Hope 2000 Debate:
**What Will the World Trade Organization
Do for the World's Poor?**

First Opinion:

The WTO Can Help in the Long Run

by Stephen Schmeltekopf

In November of 1999 the eyes and ears of the world were riveted on the events surrounding the WTO meeting in Seattle. Prior to the picketing, the handmade signs, the riots, most U.S. Americans had never heard of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The media soon brought us images of outraged and sometimes violent protesters outside the meetings of trade envoys, as well as the occasional national leader—when it suited their popular agenda.

The past round of trade negotiations will be remembered for the action on the street as well as the apparent lack of action inside the meeting halls. The WTO, as it appears now, has failed again in resolving trade disputes or improving trade relations between wealthier and developing nations. This has largely been the same song from the 134-member Geneva-based organization since the beginning.

Dysfunction Junction

The WTO's deliberations remind me of my eight-year-old nephew, contemplating for hours on what candy to purchase. They failed to agree on anything. I am tempted to say to them what I say to my nephew: "Come on...pick anything, just do something!" The last round of trade talks, which took place in Uruguay, deepened the suspicions, among developing nations, of the genuine intentions of the mostly Western, wealthier countries.

Failing more recently to appoint a successor for Director General Ruggiero and feeling the pressures of choosing a successor prior to the Seattle round, the group managed to elect two director generals in late July. (Again, I feel like saying, as to my nephew, "You can't have two pieces of candy, only one!") New Zealand's Mike Moore and Thailand's Supachai Pantichpakdi will be splitting the six-year term. The main criticism of this "quick-fix" agreement is that each man has a different agenda without significant time to act on it.

The drama continued, then, in Seattle, complete with riots and general mayhem. Now the question arises: will the WTO fail outright like its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) did?

The WTO, it appears, has managed to learn a few things from the past mistakes of GATT. Their charter stipulates that decisions made on

trade issues and disputes are more binding—putting them, in a way, into quasi-international law. Disputes are settled through an arbitrary panel that concludes with a binding verdict, contestable by one appeal. The process, thus, seems solid and democratic.

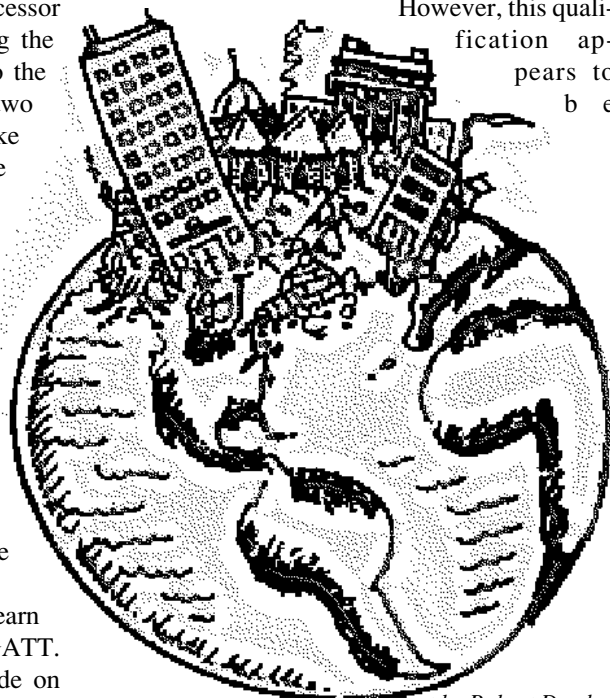
Flaws in the System

However, there are many flaws within the system. There is a lack of physical experience among the arbitrators and judges, a lack of transparency in the hearings and rulings, and a lack of public participation within the hearings.

The organization is riddled with inconsistencies, double-talk, and personal political agendas—led primarily by the wealthier nations. France, for instance, will not import British beef due to the supposed "mad cow disease," which is no longer a problem for the British beef industry. President Clinton recently changed his views on the reduction of trade tariffs and quotas, citing that unfair wages in other countries were "bad" for the American worker constituency.

Critics interpret this as a simple political press move, lacking integrity, in order to land presidential-hopeful Al Gore four more years in the White House. Further, the U.S. has been kept out of the European Union agricultural market. The U.S. wants the WTO to rule against heavy farm subsidies and protection by the EU member nations.

However, this qualification appears to be



art by Robert Darden

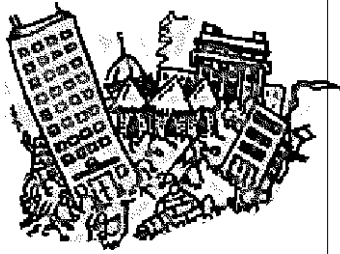
What Will the WTO Do for the World's Poor?

hypocritical; the U.S. has billions of dollars allocated to subsidize family farms within its own borders.

In addition to the imperfections of the process, the WTO cannot even agree upon what issues to discuss. The U.S. and other wealthier nations seek rulings on intellectual property rights for genetically enhanced crops, pharmaceuticals, and software. Developing countries want

“It is popular belief that the WTO and its main purpose—to increase the effectiveness of the world trade market mechanism—can only cause harm. The truth is that it just may not be that simple.”

—Stephen Schmeltekopf



rulings on fat farm subsidies and antidumping rules from Western nations. There are scores of nation-to-nation and rich-to-poor issues on trade that seemingly cannot be resolved.

The WTO, after Seattle, can imagine themselves at a “dysfunctional junction” in their existence. Time will only determine the future of this ailing organization.

O! Seattle

As the WTO arose in the popular limelight last November, many large and small constituencies were able to voice their passionate views to the world via the media. American steelworkers protested alongside Greenpeace members, AFL-CIO unionists, and the Sierra Club—a mixed bag, to say the least.

It is true that the issues brought to Seattle by the aforementioned protesters and various other special interest groups are legitimate issues that the WTO should address within their future agenda. However, it could be that many of the protesters who think the WTO is a negative influence on their causes—environmental responsibility, foreign labor and health standards, protection of U.S. workers, or protection of a whole industry—might actually be hurting their causes.

It is popular belief that the WTO and its main purpose—to increase the effectiveness of the world trade market mechanism—can only cause harm. The truth is that it just may not be that simple.

Environmentalists contest that increased trade with developing nations will increase ecological degradation in those nations. They point out that the developing nation's lack of ecological standards is reason enough to apply limits on their exports and sanction imports—until they begin to act more responsibly toward the environment.

Some protesters against the WTO are convinced that the organization will perpetuate the exploitation of poor labor practices in developing nations by wealthier Western powers. Capital flight will also further recess the developing nation's economy by the repatriation of profits by Western investors back into their own nation.

These special interest groups are demanding that the WTO stop Western nations from taking advantage of poorer nations' weak (in some cases nonexistent) environmental and labor laws. These groups are screaming for a stop to this neocolonial style of exploitation capitalism.

These groups claim that, when Western firms invest in trade with poorer nations, they feel no responsibility to improve the area in which they depend on a workforce or a manufacturing facility. These firms simply want fast profits that would be harder to achieve within a developed country—because of higher costs in conducting business where laws mandate labor regulations or environmental regulations. All these allegations are true in many instances.

Western firms often move to countries that allow for a longer workweek (with respect to hours worked and paid overtime) and with fewer ecological regulations (due to the high cost usually associated with environmental responsibility). There is even a Spanish noun, *maquiladora*, which has popularly become known for a U.S. plant moved to “the other side of the Mexican border.” It generally translates in the vernacular as “sweatshop.”

The question is, will the WTO perpetuate this kind of thing, or will it help to bring about changes? It is possible to keep Western firms out of poorer nations and hence not allow them to exploit weak environmental laws. However, it is possible that freer and more liberal trade with poorer nations could catalyze them out of poor-nation status.

Think of it in this light—why do poor nations allow for ecological damage to occur? Is it because their standard of living does not enable them the luxury of caring for the environment? Or is it because they do not have the revenues to afford watchdog agencies to monitor and enforce environmental laws? Perhaps the answer lies in both.

When richer nations build companies within the borders of poorer countries, positive transfers of management practices, technologies, manufacturing techniques, and so on, become possible. Foreign firms also pay taxes to their host countries. They provide a market for labor, manufacturing inputs, and various other services. Even if profits leave the host nation, the overall economy may actually have benefited from a variety of sources.

The hope is that the poor nations might one day raise themselves to first-world status, being much more accountable for the negative issues within their countries. They would be able to address labor and ecology issues within their borders. It is unfair to ask a poor nation to be more eco-friendly when they cannot provide sanitation or health services to their own people.

The transfer of economic knowledge through trade liberalization should not worsen conditions for the devel-

oping economy in the long-run. It will make them more accountable for what is going on within their country. There will be more foreigners living in the country, the goods exported to the rest of the world will increase, and this will make them more accountable for what goes on there. Moreover, by closing the doors to developing nations, they will continue to stagnate in the poverty cycle, ecological degradation by local manufacturers will continue, and they will remain unaccountable to the world for the negative issues within their borders.

Lastly, I think of a story that was told to me once: Within a very poor country, there was a foreign manufacturing plant. There was no local law against child labor, so the plant was full of children working for pennies an hour—in squalid, dangerous conditions. This does not sound like it would raise any poor country's standards. However, if the little girls working within this plant did not have this job, in many cases, they would be forced into prostitution to support their families. It is for reasons such as this that I say that the answer is not so simple.

It is for these reasons that I think the WTO can help raise the overall quality of life within the developing world. Through foreign investment and the transfer of technologies into developing countries by Western firms, the WTO can eventually make poor nations accountable for social and ecological injustices. ■

Second Opinion:

The WTO is a Threat to the Common Good

by Lee McKenna duCharme

I sat down to write this response the week the lectionary readings included the 9th Psalm. Coincidence? Perhaps not. That psalm is an ode to God's concern for justice, and I think the message is relevant for all times. Though cultures and actors and circumstances change, there is an essential message that does not.

I contend that the biblical text consistently portrays God as saving the worst diatribes for those—usually the politically or financially powerful—who fail to provide for the needy and advocate for the oppressed. I also contend that the nation states and power brokers addressed by the ancient prophets can be replaced in our contemporary lexicon with entities such as the World Trade Organisation.

Stephen Schmeltekopf, in his "The WTO Can Help in the Long Run," goes a long way to sharing my argument, listing most of the well-known sins of the WTO. Yet, having listed those transgressions, Mr. Schmeltekopf still has hope that the WTO can perform contrary to type and return to its good purposes of trade regulation. I am not convinced.

Though the eight-year long Uruguay Round (that ended in April of 1994 with the signing of the GATT's Final Act in Marrakech) was arduous and acrimonious, it went a long way towards former WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero's vision of a "constitution of a single world economy."

The disputes that have arisen since the end of the Uruguay Round are both old and new. In the world of "rules-based trade," the rules are made by the big players. At first, the little players didn't like it but were forced to play or get kicked out. Then the big players themselves started to get queasy.

What happened in Seattle was a combination of ill-prepared governments (my own, Canada, was a prime example) arriving with a much-disputed text; the refusal of the big players to compromise on key issues; the growing capacity of the big players to collaborate strategically and do major damage; and, yes, the street protests.

What we saw in Seattle, probably swollen by the drama in the street, was a fundamental dissatisfaction with the direction of the WTO reaching a crisis point

that was so profound that the future, so recently seen as inevitable, has become quite uncertain.

I believe that the WTO is anything but democratic—both inside and outside the organisation. Ask developing world representatives how much say they have. Here in Canada our representatives on the multilateral trade and financial institutions are not required to report to us in any kind of transparent manner. And the decisions that are made by trade dispute panels are indisputable by the electorates affected by them. This is more than a flaw; this is fatal.

There are two questions to be posed to the WTO: 1. What is its purpose? and 2. How does it function? The preceding paragraph deals with the latter. Its unaccountability to people is alone sufficient to justify non-support.

As for its purpose, the WTO wants to regulate trade. So what does that mean? It helps to add here a third set of questions: How does the WTO actually operate? Who sets the rules? Who do the rules favour?

This is where the rubber hits the road. And these are the easiest questions to answer. The rich and powerful people of the rich and powerful nations write the rules. The rules favour the rich and powerful. They are the ones to benefit. We could end there. This is enough to oppose the WTO. But there's more.

"I contend that the biblical text consistently portrays God as saving the worst diatribes for those who fail to provide for the needy and advocate for the oppressed. I also contend that the nation states and power brokers addressed by the ancient prophets can be replaced in our contemporary lexicon with entities such as the World Trade Organisation."

—Lee McKenna duCharme

The five-year review of the 1998 World Summit on Social Development is taking place in Geneva as I write. Its conclusion supports the apparently reductionist statements above. In the last five years, none of

the signatories of the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action has made progress on their promises to decrease poverty and social disintegration; everyone has gone backward. The gap between the rich and poor nations has grown; the gap between the rich and poor within nations has grown. This is in lockstep with the growth of the reach of globalised capital. Coincidence? I think not.

Like any international forum, the WTO is awash in politics and political appointees doing their capital's bidding, looking for advantage at every point—which would be fine if this were a game among equals. But it's not.

So governments handed over power to this unaccountable system whose central goal was to grant unfettered rights to capital to flow unimpeded across increasingly irrelevant borders in the pursuit of the highest possible profit. And then, while citizens had been researching and monitoring and organising for years, some people in high places began to notice that the very rules they had written were making it possible for others to tell them what to do.

Those in favour of the WTO point to all the developing countries that have eagerly gotten on board. Why would they get mixed up with a group controlled by a bunch of bullies so bent on their own interests that the developing countries would never be heard? Why? They feel they have no choice. Inside is terrible. But outside is worse.

Briefly, these are the key contentions I have with the WTO:

- Its ethic is one of fidelity to the shareholder. Any other loyalty—to the local community, the environment, the worker, etc.—is regarded as "amoral." The goal is profit maximisation.
- Governments who line up their ducks to suit the WTO follow a script written in the 1980s to assist developing countries to pay their debts to the countries and banks of the North. Called Structural Adjustment Programmes, they constitute classic neo-liberalism: pay down the deficit, cut the civil service, orient production to export, cut corporate taxes, devalue the national currency, reduce tariffs and trade barriers, and privatise as many programmes as possible. And who benefits from this? You guessed it. (Take Mexico, for example. Five to eight million more Mexicans have been added to the numbers of the

poor in the last six years, while the number of billionaires has gone up by 25.)

- The WTO is where the doctrine of the free market is created and turned to orthodoxy. This devotion to the creed of unfettered capital takes away from the value of the non-monetary care of the economy and society: unpaid work, community activities, mutual help, and cooperation.

I think that a better world depends on (1) slowed, if not zero, growth that respects the finiteness of creation; (2) fair and just terms of trade among the nations of the North and South; and (3) the equity-seeking redistribution of the results of production and wealth-creation.

The goals of the WTO are antithetical to all of those. For the WTO, unlimited economic growth is a given, the terms of trade will inevitably favour those who write the rules, and equity is irrelevant.

This is not fixable. Tinkering with it won't work. Corporate conduct codes won't work. Neither will parallel or side agreements glued onto multilateral agreements like NAFTA. They won't work.

This does not, however, mean that I am against trade. There are alternatives that are just and fair—alternatives that put people and the environment in a primary place above the rights of capital. But they will not fit within the present system of the WTO.

What it comes down to is this: The WTO is a fundamental threat to democracy and the right to economic self-determination. The common good is neither its purpose nor its goal. Why? That's a good question. And it's not just an economic question; it's a theological question. ■

Meet Our WTO Issue Respondents

—*Stephen Schmeltekopf is a recent graduate in economics and international business from Baylor University, now working in Dallas as a financial advisor.*

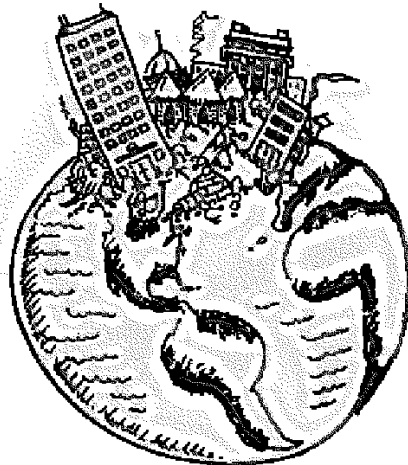
—*Lee McKenna duCharme is an international organizer for peace and justice issues, and a sometime pastor in Toronto, Ontario. She has been described as a modern, female, Canadian version of the Old Testament prophet Amos.*

—*We'd like to thank these two for agreeing to amiably disagree, so that we might better understand the issue.*

For further reading, we'd also like to recommend "Uncensoring Globalization," an editorial by Greg Guma, the editor of Toward Freedom, in the May 2000 issue of that magazine.

Contact: PO Box 468, Burlington, VT 05402; Phone: 802/654-8024; Fax: 802/658-3738; E-mail: TFmag@aolcom.

—eds.



What Will the WTO Do for the World's Poor?

Resources

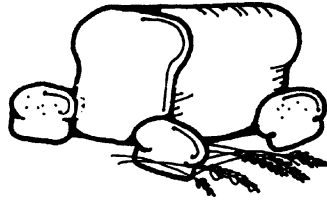
Note: for the resources department in this issue of HNH, we have selected a variety of excellent materials from the Alternatives Catalog—eds.

To Celebrate: Reshaping Holidays and Rites of Passage

Encouraging joy, spontaneity, justice and concern for nature, this edition of the Alternative Celebrations Catalog is for people who are not satisfied with the models of celebration offered by a consumer society. Included are the celebration experiences of people with widely varying backgrounds and perspectives. 224 pages. \$5.

Breaking Bread: The Spiritual Significance of Food

Author Sara Juengst puts faith in the kitchen. And she quotes the Frugal Gourmet (Jeff Smith, a Methodist minister): "I want your family to feast together and to be together when they eat." In Luke 7:34a we hear "the Son of Man has come eating and drinking." If you have ever felt as though mealtime was merely putting fuel into the body for another day's toil, this book will help you see the Spirit during your repasts. 113 pages. \$12.



The Secular Squeeze: Reclaiming Christian Depth in a Shallow World

Mark Knoll wrote of this book, "If you can hang on for the ride, you will see yourself, God, and the contemporary cultural crisis much more clearly." John Alexander does not use euphemisms. Nor does he offer comfortable platitudes. This is a work that calls us to becoming the remnant church within our communities and John tells us the story that will help us establish that remnant. It is a story we know, but he argues convincingly that it is not the story we live. A vigorous and entertaining read. 307 pages. \$14.

Toward a Nonviolent Economic

In a self-published, hand-bound book, author Charles Gray details a "World Equity Budget (WEB)," describes the consequences of living on such a budget, and makes a very pervasive argument for all believers to join him in using the WEB as a guide. The appendix includes an economic line that is helpful in giving youth a firm handle on the meaning of unequal distribution of wealth. Gray gives a detail of the sources of wealth of a "White Anglo-Saxon Male in the U.S." (a WASMUS). He has calculated that only one percent of wealth is attributable to a WASMUS's own effort. The book is \$8.

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God

Based on the teachings of St. Francis, the authors—both Protestant and Catholic—speak to those who long to do something about poverty and inequity, about conspicuous consumption and spiritual emptiness. Co-written by Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, OFM, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Stuart Taylor, this 184-page book was written especially for the privileged of the world. It offers creative exercises and reflections for individuals and study groups. The cost of the book is \$13.50.

—from the Alternatives catalog; contact Gerald Iverson at PO Box 2857, Sioux City, IA 51106; Phone: 712/274-8875 or 800/821-6153; E-Mail: Alternatives@SimpleLiving.org; Web: www.SimpleLiving.org.

Seeds of Hope Unveils the 2000 Hunger Emphasis Worship Packet:



Four 20-page packets each year filled with prayers, litanies, sermons, activities, art, and more. \$50 per packet or \$120 for all four (US). To order, call 254/755-7745; fax 254/753-1909; write 602 James, Waco, TX 76706; or e-mail seedshope@aol.com. Web: www.seedspublishers.org.

World Food Day Teleconference

Featuring Nobel Prize Winner Amartya Sen

October 16, 2000

This year's World Food Day teleconference will feature a conversation with Professor Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics, in a wide-ranging discussion on the relationship of hunger and poverty—the subject of many of his books.



All teleconference components, written and audiovisual, will be offered worldwide. Simultaneous interpretation from English into Spanish and French will be available for international sites.

A Study/Action Packet will be distributed to all participating teleconference sites. Single, reproducible copies of the packet will be available free of charge to sites from the National Committee office in early summer.

The program will be broadcast live from the studios of George Washington University in Washington DC, Monday, October 16th, from noon to 3:00 PM., Eastern Time. There are no restrictions on videotaping.

—For additional information, contact Patricia Young, National Coordinator. 2175 K Street NW, Washington DC, 20437; Phone: 202/653-2404.

News Briefs



Project Links Ministries with Federal Resources

WASHINGTON, DC—The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently initiated the Building Blocks Project, a campaign to encourage communities to use resources from federally founded nutrition programs. FRAC officials say that the programs that religious institutions already have in place can be enhanced by federally funded nutrition programs.

“Religious institutions often feed the hungry as part of their mission. These groups have long been key providers of emergency food,” FRAC officials said. “At the same time, many have provided children safe havens in the form of summer, after-school, before-school, and early childhood programs, as well as homeless and domestic violence shelters.”

The Building Blocks Project is an effort to connect ministries that serve at-risk children with federal resources. For more information, contact FRAC at 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW #540; Washington, DC 20009; Phone: 202/986-2200; Fax: 202/986-2525; Web: www.frac.org.

Kitchen Program Teaches Skills, Provides Food

CHICAGO—The Greater Chicago Food Depository recently began a pioneering “welfare-to-work” program designed to help people move from public assistance to self-sufficiency. The Community Kitchens program is run as a joint effort by the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the DePaul University Office of Applied Innovations (OAI) and the Association House of Chicago. It is one of more than a dozen similar programs that have recently opened their doors around the nation.

The program was initiated in 1998 with a start-up grant from Foodchain and is modeled after a program begun over ten years ago at the D.C. Central Kitchen in Washington D.C. The concept is simple—to make balanced meals from donated food for hungry Americans, while training underemployed individuals in basic food preparation skills.

Around 80 percent of the people enrolled in the program are either underemployed or unemployed. 67 percent of the students are immediately placed in food service jobs after graduating.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository supplies the food for classroom instruction, which is held at the Association House, a local Chicago service agency. The prepared food is then served in the cafeteria that Community Kitchen participants run. Addition-

ally, prepared food is delivered to nearby agencies that feed hungry children and adults.

For many students the program offers the first opportunity for financial independence and the first avenue away from public assistance. At the same time the program allows service agencies to bring prepared, balanced, nutritious meals to hungry Chicagoans.

—*from America's Second Harvest*

Alternative Nobel Prize Goes to Cuban Group

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN—The Grupo de Agricultura Organica (GAO), the Cuban organic farming association, which has been at the forefront of the country's transition from industrial to organic agriculture, was named as winner of a major international prize—the Right Livelihood Award—commonly known as the “Alternative Nobel Prize.”

The Grupo de Agricultura Organica is one of four winners of the 1999 award, chosen from more than 80 candidates from 40 countries. GAO brings together farmers, farm managers, field experts, researchers, and government officials to develop and promote organic farming methods. Its aim is to convince Cuban farmers and policy-makers that the country's previous high-input farming model was too import-dependent and environmentally damaging to be sustainable, and that the organic alternative has the potential to achieve equally good yields.

During the 1990s Cuba overcame a severe food shortage caused by the collapse of its trade relations with the former Soviet-bloc, and by the ongoing U.S. trade embargo. Self-reliant organic farming played a significant role in overcoming the crisis.

GAO was founded in 1993 as the Asociación Cubana de Agricultura Organica (CAAO), but recently changed its name when it was legally incorporated as part of the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forest Technicians (ACTAF). Over the past five years it has built up an impressive program of lobbying, training courses, workshops, documentation centers, demonstration farms, and exchange visits for farmers. The group has also held three international conferences, along with Food First Institute.

GAO is the first Cuban winner of the Right Livelihood Award. It shared the prize money of SEK1,800,000 (approximately US\$225,000) with a Colombian network, Consolidation of the Amazon Region (COAMA), that works for indigenous rights and biodiversity; and with Chilean-Spanish lawyer Juan Garces, who is honored for his untiring efforts over many years to bring the former Chilean dictator, General Pinochet, to justice. One of the world's leading promoters of solar energy, Hermann Scheer, received an honorary award.

—*from Food First Institute*

Sudan Military Bombs Site of Relief Effort

LEITHNOM, SUDAN—Twelve bombs were dropped from Sudanese military planes yesterday on the area surrounding the city of Leithnom, one of World Relief's (WR) two centers of relief operations in southern Sudan. The bombs fell just beyond WR's facilities. One staff member was injured.

This was the third bombing of the Leithnom area since the middle of June, shortly after the nearby town of Gogrial was captured by the Sudan People's Liberation Army from the government of Sudan. Since then, the bombs have come progressively closer to the agency's headquarters.

WR's Disaster Response Director, Ahuma Adodoadji, says he believes that the attacks are not intended to kill or maim, but instead are designed to intimidate humanitarian workers in the area. The Leithnom-based expatriate WR staff, who have been evacuated twice since June, were about to return when the most recent bomb fell. These staff members, at press time, were standing by, across the border in Kenya, waiting to go back to work.

—from *World Relief*

Foodchain Merges with Second Harvest

CHICAGO—Foodchain, a national organization for food-rescue programs, recently merged with America's Second Harvest (ASH). Officials of both groups say the merger will allow the organization to dramatically increase the distribution of prepared and perishable foods to hungry people. The leaders estimate that the new arrangement will reach one in ten U.S. citizens.

ASH operates a network of almost 200 food banks in all 50 U.S. states and Puerto Rico, distributing one billion pounds of food a year to 26 million people. Until now, the ASH distribution has focused on nonperishable items. Foodchain's expertise has been in prepared and perishable items, distributing excess food from hotels, restaurants, and caterers through a nationwide chain of food-rescue programs.

The merger of these two organizations, officials say, will produce the most comprehensive and efficient charitable food distribution program in the U.S. In addition, such innovative programs as Kids Cafes (see the lead story in *Hunger News & Hope*, Volume 2 No 2, Spring 2000) and Community Kitchens (see the news story on page 10) will be enhanced by the new distribution system.

The national operations will be based in Chicago. For more information, contact the ASH headquarters at 312/263-2303, or look up the web site: www.secondharvest.org



Hey, Jake! The guys from that advertising agency are pretty upset that we're still printing copies with Luke 12:15 in 'em--

Update on Hunger Legislation

Republications Tip Balance in Support of Debt Relief Funding

At press time, debt relief legislation was given a breakthrough in the House of Representatives. Just when supporters had felt that U.S. debt relief funding was in jeopardy (the House committee had denied full funding), Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) offered an amendment to the foreign aid spending bill in the House.

The Waters amendment brought funding for debt relief from \$69.4 million to \$225 million. The amendment passed by a narrow margin of 216-211 after 26 Republicans crossed party lines to support the amendment. Representatives Spencer Bachus (R-AL), Jim Leach (R-IA), and John Kasich (R-OH) were outspoken in their support of the measure.

The additional funds are to be obtained from foreign military aid accounts. The House also voted to transfer \$42 million from foreign military aid to a World Bank program to fight AIDS primarily in Africa.

—to stay updated on debt relief legislation, contact David Bryden at dbryden@j2000.org, or look up the Jubilee 2000 web site: www.j2000.org

Hunger Relief Act Not on Schedule

The U.S Congressional budget office recently announced a \$2.2 trillion surplus, but Congressional leaders are balking at funding the Hunger Relief Act. The bill (S-1805/HR-3192) would expand nutrition assistance to more needy people—allowing low-income people to own a reliable car and still receive food stamps; allowing low-income people who spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing to receive food stamps; allowing legal immigrants to receive food stamps on the same basis as citizens; and increasing funding for emergency food providers (including authorization for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP).

At press time the bill had 155 House cosponsors and 28 in the Senate. The measure is supported by the Clinton administration, and continues to gain bipartisan support in Congress. Nevertheless, congressional leaders have yet to schedule a vote, and several members of Congress have refused to support it unless the cost of the bill, \$2.5 billion over five years, is offset by cuts to other programs. The cost of the Hunger Relief Act would be less than one half of one percent of the expected budget surplus.

—for more information, check out the *Bread for the World* web site at www.bread.org, or call the legislative hotline at 301/588-7439.

Hunger News & Hope is published quarterly by Seeds of Hope Publishers, in partnership with the following denominational groups:

- American Baptist Churches in the USA
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Christian Reformed Church in North America
 - Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - Presbyterian Church USA
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The Hunger News & Hope logo was created by Robert Van Darden, a student at Vanguard High School in Waco, Texas.

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

Seeds of Hope Publishers are housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James, Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: SeedsHope@aol.com.

Web Address: www.seedspublishers.org

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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgi-

et cetera

You must do the thing you think you cannot do.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

Always hold firmly to the thought that each one of us can do something to bring some portion of misery to an end.
—from a poster by Bonnie Acker in *Tools for Change, the catalog of Syracuse Cultural Workers*

It is not enough to be compassionate;
you must act.
—the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, 1992

I truly believe we should never give up on our hopes and dreams. The path may be rocky and twisted, but the world is waiting for that special contribution each of us was born to make. What it takes is the courage to follow those whispers of wisdom that guide us from the inside. When I listen to that I expect nothing less than a miracle.

—Marilyn Johnson Kondwani

Liberation theology is about God's preferential option for the poor. We work for their liberation because God has chosen them, period—not because they are better than anybody else, or because they will do better if they are helped.

—Marc Ellis, University Professor of American and Jewish Studies at Baylor University

No society can be truly said to be civilized when one of its citizens goes to bed hungry on a day when there is surplus food available.
—from *America's Second Harvest*

No matter what our attempts to inform, it is our ability to inspire that will turn the tides.
—Jan Philips, from the mission statement of *Syracuse Cultural Workers*

There was a time when people thought everyone had a right to eat. During the Depression, neighbor took care of neighbor; that's how they got through it. Then people had nothing. Today people have everything, and yet we're still more polarized—rich and poor, black and white—than we've ever been before.

—Father Ray, ABC's "Nothing Sacred"



art by Lenora Mathis

cal year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 non-profit tax status. All contributions above the subscription rate are fully tax-deductible.

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