

GROWING Together

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WHAT WOULD JESUS THINK OF GLOBALIZATION?

We sit in our living room watching the television news. We feel helpless and hopeless as we see people displaced from their homes, observe the effects of global warming and watch factories spew out pollutants.

More and more people blame these problems on globalization. But what is globalization? How does it work?

Globalization creates huge multinational corporations which are able to move resources, manufacturing and profits anywhere in the world. Too often human rights are ignored, the environment is degraded, and social inequality is increased in order to provide greater profits. Wal-Mart's economy is bigger than that of 161 countries. General Motors economy is bigger than that of Denmark's. The top 200 corporations in the world have almost twice the economic influence of the poorest four fifths of humanity.

Transnational corporations are moving production to places such as Honduras where they pay women starvation wages, work them 13 hours a day, often 7 days a week with no environmental standards or health care. If they are ill or pregnant they are fired. Meanwhile, back home in Canada, inequalities are growing as well. Big box stores put family stores out of business while many employees now work part time with few benefits.

Globalization puts power in the hands of a few people. Power is concentrated at the international level where new rules have been developed with the various Free Trade Agreements. National governments are losing their power to international corporations. For example, Ethyl Corporation sued Canada for \$250 million because Canada banned the imports of MMT, an ingredient in gasoline which posed health risks. The corporation dropped its suit when Canada fearing it would lose the lawsuit reversed the ban. The Canadian government also paid Ethyl Corporation \$13 million and had two MP's read statements in Parliament saying the

contentious ingredient was harmful neither to the environment nor to health, despite damning scientific evidence. (The Gallon Environment Letter, Vol. 5, No. 17, April 16, 2001)

Globalization is with us, it is not going to go away. It is our responsibility to ensure that it works for people not just for profits.



Jesus detested the misuse of power; his main concern was justice for all. He said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)

We must not allow a few powerful people or corporations to diminish the rights of many. We Christians must speak out. We should make our voices heard. Jesus' first disciples were few in number yet they brought great change to the world. We can do the same. We can share our concerns with others and learn more about globalization and its effects both on people and the environment. We should become active in a political party and join groups who work for peace and justice.

As Margaret Mead wrote, "A small group of committed concerned people can change the world. Indeed it is all that ever has."

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.

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