

8th Day Center for Justice
205 West Monroe St. Ste. 500
Chicago, Illinois 60606-5062

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Chicago, Illinois
Permit No. 7596



A PUBLICATION OF 8TH DAY CENTER FOR JUSTICE

MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

Claretian Missionaries	Order of Carmelites, PCM
Capuchin Province of St. Joseph	Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
Clerics of St. Viator	Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ
Congregation of St. Agnes	Priests of the Sacred Heart
Congregation of St. Joseph	Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph
Daughters of Charity	School Sisters of Notre Dame
- St. Vincent De Paul, Evansville	- Atlantic Midwest Province
De La Salle Christian Brothers	School Sisters of St. Francis
- Midwest District	Servants of Jesus, Detroit MI
Divine Word Missionaries	Sisters of Charity, BVM
- North America	Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Dominican Sisters of Peace	- West Midwest Community
Dominicans of Adrian, MI	Sisters of Providence
Dominicans of Racine, WI	- St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN
Dominicans of Sinsinawa, WI	Sisters of St. Benedict, Chicago
Dominicans of Springfield, IL	Sisters of St. Benedict, Rock Island
Franciscan of Rochester, MN	Sisters of St. Joseph
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	- of the Third Order of St. Francis
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart	Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters	Sisters of the Living Word
Hospital Sisters	Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque IA
- of the Third Order of St. Francis	Ursuline Sisters, Roman Union
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Wheaton Franciscans
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate	

CORRECTION: In our last issue of Centerings we incorrectly listed the Dominican Sisters of Peace by listing the Dominican Sisters of both Great Bend and Columbus. Many apologies! Both of those communities are now part of the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

Mark your calendar!

8th Day Annual Event
“Justice is what Love looks
like in Public” (Cornel West)

When: Saturday, September
17th, 2-5:00 p.m.

Where: At the Irish American
Heritage Center in Chicago, IL
Guest Speaker: Father Roy
Bourgeois, SOA Watch

Event includes presentation of the Mary Elsbend, OSF Award. Tickets cost \$60 or \$30 for low-income/student. To purchase tickets or make a donation, contact Beth at 8th Day Center for Justice (312) 641-5151.

**Witness for Peace
Delegation to Colombia**

Militarism in Colombia,
August 13-23, 2011

Contact: Thomas Long (773) 883-
1003 or Tlong340@gmail.com

Volume XXXVII, No.2 Spring 2011

“Why is an alternative economy needed?”

BY: MARY BRICKER-JENKINS



Photo by Harvey Finkle.

This is the question I was asked to ponder for this essay. Immediately what came to mind were images of disasters caused by the pursuit of economic gain: our tortured planet, robot-delivered bombs, crumbling highways circling crumbling cities, inmates stacked four-up in a cell built for one, children slouching through metal detectors at the doors of elementary schools, families shivering under bridges or hiding in the hills above the factories where they once worked and the homes they once owned.

But we can't stop here; this leaves us in a state of despair. Let's reframe the question. I believe that we already have an alternative economy. The relevant question then—the one that will dig us out of despair is: “How can we reshape the economy to meet common human needs?” This is a political question, one that calls for reflection, analysis, and action.

In today's economic climate, jobs are either permanently gone or no longer pay enough to support a family. Labor organizing is thwarted by fear of job loss, bargaining rights abrogated, and to keep their jobs, workers are required to “give back” while their bosses take huge salaries and bonuses. The social contract that has governed the relationship between labor and capital for two centuries has been unilaterally abrogated by capital. The ruling class has broken the rules.

We have moved from the industrial age to the electronic age. The primary “fuel” of production and distribution is no longer steam, but the microchip. Microchips make possible instantaneous global movement of capital and communications, rapid movement of goods and services, and—most crucially—the very production of goods and services. Not only has it become easy to “offshore” jobs, increasingly it has become easy to re-

place labor in the production and distribution processes. Robots build cars, dispense prescriptions, load trucks and trains, assist in surgery, and deliver bombs. Increasingly we “interface” with computers rather than people—in the grocery store, the bank, the schoolroom.

Consequentially for working people, productivity and profits have gone up, and continue to go up, with fewer and fewer workers needed for permanent jobs. This sector of the labor force has been replaced by a contingent labor force who are paid less, often unemployed or underemployed, and largely unprotected from the vagaries of economic cycles. The industrial working class is gradually being replaced by a new class. The new class has tenuous or even no connection to the world of employment. In the eyes of those with the power to create jobs, the new class is relatively superfluous. In the process of production, its members are, in a word, expendable. As consumers, they might also be expendable; if it takes more resources to keep them buying than their buying contributes to profits, why bother with them? And if we no longer need a healthy and educated “reserve army of unemployed,” why bother with their schools or health care?

We must craft an entirely new vision and program, one that can harness the productive capacity of the electronic age—the capacity to produce, without destroying the planet, all the goods and services required to meet basic human needs with less labor than we've ever needed to meet only some of them. Yes, it is possible to do more with less. We already have an alternative economy that makes this possible. The problem is, of course, that we don't control it.

Just as those who benefit richly from the economy have framed a political program to protect their interests, we must frame ours—and work for it. We too are brilliant, but we have not tapped our power. We have obscured our vision of the possible, and therefore the development of a sound political program, by pursuing the logic of a bygone era. We have been playing by the rules that governed its social contract and expect those who own the means of production to do so as well. It's not going to happen. We must realize that it is possible to think in new ways about how our common needs can be met. We have nothing to lose.

Mary Bricker-Jenkins, activist and social work educator, was guided to the civil rights movement while attending Manhattanville College in the 1950s. Since then her work has focused primarily on organizing to claim the full range of human rights for all.

Mondragon, Transformation and Our Economic Tomorrow

BY: LIZ DELIGIO

In the last several years we saw the near collapse of the financial industry that sent the economy into a tail spin. When the government was forced to intervene, an eruption of rhetoric decried the evils of socialism and predicted our descent into a totalitarian state if the free market was meddled with in anyway.

The socialism narrative neatly misses the point that it was the unregulated free market that created the economic collapse. It expertly dodges the reality that our government has always regulated the economy with varying levels of intervention without becoming “totalitarian.”

This narrative creates a drumbeat of fear that misses a profound reality; there are over 15 million people without employment in the U.S. The problem with the intervention of the government is not that it has been too radical, but rather that it has not been nearly radical enough.

What if instead we created a narrative of ingenuity? Hope? Enterprise?

During the 1940's José María Arizmendiarieta created this narrative in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, when much of Spain was wracked with poverty, hunger and tension. Don José spoke of coexistence through an economic model based on solidarity and thus, transformed a community.

Don José's model (Mondragon) depended on a belief that common ownership promotes an ethical relationship between workers, management and community. From this ethical place of co-existence a community is able to equally provide for the needs of all without exploitation.

Mondragon operates companies in four different sectors: finance, retail, industry and education. The corporation posted a total turnover in 2008 of 16.8 billion Euros while providing jobs, free education, banking and access to a full spectrum of social services.

The Mondragon model is based on the following ten basic principles:

Open admission there is no discrimination for membership on the basis of gender, sexuality, race etc.

Democratic organization invests authority in the “general assembly” or worker base which freely elects a leadership council; there is no CEO or hierarchy.

The sovereignty of labor places labor, rather than profit, at the heart of the decision making. How will decisions uphold labor's ability to be positively transforming to people, society and the environment?

The valuing of labor means then that **capital is seen as the subordinate concern** in decision-making of the co-operatives. Profit would never be a justifiable cause to damage the environment or cut jobs.

Participatory management ensures that transparency and channels for participation remain central to the decision-making structures.

Payment solidarity creates a structure in which the workers can never be exploited by management. Management is needed and requires different expertise; however, this expertise should never allow exploitation of labor base or create huge salary disparities.

Inter-cooperation is the commitment of Mondragon cooperatives to work with one another and other cooperatives in the world.

Social transformation states that the cooperatives have a duty to contribute to the common good of their own communities. 10% of all profits go to charities and the next 40% go to improving the education and resources of the community.

Universality proclaims the solidarity of the workers of Mondragon with all those in the world who struggle to support objectives of Peace, Justice, and Development.

Education is seen as the cornerstone for creating a more just social order; it must be included in all aspects of the model.

If JP Morgan Chase operated from these principles, the \$17 million dollar bonus that CEO Jamie Dimon took home could have been distributed to Chase's over 200,000 employees, averaging \$85,000 more for each employee.

If BP operated from these principles there would not have been an oil spill because BP would never have allowed its average profit of \$20 billion to come at the expense of the environment and its workers.

Don José, in partnership with the people of Basque region, changed the theory and the practice of economics and created a model of democratic socialism. Yes, socialism - that evil fire breathing dragon that will gobble us whole unless we allow the free market to give Jamie Dimon \$17 million? It may be time for this dragon to not only tame our free market, but free our imaginations as well.

Liz Deligio is the staff for the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA's) and has worked at 8th Day Center since 2005.

A Paradigm Shift

BY: KATHLEEN DESAUTELS, SP

If recent news and T.V. footage from Egypt tell us anything, then Margaret Mead's popular saying has never been truer - “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Real transformation in creating sustainable communities will happen only when small groups of citizens work together to adjust the prevailing mind-set that change can only come from on high.

Small efforts to raise consciousness of the interconnectedness of human rights, economic rights and environmental sustainability have been on the agenda of women religious for decades. Experience tells them that social justice and Earth justice are branches of the same tree.

Responding to the “signs of the time” is how women religious understand mission. One sign that is becoming more evident is the connection between sustainability and economics. Many communities work on this connection by developing sustainable living experiments on their Motherhouse grounds.

In 1994, the Sisters of the Earth network began by bringing together women religious who had initiated small environment-friendly projects on their Motherhouse grounds, i.e. organic gardening, wetland development, bio-thermal heating projects to name a few. An example of one of the Congregations involved in this network is the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN. The Sisters formed the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, which grew to become a major ministry of their Congregation.

Some 17 years later the Center has grown to include – organic gardening where fresh vegetables are used in the kitchens of the Sisters, the local College, donated to the neighboring food bank in Terre Haute or shared as part of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project. There is a straw bale house and two other retreat houses built with sustainable construction methods and a herd of 66 alpacas whose fiber is processed and made into weavings by the Sisters. Some 350 acres of state certified organic farmland houses beehives, a large composting site, wetlands, classified forest and orchards.

The ongoing educational programming of children's garden camps, the earth literacy program and spiritual enrichment opportunities that promote eco-spirituality and eco-feminism keeps Director Maureen Freeman, CSJ, the dedicated staff and volunteers hopping.

In addition to these efforts are the plant operations of the Motherhouse that include their own environmentally friendly projects – re-using motor oil to heat the garages, a wood burner that re-uses scrap wood from the neighboring area to heat the recycle barn, and collaboration with Indiana State University to recycle materials with lead or mercury base products.



Denise Wilkinson, General Superior for the Sisters of Providence talks with workers in front of the boiler. Photo taken by Cheryl Casselman who is the Marketing Director for the Office of Congregational Advancement for the Sisters of Providence.

Rose Ann Eaton, SP – the Associate Director of Plant Management is quick to mention the newest effort for sustainability. In 2007, a huge biomass burner was installed. Scrap wood collected from the campus and local businesses, which ordinarily would be dumped into landfills, is scraped clean, chopped and fed into the burner that produces steam heat and hot water for the major buildings. “Instead of paying for oil and gas,” stated Rose Ann, who likes to remind people who ask, “we are paying workers to prepare the fuel.” The bio-fuel burner is rare in Indiana, which prompted Purdue University to bring together bio-fuel engineers, professors and researchers to spend the day at St. Mary's and learn its operational benefits.

As David Korten reminds us – “Real transformation, no matter where it comes from, needs to be rooted in the belief that a new economy is one that shifts the locus of power from global financial markets to local communities.” White Violet Center is an attempt to be a part of this shift of imagination and structures.

White Violet and similar projects help to hold open a space that points to the possibility that workers, the environment, and the community need to be at the center of our economic equations. For too long the U.S. model has placed profit above land and people. Efforts from groups like Sisters of Providence shift this paradigm and dispel the myth that people and places are not impacted when we choose efficiency and money over right relationships.

Kathleen Desautels, SP has been the staff person for her Congregation of the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN since 1986.