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The globalization of the economy creates new challenges for social work in the arenas of social and economic justice. This article outlines social justice issues related to the debt crisis of the Global South and sweatshops. A presentation of colonial precursors is followed by a detailed examination of these global institutions with an emphasis on the vulnerability, disempowered status, and exploitation of poor people of the Global South. Connections with global inequities in wealth, income, and the distribution of resources are made explicit. The article explores domestic social justice problems as possible points of connection with these issues. Finally, the authors give recommendations for social work education, advocacy, and activism.

Key words: debt crisis; economic justice; global economy; social justice; sweatshops

In the new century, social work is confronted with a global system in which the world’s people are bound together in a complex web of economic relationships. People’s lives are now linked to lives of distant others through the clothes that they wear, the energy that warms them, and even the food that they eat. What are the institutions of this new global economy and are they just and equitable? We are compelled to once again consider the perennial themes of social justice, exploitation, and privilege, but this time as they relate to an economic system of unprecedented scope.

With regard to social justice issues, the NASW Code of Ethics (2000) leaves no doubt about a global mandate. Whereas the term “global” was not used in earlier versions, the current code states “social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels... [including] social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice” [italics added] (pp. 26–27). This explicit extension of ethical responsibility beyond national boundaries flows naturally from the core value of “human dignity and worth” that is at the heart of our professional identity. Moreover, such a worldwide orientation is consistent with the work of numerous and often prominent social workers who have worked on peace and global social justice issues throughout the history of the profession (Van Soest, 1995). What then are the structures of privilege, exploitation, and resource distribution inherent in the new global economy? This question is best approached by first noting critical antecedents.

Colonialism—Precursor of the Current Global Economy

Beginning in the late 1400s and continuing until the middle of the 20th century, European countries, most notably England, Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands, exploited the peoples and resources in the areas of the world now commonly referred to as the “Global South.” Colonies of both expansion and exploitation were established in places such as South and Central
America, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and India, and in the 19th century, Africa. Much of the current geopolitical map is actually the product of this history of European colonialism.

Whether Europeans migrated to particular colonies or simply maintained control by establishing puppet governments or a local military presence, colonialism generally aimed at one goal: the movement of local commodities and resources toward the Europeans and the exploitation of indigenous people for labor or, in other cases, social marginalization or elimination. In other words, colonialism established a historical context of severe class polarization as well as a precedent for the exploitation of indigenous people and their resources in the countries of the Global South (E. Goldsmith, 1996; Magdoff, 1978; Weaver, 2000).

Colonial domination was often justified through a belief in the superiority of Europeans over the indigenous populations. At its worst, this rationalization, which was racist as well as ethnocentric, was used to justify the slave trade and genocide. In less severe variations, Europeans envisioned themselves as “civilizing” their subjects, who, we should note, were virtually always not white. In general, colonialism involved a powerful belief in European entitlement and superiority as well as an unabashed racist orientation that was used to justify centuries of wholesale exploitation (Moussa, 2000).

Although some colonies became independent of direct European control during the 19th century, the full scope of direct domination came to an end in the years after World War II. During that time, the remaining colonized countries of the Global South experienced the emergence of military coups, dictators, and other varieties of autocratic governments. With few and fleeting exceptions, the independent governments of the Global South were undemocratic in origin and patently corrupt. Most important, whether of European or local origins, these governments functioned to perpetuate severe class inequities characterized by a small, wealthy group of elites polarized against much larger populations of people who were poor and of predominantly indigeneous or slave descent (Chomsky, 2000; Magdoff, 1978; Weaver, 2000).

**Debt of the Global South**

The debt crisis of the Global South is a significant factor contributing to current inequities in the distribution of resources worldwide. Its origins may be traced back to the period immediately following World War II when northern investors, including the newly formed World Bank, began providing loans to the countries of the Global South for large-scale infrastructure projects, such as hydroelectric dams, highways, power plants, and steel mills. Whereas initially the capital for these investment loans came from northern investors and governments, record profits by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries during the 1970s created a glut of investment money, with northern bankers desperately attempting to make loans to cover interest payments to depositors. At that time numerous loans totaling in the tens and, ultimately, hundreds of billions of dollars were made in haste and with insufficient concern for the viability of the proposed projects, their relevance to local economies, or how borrowing countries would make their payments (Chomsky, 2000; Madeley, 1999; Northcott, 1999; Ransom, 1999). Although the precise contribution of these loans to the current debt crisis is difficult to ascertain, Roodman (2001) stated, “the scale of the debt trouble in the poorest nations points to widespread waste, misuse, or failure of development projects” (p. 26).

Many of these large-scale infrastructure projects either failed completely or were of primary benefit to the wealthy elite or the northern-based corporations who profited through designing, building, or subsequently running the projects (Chossudovsky, 1999; Northcott, 1999, Roodman, 2001). As one of many possible examples, the Bataan Nuclear Power Station in the Philippines, costing $2.8 billion dollars during the Marcos era, was built by Westinghouse for 11 times the original estimate but was never used because of its location over an earthquake zone (Hanlon, 1999).

Also relevant to our understanding of the
disempowered masses of the Global South, many of these projects displaced significant numbers of poor people, ultimately driving them more deeply into poverty. Moussa (2000) stated that between 1985 and 1995 an average of 10 million people were displaced annually by the construction of hydroelectric dams and urban transportation projects.

Perhaps even more disturbing than this legacy of questionable, capital-intensive development projects, a huge chunk of the collective current debt, as much as 50 percent, originates from loans used for military or “internal security” spending (Moussa, 2000). Oppressive governments in the south have frequently used such armaments against their own people (Chomsky, 2000; Hanlon, 1999; Moussa). Even now, long after the end of the Cold War, transnational arms manufacturers from the United States continue to lead the way with record sales, further contributing to the debt and also, in some cases, to the perpetuation of totalitarian and oppressive regimes (“Arms for the Poor,” 1998; Chomsky, 2000).

Finally, considerable amounts of borrowed money were simply stolen by corrupt leaders, with Marcos of the Philippines (Hanlon, 1999) and Suharto of Indonesia (Chomsky, 2000) being the most high-profile examples. These cases, by no means unusual, illustrate a key social justice issue that runs through the whole debt crisis: the poor people of the countries in question, be they Colombian, Ghanaian, Haitian, Laotian, or Mexican, often did not benefit from the money that was borrowed. Directly related to this issue, the typically corrupt leaders who made the loans were not representative of the poor population, having often assumed power outside of any viable democratic process (Roodman, 2001).

To obtain money for meeting ongoing debt and interest payments, southern countries have resorted to producing exports, generally commodities, for sale to northern-based transnational corporations. For instance, South American countries have sold off tracts of rain forests to timber companies at alarming rates (Khor, 1996), and many other countries have displaced subsistence farmers to make way for agricultural crops suitable for export markets in the north (Northcott, 1999; Shiva, 2000). Worldwide, millions of people who are poor have been displaced and driven into deeper poverty, while significant resources and commodities that could have been used by local populations have instead moved north through the exigencies of debt (Madeley, 1999; Moussa, 2000).

**Structural Adjustment Programs**

Beginning in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s, two additional developments became important to the debt crisis. First, because of changes in lending policies in northern countries, interest rates increased dramatically, typically doubling during the period between the late 1970s and early 1980s (Northcott, 1999). Through this development many countries were reduced to paying the interest on their original loans, with diminishing possibilities of actually repaying the principle. This development eventually precipitated a crisis, with many countries threatening to default on their payments, beginning with Mexico in 1982 (Chomsky, 2000; Northcott; Ransom, 1999).

As a response to the threat of default, the World Bank and, especially in more recent years, the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the international organizations designed to finance capital and regulate world currencies—began enforcing “austerity measures” or structural adjustment programs (SAPs) as a prerequisite for debt restructuring and continued participation in the global economy. The effects of these programs on the world’s poor people have been devastating (Bello, 1996, 1999, 2000; Herdia & Purcell, 1996).

The SAPs have routinely required cutbacks in government spending on health care, education, and other social services to make more money available for debt or, more typically, interest payments. Countries have also been regularly required to “privatize” government-owned functions, such as utilities and water. In most cases these essential services have been purchased by private companies, sometimes from the north, whose primary interest has been profit, sometimes with subsequent cuts in essential services to populations unable to afford market pricing (Northcott, 1999). Finally, SAPs have regularly required “cutting or constraining wages and eliminating or weakening mechanisms like the minimum wage . . . to remove what were seen as artificial barriers to the mobility of local and foreign capital” (Bello, 2000, p. 66). Structural adjustments illustrate most clearly that the poor people of the Global South are shouldering the burden of the debt.
Ramifications of the Debt

Overall, there has been a steady rise in the debt of the Global South, which totaled well over 2 trillion dollars at the end of 1999, with 47 of the poorest countries of the world owing 422 billion of that sum (Roodman, 2001). Concerning these poorest countries,

what is beyond debate is that [they] ... are among the most troubled on earth. Thirty seven ... rank in or just above the U.N. Development Programme’s lowest category of human development. ... babies born there can be expected to live 40–50 years, ... fewer than half of the children and young adults attend school or college, and ... barely half the adults can read. Despite all of these problems, many of these countries are forced to spend more on debt service than on basic social services. (Roodman, pp. 23–24)

At the poorest end of the global poverty spectrum is Mozambique, the debt payments of which consume up to 90 percent of export revenues. In 1997 this amounted to a $1.13 million dollar transfer of wealth to the lenders of the north that might have otherwise been used for health care, education, and other social services (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report for 1999 stated that annual debt payments exceeded combined spending on education and health care in nine countries, and health care expenditures alone in 29 countries, with 23 of those countries being in sub-Saharan Africa. An earlier report (UNDP, 1997) estimated that if the heavily indebted countries in Africa alone were relieved of their debt burden, about 7 million children could be saved from starvation and disease annually. Echoing these grim statistics, the former executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Adebayo Adebisi, was quoted as saying, “so severe has been ... the debt on ordinary [African] people ... that the destructive impact is comparable only to war, the only difference being that it is children rather than soldiers who are dying ...” (quoted in Northcott, 1999, p. 14). Northcott added, “the enormity of the debt of these poor countries has led to virtual enslavement of their people to debt repayments” (p. 13).

In summary, debt has functioned as a mechanism by which money, commodities, and re-

sources have tended to flow in one direction—toward the wealthy countries and peoples of the northern hemisphere. These inequities have transpired through several routes. First, the lenders, be they countries, banks, or wealthy individuals, have benefited by realizing massive returns resulting from sometimes escalating interest rates—sometimes over a period of decades. Second, in many cases, the immediate beneficiaries of the original loans were the northern multinational corporations that profited from engineering and construction projects and also from the sale of armaments. Finally, because of a desperate need to obtain money from exports, and also under SAP requirements, southern countries have loosened environmental standards, taxes, tariffs, and other regulations to attract buyers for local resources and commodities. Ultimately, this has afforded transnational corporations abundant, cheap resources and commodities with minimal regulations hampering their access.

Note also that recent trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and those made through the World Trade Organization (WTO) have further eroded local trade barriers, pitting countries with similar exports against each other. These related factors have ultimately contributed to declining export prices, increased profits for transnational corporations, and a more rapid transfer of commodities, resources, and wealth from the southern to the northern hemisphere (Wallach & Sforza, 1999).

Labor in the New Global Economy

The legacy of colonialism and debt, however, is only one dimension of the injustices that are currently shouldered by the poor people of the new global economy. Beginning with Sri Lanka in the 1970s, numerous southern governments, desperate to attract outside capital and labor income, have established free trade zones (FTZs) within their countries’ borders. Within these areas, transnational corporations are allowed to sidestep local regulations (when they exist), such as those pertaining to minimum wage, working hours, and especially child labor. Generally, these corporations are also allowed to avoid or pay greatly reduced taxes and tariffs on goods “processed” by local labor within these zones (A. Goldsmith, 1996).
Trade barriers have been further loosened and, often indirectly, labor standards have been weakened by trade agreements such as those made with NAFTA, GATT, and the WTO (Hahnel, 1999; Wallach & Sforza, 1999; Weaver, 2000). Beginning in the 1980s and accelerating through the 1990s, the dismantling of trade barriers and the erosion of labor standards have resulted in a massive movement of jobs from the factories of the north toward the emerging sweatshops of the south. Although only 79 FTZs existed worldwide in 1984, by 1990 nearly 2,000 could be found in Mexico alone (Hart, 1995). Currently, the majority of consumer goods available in wealthy northern countries are being assembled, at least in part, by poor people of the Global South for a fraction of their corresponding labor costs (Madeley, 1999; Varley, 1998).

Sweatshop labor abuses are by no means limited to a few companies, a few industries, or a few isolated incidents. Currently, virtually every conceivable sort of consumer goods, from automobile parts to clothing to toys and even to hospital supplies, is produced under sweatshop conditions. The list of multinational companies benefiting from sweatshop labor is very long and includes virtually every major retail supplier in the United States with numerous high-profile high-profit corporations such as Disney and Walmart leading the list at different points during the past decade (Greenia, Champagne, Spiridakis, McClean, & Mitlo, 1999; Mitlo & Beaulieu, 1998; Varley, 1998).

Sweatshop wages are commonly inadequate for providing basic human necessities, such as food, medicine, and shelter at local prices (Mitlo & Beaulieu, 1998; National Labor Committee, 1999; Varley, 1998). Moreover, Varley stated that “workers around the world have complained of being cheated by a number of wage practices” (p. 62), including long waits to receive pay and also refusal of employers to pay for overtime work. The extensive and detailed report goes on to say that “workers . . . complain frequently about long hours—sometimes 12 hours a day seven days a week, sometimes 24 hours at a stretch, sometimes weeks without a day off” (p. 65). Perhaps more disturbing but less widespread, this report and other sources (A. Goldsmith, 1996; Madeley, 1999) describe how sweatshop workers, typically young women, have sometimes been found working in extremely hazardous environments and have also been subjected to mental and physical abuse and sexual exploitation by supervisors.

Child labor is the norm in the sweatshops of the Global South. According to an International Labor Organization report (1996), by the mid-1990s there were 250 million children between ages five and 14 working in factories and other arrangements related to the global economy around the world. The National Labor Committee, quoting factory owners in the FTZs of Central America, reported the “preferred” garment worker is a 16-year-old girl because “at that age, hand/eye coordination is at its peak,” and “young girls are less likely to know their rights and cause trouble” (“Zoned for Slavery,” 1995).

Similarly, women are generally overrepresented in sweatshops, with about 68 percent of Mexican FTZ workers being female (Hart, 1995). With regard to the greatly disproportionate number of female workers in South and Central American “Maquiladoras” (FTZs), Weaver (2000) explained, “women have relatively less power and thus are vulnerable to exploitation no matter what their skills. This is the secret behind the employers’ preference for women workers” (p. 156).

Although the United Nations’ (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated the ideal that every human being has the right to join a union and engage in collective bargaining, organizing efforts in the Global South have frequently been met with immediate firing, harassment, blacklisting, and violence (Gonzalez, 2000; Greenia et al., 1999; Varley, 1998; “Zoned for Slavery,” 1995). In a pattern familiar to those with knowledge of U.S. history, masses of powerless and desperate workers are now pitted against each other in a “race to the bottom” with regard to wages and working conditions. Attempts to organize involve the risk of losing one’s income and perhaps even starving, as organizers face the prodigious power of factory managers, corrupt and sometimes brutal governments, and, ultimately, the overwhelming power of the transnational corporations. As a final recourse against union organizing and collective bargaining, the corporations or, more typically, their subcontractors may leave any situation, rapidly resuming operations in another country or region more conducive to minimizing labor costs (Varley).

As was commonly the case before and during the progressive era in the United States, the sweatshops of the Global South illustrate the inevitable
result of unbridled, free market capitalism operating in the context of a glutted labor market, which is to say the wholesale exploitation of vulnerable peoples in the pursuit of maximizing profit.

**Debt and Labor Exploitation in Larger Context**

Anathasiou (1998) said, “a great deal of money has flowed from South to North... It flows as never ending debt service... as low commodity prices, as wealth bled off by a thousand obscure mechanisms” (p. 214). More specifically, Khor (1994) estimated the net south to north resource flow at approximately one-half trillion dollars annually (by the mid-1990s). His detailed analysis, which included both debt and labor factors, began by noting that

there is a widely held perception that there is a large, net transfer of resources from North to South. This perception is mainly due to the well-publicized emergency and humanitarian aid provided to poor countries. Not so well known is that in reality there is a transfer of economic resources from South to North much more than the reverse flow of aid. These outflows from the South arise from the South’s adverse position in the international structures of trade, finance, production, technology and distribution. (p. 15)

This transfer of wealth has occurred during a time of growing disparities in wealth and income between the richest and the poorest people of the world. By the mid-1990s the gap in per capita income between the countries with the richest 20 percent of the world’s population and the countries with the poorest 20 percent increased to an all-time high of 74 to 1—up from 60 to 1 in 1990, and 30 to 1 in 1960. Similarly, the assets of the richest 200 people in the world increased from 440 billion to more than 1 trillion dollars in the four years between 1995 and 1998, and the combined assets of the wealthiest three individuals increased to an amount greater than the gross national product of the poorest 48 countries (600 million people) combined—with 46 percent of sub-Saharan Africans living on less than $1 per day (UNDP, 1999).

At this same time, major inequities in the gross national products of E-9 nations—a cross-section of countries considered key indicators of environmental and economic trends—were also evident, with the average per capita share ranging from $32,350 in Japan to $440 in India (World Bank, 2000) (see Table 1). Even when viewed in terms of purchasing power, a 10 to 1 discrepancy was still evident between the countries. It is not surprising that during this same decade, the richest one-fifth of the world’s people were consuming 80 percent of the world’s resources, whereas the poorest three-quarters of the world’s people, primarily of the south, were left with only 20 percent (Khor, 1996). Most disturbing, by 1998 the poorest 20 percent of the world’s people shared less than 2 percent of the world’s total gross product (UNDP, 1999). “Thus, only a small portion of the world’s resources are serving... the basic needs of the poor majority” (Khor, 1996, p. 54).

Noting the inequitable movement of money, resources, and labor production from the south to the north, some commentators have referred to the latest global economy as the “new colonialism” (E. Goldsmith, 1996; Moussa, 2000; Tabb, 2001). As in the old world order of earlier centuries, the exploited population of this new economy is disproportionately represented by people of color and of indigenous descent, whereas the recipients of the wealth, resources, and labor of

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<td>Japan</td>
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**Table 1**

Per Capita GNP and Purchasing Power and Percentage of Population Earning Less than $2 per Day in E-9 Nations


Note: GNP = gross national product. E-9 countries are a cross-section of nations that are considered key indicators of environmental and economic trends.
poor people are more likely to be of European origins (Moussa). In short, there is compelling evidence that the colonial domination and exploitation of preceding centuries, replete with racist undercurrents, has simply assumed a new, less overt form through the institution of debt, global trade policies, and the predatory tendencies of transnational corporations.

Connections with Domestic Economic and Social Justice Issues

The current globalization of the economy virtually requires that social workers view many domestic social justice issues within a larger global framework. For instance, Moussa (2000) and Mittelman (2000) have linked immigration and the increasing dislocation of poor people of the Global South, in part, to debt and structural adjustments. To put it directly, if we are to get at the root causes of immigration, rather than just the domestic consequences, we must understand and begin to address related global issues such as the debt crisis.

Fully adopting a global perspective, however, will inevitably reveal other, more subtle aspects of domestic issues such as immigration. Consider, for example, the desperate immigrant from Latin America who not only contributes directly to the local and national economies after she arrives in the United States, but also has already contributed—even before she gets here. Before entering the United States, she has already subsidized our economy through the exploitative transfer of resources and commodities from her country into ours. Also, realize that she and her counterparts working in sweatshops have also subsidized our economy through the greatly reduced labor costs used in the manufacturing of many of our consumer goods (“Ties that Bind,” 1998). A global orientation undoubtedly uncovers many such previously unarticulated interconnections between what are now regarded as purely domestic issues and larger, seemingly foreign or international concerns, sometimes casting familiar problems in a whole new light.

Considering the weakening of trade barriers, the advent of sweatshops is obviously connected with the loss of manufacturing jobs, the demise of unions, and the lowering of wages and benefits for workers in the United States. Speaking from a purely domestic, nationalistic frame of reference, protectionists seeking to illustrate how immigrant workers are the “enemy” of the domestic labor force frequently cite such evidence.

A broad analysis of global power structures, however, reveals that the disempowered U.S. worker actually has more in common with the sweatshop worker in Central America than she has with the corporate chief executive officer who lives in her own country. Each, in her specific circumstance and country, is the victim of a larger global movement aimed at undercutting labor regulations, driving down wages, disarming collective bargaining, and ultimately reducing labor costs for the benefit of those in power (Bello, 1999; Tabb, 2001). In other words, understanding the global context of such domestic economic issues facilitates a shift in focus away from a facile, nationalistic “us versus them” debate, even as it reveals previously obscured dimensions of power, exploitation, and privilege that have been taking shape at global levels during recent decades.

Suggestions for Action

Although recent Council of Social Work Education standards have called for more international content in social work education, Ramanathan and Link (1999) explained that in general “social work educators and practitioners have been slow to recognize the interdependence of national . . . systems” (p. 1). More specifically, Khinduka told us “only a handful of [social work] programs offer even a single course on international social work” (quoted in Ramanathan & Link, p. xi). Current trends in economic globalization compel us to redress these deficiencies. Given how the overarching systems that shape our national and local economies have now assumed a decidedly global scope and, also, how we are now inextricably linked to the circumstances of others in the Global South, social workers should be acquainted with the relevant historical, economic, and political issues in the course of their training.

The incorporation of global social justice issues in the social work curriculum may be accomplished in at least two ways. First, some programs may elect to offer a stand-alone elective, thereby providing a more in-depth look at the issues and circumstances of key countries such as Mexico. The essential structure of this article, can provide an effective format for such a stand-alone class. Within this format, course content should focus on the historical and contemporary exploitation of the poor people of the Global South. Note that
a basic grounding in economic concepts related to free trade and laissez faire capitalism, as well as a presentation of the institutions and policy mechanisms governing the current world economy should be included early in the course content.

With regard to the core social work curriculum, a global component, again using the essential format given in the structure of this article, may be used to frame an understanding of many domestic policy issues while also familiarizing students with global social justice issues. More specifically, the erosion of domestic job quality for low-end workers, various immigration issues, the general movement toward deregulation and privatization, and the recent attacks on social welfare can be presented in the context of an encroaching laissez faire movement of global scope. Perhaps most important, current inequities between rich and poor people in the United States should be presented as part of larger, global trends.

It is important to emphasize that the incorporation of a global component in the core social work curriculum, both at the bachelor and master's levels, need not occupy a great amount of class time to frame key domestic problems and facilitate a basic understanding of global social justice issues. Fortunately, the issues in question do lend themselves to a succinct, broad analysis and presentation.

Beyond the pressing need for social workers to be educated in global social justice issues, efforts to change global inequities will occur primarily in the arena of national policy. Referring to a broad spectrum of global economic issues, including the debt crisis, Prigoff (2000) most aptly summarized the current situation:

At this point in world history the critical problem...is that corporate and financial institutions have gained control of the decision making...and are using that power to promote their own self-interests, which are detrimental to the interests of communities and of humanity in general...Local and global coalitions are needed to challenge and to end the claim of legitimacy of that power elite of the wealthy. It is appropriate for social workers...to step up and to be among the members and leaders of those new coalitions. (p. 255)

Fortunately, social workers in the United States are in an elevated position of power and responsi-

bility relative to many other people in the world, as our federal legislative and executive institutions have been central in the creation of international institutions such as the World Bank and the WTO, and their evolving policies. Recent "fast track" legislation has greatly expanded federal executive powers in negotiating trade agreements with potentially detrimental effects for poor people of the Global South. To put it directly, social workers have the potential, especially when working collectively and in coalition with other groups in the United States, to influence federal policy conducive to remedying or mitigating the growing inequities in the global economy.

As a more specific example of possible policy recommendations, "Jubilee 2000" (now the Jubilee USA Network), a coalition of religious leaders, labor groups, nongovernment organizations, as well as past and present secretaries of the United Nations, has called for debt cancellation for the most heavily indebted and poorest countries of the Global South. This debt relief would be financed directly by money from northern governments through tax breaks designed to compensate for losses realized by private banks and also through the use of IMF reserve holdings (Northcott, 1999). Jubilee Network proposals also include provisions stipulating "how the resources released from debt repayment will be used for poverty eradication" (Northcott, p. 85).

In addition to endorsing legislation related to these recommendations, the Jubilee Network is requesting that affinity groups apply political pressure, both directly and indirectly (through lobbying legislators), on the executive branch to move World Bank and IMF policy in directions beneficial to the poor people of the Global South. Social workers operating collectively through professional organizations such as NASW should consider adding these and other proposals related to free trade and sweatshops to their policy statements and to their legislative agendas. Similarly, the endorsement of individual political campaigns might include criteria related to a candidate's stated stance and voting record on various aspects of the global issues in question.

In addition to such collective political action, social workers may also work to effect change in the global economy through individual action and direct practice by

- joining and actively participating in local grassroots organizations aimed at addressing
the debt crisis, sweatshops, and free trade institutions detrimental to poor people of the Global South (for example, Jubilee USA Network)

- promoting educational forums, programs, speakers, and discussions aimed at raising awareness of the issues and the plight of those who are poor of the Global South (social workers in community settings, and also in positions of designing continuing education programs for practicing professionals, are especially important in this regard)
- engaging in individual political actions, such as letter writing and bringing their views to the attention of legislators
- cultivating individual purchasing habits supporting companies working toward more equitable distribution of resources and fair treatment of workers (fair trade labeling, that is, guaranteeing minimum standards in labor practices) and listing corporations by demonstrated commitment to social responsibility may be especially helpful in this regard (for example, Coop America, 2001).

Conclusion

At their core, current global social justice issues are familiar territory for social workers. Indeed, the profession was born from similar circumstances of economic exploitation occurring in the latter half of the 19th century. Beginning from such origins, social workers have, throughout the past century, engaged in consciousness raising, organizing, advocacy, activism, and the effecting of policy change in the service of exploited and disempowered people. To put it directly, within our profession there is a wealth of experience, an accumulated knowledge base, and superior skills, which may be used in the service of empowering those who are exploited in the global economy. Social workers should work both collectively, in coalition with related organizations, and individually to effect change in the debt crisis and related global issues.

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