

Appendix C

Excerpts from Organizing for Economic Justice

Used with permission: Excerpted from Chapters 2 and 6 of Organizing for Economic Justice, Hall, Robert T. with John Hooper and Gretchen Shaffer, S.S.J. Economic Justice Implementation Committee, the Episcopal Church, 1990.

Christian Faith and Economic Justice

Economic Justice in the Judeo-Christian tradition was not limited to charity for those who are less fortunate. The values implicit in our faith are indeed applicable to the structures of our economic institutions as well as directly to individuals within the system.

Covenant and Community

The faith of Israel, focused upon the exodus experience, is one of covenant and community. God gives the land to the people God has liberated from slavery and promises God's blessing. The people of Israel are to show their faithfulness to the covenant by conducting their personal and communal lives according to God's law. The law – Torah – governs not only religious ritual (sacrifices and feast days) and personal relationships (duties to parents, marriage laws), but also the economic relations of people within the community.

The systemic significance of the law of Moses is clear. Israel was to have its own set of economic institutions. The Lord told Moses to speak to the Israelites in these words. "You shall not do as they do in Egypt where you once dwelt, nor shall you do as they do in the land of Canaan to which I am bringing you; you shall not conform to their institutions... You shall observe my institutions and my laws." (Leviticus 18:3-5)

The rules laid down in Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers cover virtually every aspect of economic life.

The concept of stewardship, reinforced as it was by the sense of the Hebrews being elected or chosen, carries strong universalistic implications. The wealth of the earth is to be available to all people. "When an alien settles with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. He shall be treated as a native born among you, and you shall love him as a man like yourself, because you were aliens in Egypt" (Lev. 19:33-34).

The New Covenant

Jesus' emphasis on the imminent end of the age ("Do not be concerned for tomorrow"), his radical ethic ("If someone demands your coat, give him your cloak as well and his

spiritual perspective (“My kingdom is not of this world”) can easily give the impression that the New Testament writers gave little thought to the political or economic restructuring although he did, of course, command a radical sharing of the world’s resource. This in itself, however, might have been more appropriate if the end of the age was expected in a matter of days or weeks.

While the eschatological perspective may have precluded long range planning to restructure the economy, Jesus’ challenge to the existing structure was essential to his message. His preaching constituted a direct challenge to the status quo. He proclaims the Jubilee year (Lk. 4:18-19) and relentlessly condemned the accumulation of wealth at the expense of the poor. What has now come to be recognized as Jesus’ “preferential option for the poor” was the sum and substance of his way of life and the “Way” of his followers. Even as an “interim” arrangement, the community that Jesus developed constituted a radical break with the social-political structure of first-century Israel.

James Perkinson has aptly summarized the community within society that Jesus created.

From among either rich or poor, Jesus attempted to gather disciples (Mk. 10:17-31). This third group faced the most stringent demands of all. They were summoned to live as Jesus did – close to the bone (Mt. 6:25-33), on the run (Mk. 6:30-31; 7:24; John 7:1; Lk. 9:58), vulnerable to surveillance and public censure (Mk. 7:1-5), often hungry (Mt. 12:1-8), utterly dependent upon the poor themselves for sustenance (Mt. 10:5-15), ready to meet emergency needs and share cooperatively with the destitute (John 6:1-14), given over to organizing the masses and being consumed by their brokenness (Mk. 6:31-44), willing to deal with the stress of public confrontation and political realism (Mk. 8:31-38, 11:15-19), and even to begin to choke down the fears of prophetic destinies (Mk. 13:9; 14:26-31, 31-38; John 15:18-27).¹

To the disappointment of some, Jesus’ strategy was not one of political control. He did not attempt to restructure society by raising an army to drive out the Romans or by seizing power from the Jewish religious establishment. His mission was to call individuals into discipleship in a new community which would live by its own values within the Judeo-Roman structure. It was restructuring by creating an alternative as an example. Even at that, of course, it was more than the established powers could tolerate.

The early Christian communities that preached the good news of the resurrection also kept alive the new “Way.” They “held all things in common” (Acts 2:44) and “as many as owned lands or houses sold them” and brought the proceeds to be distributed to those in need (Acts 4:32-35), Baptism meant identification with an alternative economic

¹ James Perkinson, “Taking Action for Economic Justice: A Theological Assessment.”

community – one based upon economic principles in sharp contrast with those of the surrounding culture.

While Christian communalism has been practiced in many ways throughout the centuries and remains for many an essential life-commitment, it is not now generally considered to be mandated by Baptism as the only way to be faithful. The point of recalling this aspect of the immediate legacy of Jesus is to emphasize the extent to which the faith involves an economic re-orientation as well as other forms of personal and spiritual “conversion.” (It is interesting to note that measures proposed in Congress to wean the U.S. economy away from military protection are now referred to as “economic conversion” plans.)

Christian efforts at economic restructuring have not always been successful. The communal Jerusalem Church, for one reason or another, was rescued by Paul’s solicitations of charity from the gentile churches. Still the principle upon which Paul made his appeal shows that economic justice was an essential element of the gospel message: “It is a question of equality,” Paul said to the Corinthians, “At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus. The aim is equality...” (2 Cor. 8:14). There is strong evidence, furthermore, to the effect that the sharing of worldly goods practiced in various ways by the Christians of the first two centuries actually helped the community – and the gospel itself – to withstand persecution.

From the time of the early church through the Reformation, economic justice was an important religious concern. Theologians and councils debated the private ownership of property and the propriety of taking interest on loans. While private ownership was generally approved, greed and the accumulation of wealth at the expense of others were universally condemned. Interest on loans, however, was eventually prohibited altogether.

From the time of St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century to the present, Roman Catholic teaching on economic justice has centered on the question of property. Throughout this period a fairly consistent position evolved to the effect that private ownership of property is justified because people take greater care of things that are their own, but that excess property – especially property used for the economic production and thereby essential to the livelihood of the community – must be used for the good of all. It was certainly felt to be within the legitimate power of the state to regulate the ownership and use of property for the common good.

Martin Luther’s emphasis on the notion of a secular calling cast a new light on the question of economic justice by ennobling human labor. It also later tended to give greater justification to the accumulation of the fruits of one’s labor. John Calvin decided that the 12th century prohibition of taking interest on loans made little economic sense

in the commercial 16th century, but he did require that the interest rate be reasonable and that loans be made to the poor without charge.

The Eclipse of Economic Justice in Western Thought

The 17th and 18th centuries mark a turning point in Christian thought with regard to the question of economic justice. With regard to property, the theories of John Locke (d. 1704) have been most influential. Locke held that while the earth and its fruits were originally given by God for the earth and its fruits were originally given by God for the common use of all, individuals could acquire rights to the ownership of land by investing their labor in it. Since this ownership could then be transferred to others by legal title, ownership came to be understood less as stewardship and more as an absolute right. Locke qualified his theory of ownership with the proviso that property could only be appropriated through investing labor in it “where there is enough, and as good left in common for others” (Second Treatise on Government, Ch.5 Sec. 27). What was more often remembered and more widely quoted, however, was Locke’s basic theory of government which tends to imply that property rights are absolute. “The great and chief end,” he wrote, of men’s uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property” (Ibid. Ch. 9, Sec. 124).

Critics have charged that while the appropriation of land from an original state of common ownership is fair when there is an unlimited amount of land to be acquired in this way, there is certainly not now “enough and as good left.” Other critics appealed to the notions of stewardship and covenant to point out that “productive” property such as factories or other means of livelihood is not personal property and must be considered with regard to the needs of the community.

Despite these criticisms, the notion of property rights as absolute became firmly entrenched in western thought. And as property rights came to be considered absolute, the Christian sense of economic justice took a back seat.

A second trend in western thought during the enlightenment period sent the notion of economic justice into a near total eclipse. In 1776 when Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, he was reacting against a system in which the business of economic production was tightly controlled by law and tradition. The use of the land and its resources were strictly governed by laws regarding inheritance and the traditions of the community. Who produced what goods and who worked for what wages were determined by the guild system – the relations of masters, journeymen and apprentices passed down from generation to generation. Commerce was regulated by national mercantile laws which set the terms of export and import. The system wasn’t working.

Smith's revolutionary proposal was that these controls which inhibited commerce and discouraged production be replaced by a free market price system. Let goods be sold at whatever prices that will bring and the market demand will determine what is produced. Let labor be sold for wages and the same demand will determine who works where. Let land and resources be rented or sold for whatever prices they will bring and these natural resources will also be allocated to the uses for which there is the greatest demand. And let money be invested in whatever enterprises offer the highest return and it too will flow to the most productive enterprises. Each element in the system – land, natural resources, labor, capital, and even technical ability – will be put to its most efficient use when that use is determined by the price that each brings on the open market.

The price system of production and distribution is based, furthermore, on the natural motivation of self-interest and individual preference. If each person in a society looks out for what will benefit him or her most, economic resources will be devoted to the actual goods that consumers demand and the personal preferences of all will be satisfied. People will even save and invest some of their money in the hope of future profits, so the system will provide natural incentives for economic development.

The price system is all the more attractive because it does not depend upon human planning, like the trade laws that restricted commerce in Smith's day. It relies only upon the law of nature. It is natural that people will seek to trade their labor for the necessities of life, or to invest their resources in ways that will bring the most return. So when individual actions are motivated only by self-interest, the natural result will be what is best for all – the production of exactly those goods and services that people want, and their distribution in whatever ways people choose to spend their wages.

In the eighteenth century, as today, the laws of nature were thought of as God's laws. Since it was God who had written the laws of nature, God's hand could be discerned behind the system. Individuals acting only on the basis of their own self-interest will, in the words of Adam Smith, "be led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of their intention." That "end," of course, was a system of production and distribution which works to the benefit of all.

However secular or marginally religious their origins, beliefs which are strongly held by any group of people tend to work their way into the fabric of that people's religion. Thus, over the last couple of centuries, the market system has become a basic principle of faith. It has, as Harold Laski has said, achieved the status of a theology. And to this extent, other Christian notions of economic justice have been nearly totally eclipsed.

Meeting Basic Needs

As the liberal economic philosophy of the followers of Locke and Smith became the guiding light of the industrial revolution, Christian concern was diverted toward more immediate practical problems. With industrialization and the growth of cities, human needs in the areas of health care, education and welfare became paramount. The industrial system created a need for direct services which has occupied the attention of the faithful down to the present.

Christian responses to the human needs of the industrial age have, in fact, produced some of our major and most effective social institutions. The Sunday School movement was a response to the need for education which was eventually answered by the development of public schools and the founding of colleges and universities. Hospitals were built to care for the sick, and religious organizations played a major role in the establishment of welfare programs.

While the development of services to meet immediate needs occupied the larger part of Christian concern, efforts of a more structural nature developed from time to time. The sectarian-utopian communities in the United States – Oneida, Amana, New Harmony, et al. – were based on the presupposition that economic justice required a complete break with the industrial system. In England the workers cooperatives founded by John Malcolm Ludlow (d. 1911), the Rev. Charles Kingsley (d. 1875) and the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice (d. 1872) and their associates constituted an effort to expand the base of ownership and control of production within the industrial framework.

In the United States concern for economic justice developed into a full critique of capitalism in the Social Gospel movement of the early 20th century. Its major spokesperson, Walter Rauschenbusch, drew a sharp contrast between Christianity and the prevailing economic philosophy of the age: “Christianity makes the love of money the root of all evil,” Rauschenbusch said, “Capitalism cultivates the love of money for its own sake and gives its largest wealth to those who use monopoly extortion”.² On the practical side, Christian involvement in the labor movement constituted another effort to promote greater justice within the capitalist system through an institutionalized mechanism (collective bargaining) to reestablish a more equitable balance of power. The rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively were most strongly and consistently affirmed in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

In recent years, developments in Biblical studies and in Christian practice in third world settings have directed attention back toward the question of economic justice. Biblical studies have revealed anew the extent to which the Gospel as preached and practiced by Jesus and his followers posed a direct challenge to the economic structures of his

² *Christianizing the Social Order*, N.Y.:Macmillan, 1907, p. 321).

age. This return to the source of our faith has literally opened the eyes of Christians to the economic justice implications of Christian faith. As we become conscious of the specific historical contingencies to which the Gospel message was addressed in the first century, we cannot help but reflect on the historical contingencies of our own time. The more we understand the meaning of the texts in and for the age in which they were written, the more we are able to apply the principles they embody to our own age. And the more we are conscious of the social, political and economic structures of our society, the more we realize our responsibility for applying the principles of our faith to them.

At the same time, the fact that Christians in many parts of the world live their lives within economic structures in which the balance of the distribution of the world's goods is so one-sided – creating an inflexible two-class society – has made them some of the most perceptive interpreters of the Gospel challenge. The “liberation theology” that has enlivened the faith of so many in our age proclaims a “liberation” from oppressive economic structures and constitutes, in many respects, a return to traditional Christian concepts of economic justice. The life of faith involves reflecting on the meaning of the Gospel for our own particular historical situation, and theology is the critical process of this reflection. The situation is enlightened by the Gospel and the Gospel is rendered meaningful in the situation. Attention to the economic dimension of our lives, therefore, is an appropriate aspect of the faith experience both in terms of our understanding of the Gospel message and in terms of our faith as a perspective from which to evaluate and reform the structure of our economy. We cannot say that the Gospel enlightens our lives without submitting all of our lives – including the economic structures of our society – to critical examination in the light of the Gospel message. Nor can we say that we are faithful if we, like Ananias and Sapphira, attempt to hold back essential dimensions of our existence – our economic lives – from the Gospel demands for love and justice.

Getting Organized

The following approach to organizing economic justice initiatives is a very general guide for the task. Since we have in mind initiatives that may be as small as parish education programs or as wide as a diocesan effort to launch or assist some sort of business enterprise, the steps that we outline will surely not apply to all people at all levels. The reader will have to pick and choose what may or may not be helpful and will surely have to adapt these suggestions to his or her own situation.

There are, however, certain general guidelines that can be suggested for getting started. We present these as stages. Each stage is conceived as a step which involves specific activities and processes, and a specific outcome.

1. Getting Started

Issues of economic justice can be raised in a church community in any number of ways.

- Some parishes in economically depressed urban or rural areas find their membership slipping away or have difficulties meeting their annual budgets. These problems, in turn, prompt reflection and action on the economic conditions of the neighborhood or area.
- Voluntary groups formed to address pressing economic problems of an area may seek the assistance of a parish, even if only as a request for the use of meeting rooms. To this extent, the parish is already viewed as a community resource.
- People involved in direct services are often the first to see the need for structural change because they are especially aware of the difficulties people have in trying to get a start economically. If direct service projects are undertaken jointly between a number churches and synagogues, the board that oversees the project would be a good place to start.
- At times adult study groups on people and justice issues can be encouraged to focus attention on economic justice issues. Some of the materials in this manual may serve as educational resources for a group that wants to consider this issue.
- A rector may appoint a committee to address the problem; or the bishop may call for the appointment of a commission in response to the urging of the Economic Justice Resolution of the 1988 National Convention.

The process can begin with a few people perceiving a need or with an event that

An Approach for Small Parishes

- Join a community organization already in existence. Economic justice issues require cooperation. Small parishes or committees must seek to work with other churches or community organizations to get things done. Not only can't you do it alone, you don't have to!

occupies the attention of a whole community. Some of the ways of getting started might be characterized as “bottom up” initiatives in which people with economic problems approach established institutions for help. Other initiatives are “top down” in the sense that a leader or an institution reaches out to individuals who are economically at risk.

Right off, we might caution that if the process you are involved in is a “top down” process, you should want to make contact quickly with individuals who are in the economically “at risk” category that will be the focus of your attention. This is important both because they need to be involved in the initiatives from the outset and because you need to see the problems from their perspective. The opposite is also true: people who are working from the “bottom up,” i.e., those at risk of being left out of economic prosperity, will want to try to involve some of those who are economically well established. Economic justice requires cooperation from all social classes.

Working With Others

Religious groups quite naturally devote most of their attention to the development of the group or community itself. They are always accustomed to seeing themselves as participants in the larger community, especially in an economic or political sense. To be involved in social justice activities, however, it is essential for church groups to work with others – to see themselves as a part of a larger effort.

There are advantages to this. No doubt, many individuals from small parishes who read these words may think, “How can we do all that? Some of these economic justice initiatives are major undertakings; we are so small.” The answer is that you do not have to do it all by yourself. In fact, in many places economic justice initiatives are well underway and involvement is a matter of bringing a parish church into partnership with established organizations.

Community coalitions exist in many areas to address specific problems or to confront injustices. These may include representatives from unions, neighborhoods, governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations and business. As community organizations clarify the nature of the problem, they often spawn alternative community groups to address them. Community Development Corporations that plan and implement long-term redevelopment are often natural allies of churches with regard to economic justice issues.

Outside of the immediate community, coalitions and associations exist that can provide a supportive environment as well as offering specific expertise. Associations of land trusts, cooperatives, worker-owned businesses and credit unions exist on state, regional and national levels. Training sessions and conferences bring together staff, members and volunteers to share experiences, concerns and resources.

One answer to the feeling of insignificance or powerlessness in the face of problems so large is the recognition that we are not alone. In many areas, in fact, the economic justice “movement” is already rolling and churches are the late comers. Perhaps it is time to find out what God is already doing.

Diocesan Commissions

A diocese is a large area and includes people who generally do not know each other much at all. Economically it covers urban and rural areas, depressed and well-to-do areas, and residential, commercial and industrial areas. It might be best for a diocese to establish a task force to conduct a preliminary study of the area prior to forming an Economic Justice Commission. The task force could:

- a) investigate whether existing Episcopal or ecumenical groups are already addressing the issue,
- b) look briefly at the major economic issues in the area,
- c) identify people who will be representative of areas, interests, expertise, and different social-economic levels to be members of the commission, and
- d) develop a proposed work plan for the commission including activities, budget and staffing.

Establishing an Economic Justice Implementation Committee

Whether the group is a parish committee or a diocesan commission and whether it is appointed or comes together as a voluntary association, participants need to be conscious of how it develops. Group behavior is a study in itself. We need not all be expert in group process or structure, but if we pay attention to some of the basics, the task will be easier.

First, the composition of the group is important; people from all sides of the economic spectrum need to be included. This may well mean that a group appointed by a church vestry should look outside itself for participants, or that a parish group should look to the community outside the parish. The objective should be an appropriate balance of men and women with proportionate members from minority communities and other affected groups.

Second, there is always a process of a group getting to know one another. This is often a matter of a group making each participant feel that he or she is an important contributor. It will be of little help to have participants from different economic circumstances if some of them feel hesitant or intimidated by others whom they perceive either to be in control or to know all the answers.

Some groups use processes of active listening to facilitate development. People can usually be encouraged to “tell their stories” in ways which bring others into their lives. The stories of those who are economically at risk are especially important for gaining a group perspective on economic justice issues.

Third, given the diversity of economic justice groups, it may be best if leadership is shared or rotated. Building leadership is part of the goal. People may emerge as leaders who perhaps had not seen themselves as leaders before.

Fourth, it will be important to keep the agenda open so that different issues can come to the fore. If the agenda is controlled by a few, the real issues may never surface. Economic justice groups may well find themselves going in different directions at different times, or a previously minor issue may become a major focus.

Fifth, it helps to have some record of what the group has done and where it is going. With some groups this may be in the form of a report that gets circulated between meetings to keep people thinking about the subject. With other groups, a summary at the beginning or end of a meeting may be the way.

Sixth, don't forget to reflect on the resources of the faith. Beginning the meeting with a prayer will not be enough. The common ground in terms of understandings among the members of the group should really be related to the teachings and values of our faith. Ideally one would want to keep a discussion of the economic implications of the faith going alongside discussions of economic problems. The "justice" in "economic justice" is a faith perspective.

Outcome: Mission Statement

We suggest that the development of a MISSION STATEMENT is an important step in the organizing process. Mission statements don't change the world, but the process of putting together a statement of what this group considers to be its perspective and its goals is important for the group itself. The process may disclose differences of perspective, different perceptions of problems, or different values with regard to solutions.

A mission statement can also tell others what the group is about. This may be an important first step in the dynamics between an economic justice group and a congregation. If later efforts are going to require parish commitments, it is essential that the congregation be kept informed of the group's activities. A mission statement can present the economic justice perspective to the parish community.

The mission statement may be in the form of the Resolution that could be presented at a parish meeting or diocesan convention. Resolutions at meetings or conventions have the effect of placing concerns on the public agenda of the community. This is another way of educating and bringing the community along with the committee.

2. Gathering Information

The second stage of the economic justice organizing process is to start putting together the information necessary to begin to address the problem. It should be clearly recognized that addressing economic justice issues is not an overnight task. Whether regional or local, it took a long time for the economy to develop its present problems and will require considerable time and energy even to develop small exemplary alternatives.

The process of gathering information, however, is a venture in self-education; it has considerable value on its own apart from its role in preparing for future initiatives. This is not the sort of task that can be handed to a staff person or consultant. The objective of this stage is the identification of committee, group or commission activities or projects.

Resources

Sources of information for economic justice groups include:

1. Existing direct service projects. People involved in direct service projects – food kitchens/pantries, clothing centers, shelters, counseling – can be invaluable resources: they generally know a great deal about the housing and employment situations as well as about the immediate needs of people. Direct service projects may be conducted by other churches or synagogues, or by non-religious groups.
2. Site visits to direct service programs, small businesses or other economic projects in the area are very important. It is difficult to get a grasp of the picture without seeing it first hand. Small business people are especially important to talk to since they are already engaged in “initiatives” of their own.
3. Surveys of the economic needs of a neighborhood or area can help to identify resources (existing ventures) as well as problems. Sometimes physically mapping an area is helpful – a community development corporation may have done this already, or a neighboring CDC may be able to get a group started.
4. Investigation of the resources of a parish or a diocese itself is also important. Trustees of parish/diocesan funds should be invited to discuss the question of socially responsible investing. A socially responsible investing initiative is often one of the most immediate projects an economic justice committee can undertake. Banks, of course, can also be surveyed regarding the amounts and types of community investing they do.
5. Parishes located in more affluent neighborhoods will want to expand their range of concern to look at the needs of the broader community. Suburban communities can often be quite isolated and will need to develop partnerships with parishes or community agencies in lower income areas.
6. Governmental agencies conduct certain projects such as Job Corps programs or Head Start programs that are designed to address economic problems. Administrators of these programs often have information that is useful. Sheltered workshops and other programs for individuals with disabilities are often entrepreneurial efforts in themselves that have been engaged in economic development initiatives already. State economic development, labor,

health and human services agencies often have information that will help an economic justice group to educate others with regard to the nature and extent of the problem.

7. Sometimes local and state public officials are good resource people. Officials can be invited to meet with committees to share their perspectives on economic development problems. It might be noted that public officials often have “conventional” assessments of problems and solutions (“All we need is to get a major industry to move into the area”) that are unrealistic (a new major industry would perhaps employ very few local people).
8. Finally, printed and media resources are important. Stories about re-inventing the wheel are true. Other communities have faced problems and some have solved them. One good example can often be worth months of worrying over a problem. The last chapter of this volume provides some information on printed and media resources and on contacts with established groups.

Outcome: Prioritizing/Decision-making

The objective of the information gathering stage is to focus upon what might be accomplished. There is a great deal of judgment involved in the prioritizing of needs and values around along with estimations of what might be most feasible. There are always too many things that need attention, but it may be a mistake to focus on the greatest need first if it requires an initiative that is not one the present economic justice group can manage.

A separation between major and minor activities in terms of the time, energy and resources required may be helpful. Housing, land and jobs initiatives are certainly major undertakings requiring in most cases the eventual development of resources to warrant full-time work. Parish and community education, socially responsible investing and political advocacy, although important, would require less.

Gathering information can be the most important step of the organizing process. Experienced organizers know that things do not usually begin to happen until people perceive problems as involving injustice. The best organizing advice is to get information about and get involved with some immediate and specific problem – people being evicted, a government program restricting eligibility or a labor dispute. From this concerns almost inevitably expand to more structural and system problems – the lack of housing, business development or public advocacy.

Example

A “Community Needs Survey”

The following survey form (abridged) was developed by Helen Lewis of the Highlander Center in Tennessee.

Part I: Community Changes

1. List the jobs that your community has lost in the last five years.
2. List the jobs your community has gained in the last five years.
3. List the major ways that people survive in addition to (or instead of) jobs:

Part II: Listening

1. What problems are people talking about?
2. What are the needs people are talking about?

Part III: Likes and Dislikes

1. What are the five qualities or characteristics of your community which you feel best describe what it is like?
2. List the five things you like most about your community.
3. List five things you do not like about your community.
4. What would you most like the community to be ten years from now?

Part IV: Priorities

Which of the following would you like to see in your community?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> Water system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stores | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rescue Squad | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care Clinic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Care Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Education Program |

Part V: Employment

1. List all businesses, services, and industries which provide employment for members of the community.
2. Average earnings, wage rates, employment policies and history: unemployment, lay-offs, seasonal stoppages, union, strikes.
3. Where does the workforce live? Where do owners, managers live or come from?
4. Do businesses buy locally, sell locally, bank locally, pay taxes locally, contribute to community projects?

Part VI: Housing

1. Housing information: Type of housing, owned or rented, need of repair.
2. Count individuals by sex, age, race or ethnic background, education, occupation, source of income, place of employment, travel distance to work.

3. Planning

Serious business activities generally begin with some sort of feasibility study. The purpose of a feasibility study is to gauge the market for a product, to assess the production costs and to investigate the availability of resources (both material and human) necessary for production. Planning is serious business.

There is no reason why an economic justice initiative should not be just as serious, whether it is the initiation of a parish investment study, a community education program, or a business venture. Planning is important not only because it helps to set out and assign the things to be done, but because, when it is undertaken seriously, it can change the structure or even the nature of the initiative. It is just as important to look into who is likely to buy into an education program as to know who will buy widgets. The characteristics of the potential audience for an educational program will surely affect what is presented and how it is packaged.

Conventional feasibility studies address four issues:

1. What is the market for which the product is produced?
2. What is the design of the product?
3. What will it cost to produce it?
4. Is the technical expertise available?

We addressed these questions in planning and producing this manual; and the project changed as often as we found better and better answers to our questions. It began with the idea of setting out steps for getting started on economic justice committees and initiatives. We then found that people really needed to see some examples of possible initiatives and needed an explanation of the economic justice perspective. At a brief conference in Pittsburgh we discovered more about the nature of the intended audience. We decided that it was essential to present something of a theological orientation rather than just assuming that, since we are all Christians, or Episcopalians, we would have enough of a common background in terms of our faith perspective. Initially the committee intended to produce a separate volume on resources, but later it seemed that we should keep the whole business together, so Chapter V was added to this volume. In various ways we had to answer the feasibility questions: What? For whom? How much will it cost? And what do we need to do it?

To talk about feasibility studies, products and technical resources is to import the language of business management. Religious communities may not be accustomed to these concepts, but they can help in terms of seeing the planning of initiatives as an identifiable and important task. Time invested at the planning stage is seldom lost.

For larger projects such as housing cooperatives and worker-owned business ventures, of course, the feasibility study will have to be more detailed and more formal. Specific data and often even a market survey will be necessary. In such efforts the participants often gain skills and expertise they would otherwise not have acquired, so planning is important for self-development.

Criteria

The second element in effective planning is to evaluate the project on the basis of appropriate criteria. In this case the criteria are not only pragmatic (will it work) and economic (will it be self-sufficient), but also ethical. Will the initiative advance the cause of economic justice in terms of securing equitable access to available resources resulting in a reduction of inequalities based on income, wealth and power? Will it empower people to make decisions, determine actions and take control of their own economic destinies?

Keeping in mind this notion of economic justice and the values that emerged in our discussion of the Christian perspective (Chapter II, above), we submit the following six criteria as general guidelines for project evaluation.

1. Will the project involve the intended beneficiaries (the poor or the economically at risk) at all levels of its planning and operation?
2. Will the project empower the participants? (Education and socially responsible investing programs may empower people by expanding their perspectives and helping them to take control.)
3. Will the project be self-sustaining? (With community development projects like worker-owned businesses or cooperative housing the necessary economic criterion is breaking even rather than making a profit. The purpose of such a business is to provide decent jobs for people, not to realize a high return on investment.)
4. Will the project exemplify community control? Will it relate the existing economy of the community (for example, through local purchasing and hiring) in ways that strengthen the community and foster an element of cooperation?
5. Will the project exemplify the principles of the faith to which the economic justice committee is committed?

Outcome: Project Plans

The outcome of the planning stage should be a concrete plan with stated goals and objectives. Goals are the larger, more encompassing ends to which the project is expected to contribute. They are often expressed qualitatively. Objectives are the more specific outcomes to be attained resulting directly from project activities and often expressed in measurable quantitative terms.

Project plans also should specify action phases or steps and time-lines for their accomplishment. Plans help committees to tack things down in terms of who is going to take responsibility for what aspects of the initiative, and when things are going to be done.

4. Implementation

Since the implementation of an economic justice project depends entirely upon its nature, it is difficult to set out guidelines of a general type. Smaller initiatives (education programs, socially responsible investing, and public policy advocacy) require only a minimal structure – assigning the obvious tasks to people and carrying them out according to plan.

Larger initiatives – housing cooperatives, worker-owned enterprises – will require formal and often highly sophisticated structures. Separate committees or individuals will have to be responsible for finance and accounting, personnel, operations, legal advice, technical support, public relations, marketing and other aspects of the operation. It may be desirable separately to incorporated projects with Boards of Directors and paid staffs.

This is not the place to discuss organizational and operational matters, but we should like to mention a few points that might be considered at this stage.

Integration

There may be a tendency for an economic justice project, especially one that grows to any size, to “spin off” from the community in which it originated. This is particularly true if the project is undertaken in cooperation with other organizations or if its meetings or operations are moved out of church buildings.

Some effort may be required, therefore, to keep the religious community (the parish or diocese) involved with the project and the project people involved with the religious community. The inclusion of economic justice concerns in sermons, announcements, prayers and discussions is essential if the economic justice perspective is to be developed as a community and family life style, not just as a special interest of a few.

Outreach

Just as integration is important, so is outreach. The implementation of an economic justice project may provide an opportunity to draw other elements of the larger community into the program. Initiatives to other churches and synagogues, civic organizations, business and public officials may be especially effective as a project is being launched. As everyone seems to know (except perhaps the church) public relations are very important.

Replication

As an economic justice committee undertakes one project, other needs are bound to appear. It is important for a group not to attempt to do more than it can handle. Recognition of new needs or projects that were given lower priority earlier, however, can be directed to new people – another economic justice group or committee. It would be a mistake for a committee to build up a backlog of possible initiatives just because they are within the scope of its mandate, if others can get organized separately to address other issues.

Evaluation

As projects are carried out and move to implementation or completion, evaluation becomes a key issue. For ongoing projects evaluation should occur at regular intervals. For events or shorter programs evaluation at the end will feed into future projects.

It is essential, of course, to evaluate economic justice projects on the basis of the criteria listed earlier. Does the initiative:

1. involve the intended beneficiaries (the poor or the economically at risk) at all levels of its planning and operation?
2. empower the participants?
3. become self-sustaining or generate continuation?
4. relate to the existing economy of the community in ways that strengthen the community foster an element of cooperation?
5. exemplify the principles of the faith to which the economic justice committee is committed?

Some methods to go about evaluating the project are the following:

- Form an advisory committee as an adjunct to the project to provide input into the project design and evaluate it at regular intervals.
- Survey community residents that are affected before and after project operations.
- Include written and/or oral evaluation as part of any workshop or seminar on economic justice.
- Conduct a year-end retreat for the project committee and staff people utilizing an outside facilitator to review project plans and determine progress.
- Make sure your project goals are quantifiable from the beginning so that you can “count” at the end. Did enough people benefit from the study group? Were women and minorities working on the job? Did a significant proportion of the housing go to low income families?

- Be active in networks of people doing similar work. Are you accomplishing your goals with similar resources? Is leadership emerging in your community as in others?

Outcome

Ideally one ends up with an effective project or program of continued activities that fulfills the goals or mandates of the committee and meets the criteria implicit in the concept of economic justice. But nothing is ideal in this world – especially where human planning and implementation are involved.

The task of shaping an economic justice position for the Episcopal Church is truly a major undertaking requiring vision and prayer. To expand that vision into viable economic development programs across the country, which reflect the church's mandate, has never been tried. The notion that social justice cannot come without economic justice, and that the church can and should have a meaningful role in this process is a major step toward our mandate to live out the Gospel.