

From the Archives

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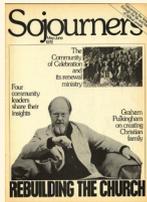
Advice to New Communities

TO PEOPLE interested in establishing a new community I would encourage them to see 1) who the leaders are, 2) what the purpose of the community is, and 3) what the commitment among them is. Many attempts at community fail because the reasons for living together are vague or “romantic.” I believe that where God’s people are gathered because that has been his word to them, there is a solid foundation on which to build.

Initially, most communities seem to face the same basic problems and struggles, ranging from eating habits to family life to priorities. When people come together committed to share openly, all of who they are eventually emerges. This, in turn, presents areas in the common life (like the ones mentioned above) that must be resolved.

The basic difference in the dynamics of a beginning community and one that is established and mature is the wisdom and experience that comes with the established community. The established community has gained knowledge in the forming of relationships and how to “grow people up.” Their trust in the Lord’s faithfulness is well established. Emerging communities would do well to vigorously pursue established communities—to visit them for periods of time and have members of established communities stay with them—whatever needs to be done to develop a trusting, learning relationship. ■

Margo Farra was an elder at Community of Celebration in Woodland Park, Colo., when this article appeared.



and never-ending media attention.

Today you can find Republicans sponsoring legislation to repeal the death penalty

our faith has taught us, and by taking a consistent pro-life stance, Christians are making real contributions toward ending use of the

God calls on us to value all life, not just innocent life.

in Kentucky, South Dakota (an evangelical pastor), New Hampshire, and Nebraska. In addition to me, there are evangelicals in anti-death penalty leadership positions in Kansas, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Texas.

From my perspective, as one who has stood in the wilderness, the tide is turning on the death penalty. By putting our beliefs and our values into action, by going back to what

death penalty in our country. In fact, if the trend continues, I believe Christians will be the deciding factor. ■

Heather Beaudoin, who helped create Montana Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty, is a national advocacy coordinator for Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty, a project of EJUSA.

By Gregg Brekke

A Wish List for the 1 Percent

The Trans-Pacific Partnership would grant new powers to multinational corporations.

THE TRANS-PACIFIC Partnership may be the largest free trade agreement you’ve never heard of. Or if you have heard of the TPP, it’s likely due to media reports about efforts by President Obama to fast-track the agreement through legislative hurdles. Still, details of the agreement and its secret negotiation process are sparse. Were it not for released drafts of the document and sub-chapters made available by the whistle-blowing site WikiLeaks, it is likely the general public would know little to nothing of the accord.

Building on the foundation of a 2006 economic partnership agreement adopted to encourage trade between Brunei, Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore, the TPP’s expansion of the agreement grows the number of participant nations to 12, adding Australia, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Vietnam, and the United States. The combined economic force of these nations would dominate global trade, representing roughly \$28 trillion—nearly 40 percent—of the world’s gross domestic product.

But the magnitude of this trading pool isn’t what concerns most critics of the TPP. What is more troubling to labor, environmental, and health groups are the powers seemingly granted to multinational corporations by the agreement and the unilateral easing of climate change laws that serve to

restrain industrial nations from disproportionate consumption and pollution.

Expanded corporate powers are nothing new for international trade agreements. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) gave rise to a legal quagmire that has allowed Exxon Mobil to challenge Canadian offshore drilling regulations, Dow Chemical to bypass local guidelines to expand pesticide production and waste disposal in Mexico, and Eli Lilly to enforce U.S.-issued drug patents and prices outside the country. Previously, under World Trade Organization treaty guidelines, a corporate entity needed to persuade its host country to challenge the trade laws of another. Corporations could not directly litigate against a sovereign nation or its policies.

Unlike the legal and economic provisions of the TPP, most of the environmental measures in the draft agreement released by WikiLeaks in January are voluntary and lack the power to enforce penalties for violators. Attempts to provide more robust language and consequences for climate change violations have been strongly opposed by the U.S. and Australia.

While members of Congress who provide oversight of international trade have been denied access to the negotiations, an estimated 600 corporate lobbyists are busy

working on the details. This has led MIT professor and activist Noam Chomsky to express what many opponents of the TPP feel is at the root of the agreement: maximizing corporate profit and increasing competition for low-wage work.

"It's called free trade, but that's just a joke," Chomsky said in a January Huffington Post Live interview. "These are extreme, highly protectionist measures designed to undermine freedom of trade. In fact, much of what's leaked about the TPP indicates that it's not about trade at all, it's about investor rights."

To paraphrase an often-heard slogan in economic justice circles, "trade agreements are moral documents." The morality of the TPP means that people will suffer as countries compete to offer the lowest price per unit, devaluing the true price of production and forcing more people into working poverty. The morality of the TPP means the earth will suffer as corporations sue nations

600 corporate lobbyists are busy working on the details.

that will not acquiesce to their demands for unregulated dumping. The morality of the TPP means that thousands of HIV-infected persons will die as U.S. drug companies enforce patents and prices for antiretroviral drugs that people in developing countries can't afford.

"No more NAFTAs," was a chant heard across the country in January as protesters gathered in 50 cities to oppose the TPP. Labor union representatives, educators, environmentalists, AIDS activists, migrant justice groups, and local trade associations have seen the destabilizing effects of NAFTA and can only imagine what an expanded free trade agreement might mean.

And nobody will know until the shroud of secrecy that has enveloped these negotiations is lifted. It's time for public transparency and oversight of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. ■

Greg Brekke is founder of SixView Studios (sixview.com) and president of the Associated Church Press.

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