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RURAL ROOTS

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This issue of Catholic Rural Life examines the topic of economic development. It does so within the international world dynamic called “globalization.” Globalization is felt as much as it is defined. In the rural context globalization is frequently felt as the disruptive economic activity which challenges local cultures, local environments, local households, and local standards of living. It is associated with topics like agricultural trade, subsidies and social dislocation. Catholic Rural Life has been exploring these issues in our magazine over the past couple of years. A brief exploration of our website: <http://www.ncrlc.com> where our magazine is posted after hard copy publication, will show that we have recurrently addressed the topic of globalization.

In this issue we bring some new voices to the table. Included in those voices are our own excellent spokespersons, Tim Kautza and Carol Richardson Smith. Tim and Carol bring the focus on economic development home. They bring it home to counties and congregations, to explore how to foster county level economic development . What if we made a stand in a particular location and determined to foster a local economy? What would happen? That is what NCRLC has done in Carol Richardson Smith’s work. Now you get a chance to explore the ongoing results of such a commitment to the localization process, finding, strengthening and thickening the local economic dynamic. Tim Kautza shares the story of congregation based economic development. The site for exploring and expanding economic life can be a congregation. As Tim describes this “building from below” phenomena, there can evolve a significant expansion and deepening of economic vitality. The congregations, the communities and their pastors give witness to the possibility which is in their midst, waiting to be actualized.

We have other new voices in these pages, including two from Seton Hall University. Bill Toth and Stephen Martin provide big-picture perspectives to our issues. Bill frames a vision of globalization from the vantage point of Catholic social teaching, helping us to make a moral and theological analysis of the current situation. Stephen explains how economic theory is relevant to the discussion, showing how the work of Jane Jacobs and Bernard Lonergan grounds a vision of economic life in contrast with several of the major economic theories that have gained dominance in the twentieth century. While the analysis here is challenging in its

complexity, it provides an intellectual platform for creative engagement with our situation. It is not enough to complain about unwelcome processes and their theoretical justification. It is important to develop and defend alternatives that have adequate intellectual rigor and accuracy. I believe that is what we have been doing at NCRLC. We welcome Bruce Anderson again to these pages; his article reinforces and complements Stephen Martin's.

The articles by Ernesto Sirolli and Luther Snow are also complementary. They provide a perspective on development in rural areas by looking at the gifts, visions, passions and assets of the local community. They provide the social and technical process facilitation that would accompany a more adequate economic vision. They challenge the dominant theory that only by bringing business from the outside can one find successful economic development. Rural communities have gifts and passions. One can develop a self-reliant local economic vitality, The articles presented here show the way to do so.

When linked with the approach of Jane Jacobs, the theoretical and practical community development efforts come together in new creative approaches to this important endeavor: creating vital local economies. The globalization dynamic and its justification can be challenged by a more adequate democratic economic vision. The motto "think globally, act locally" takes on a new meaning here. It suggests that the Act Locally advice is central.

Donna Altieri Adler helps us recognize that economic life is not an end in itself, but that it is for a higher purpose: the development of culture. Work is not the sole justification for living. Aesthetic development and the spiritual development of the human person is a higher goal for economic activity. The lessening of human potential, though, is part of the achievement of much current economic activity. Based as they are on a false conception of economic life, agricultural monopolies have become so dominant that alliances are needed to challenge their power. Adler charges NCRLC to make contact with a variety of partners to challenge inordinate power in the marketplace. As part of our 80 years of existence, NCRLC not only has been making such contacts, but is seen as a leader in forging such contacts. Adler's passion and proposals are being realized everyday in the efforts and commitments of NCRLC. This issue of Catholic Rural Life testifies to our intellectual and activist orientation. We welcome your participation and expansion of our mission. In the words of our partners in the world social forum: Another world is Possible.



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