

Business Briefs

United Nations

Worldwide, the Poor Are Getting Poorer

A September 2005 five-year progress report issued by the United Nations on its Millennium Development Goals, makes it clear, that if current global trends persist, many of the poorest countries will not be able to meet most of the adopted goals. In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which decided upon eight Millennium Development Goals, ranging from halving extreme poverty, to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and providing universal primary education—all by the target date of 2015.

One of the stated goals is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger which is a daily reality for more than 1 billion people, who subsist on less than \$1 a day. The report shows, that while there is a slight decline in extreme poverty in Asia (mainly because of developments in China and India), the worst-affected regions, the very poor in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, are getting poorer, and the number of hungry people has increased by tens of millions. Almost half the children in Southern Asia are underweight, and in sub-Saharan Africa the number of underweight children increased from 29 million to 37 million between 1990 and 2003.

Poverty and the spread of diseases are closely connected. So it comes as no surprise when the UN report states, that AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria are concentrated in the poorest countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, 7 out of 100 adults are living with HIV. In some southern African nations, more than 25% of the adult population are HIV-positive. In sub-Saharan Africa, 57% of the infected people are women, and AIDS is robbing children of their parents in record numbers. In 2003, there were more than 4 million children in sub-Saharan Africa alone, who had lost both parents to AIDS, and 12 million who had lost one or both of their parents.

The same pattern holds for malaria: 90% of the 1 million malaria deaths each year occur in sub-Saharan Africa, where 2,000 chil-

dren die every day of this disease. As for access to safe drinking water and sanitation, in sub-Saharan Africa, 42% of the population does not have access to such basics, and the report states that if present trends continue, close to 2.4 billion people worldwide will be without improved sanitation in 2015. To end the grim picture: Eight out of ten children not in school live in sub-Saharan Africa or Southern Asia.

This map of genocide will worsen, unless there is the kind of profound change as outlined by Lyndon LaRouche, toward a New Bretton Woods financial-monetary system.

U.S. Bankruptcies

Northwest and Delta Pensions in Jeopardy

The bankruptcies of Northwest and Delta airlines could dump another \$11.2 billion on the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, according to estimates released Sept. 15. The PBGC estimated that Delta's pensions are underfunded by \$10.6 billion, of which the PBGC would be responsible for \$8.4 billion, and that Northwest's are underfunded by \$5.7 billion, of which the PBGC would have to cover \$2.8 billion—for a total \$11.2 billion loss for the already overwhelmed PBGC.

In response to the Chapter 11 filings, PBGC Executive Director Brad Belt issued a press release, warning, "Northwest Airlines and Delta Airlines are required to make minimum pension contributions under ERISA and the Internal Revenue Code. . . . [N]othing in the bankruptcy code requires companies to skip their pension funding payments."

At the end of its 2004 fiscal year, the PBGC's deficit had doubled to \$23.3 billion. So far, in 2005, bankruptcy judges have allowed United and U.S. Airways to dump their pensions on the PBGC, for a combined total of \$8.5 billion. If the Bankruptcy Court allows Delta and Northwest to dump their pensions, it would increase the PBGC deficit to more than \$43 billion.

Nuclear Hydrogen

General Atomics, South Korea Sign Agreement

General Atomics of San Diego, the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, and the Doosan Heavy Industries & Construction Co. announced a joint research and development program Sept. 12 for the large-scale production of hydrogen using nuclear energy. Meeting in San Diego, the three parties outlined plans to establish a Nuclear Hydrogen Joint Development Center located in Daejeon and San Diego, which will cooperate in the development of the high-temperature gas-cooled nuclear reactor and its use for the production of hydrogen. South Korea's Ministry of Science and Technology stated, "The new project is part of an ongoing effort by the Republic of Korea under a multinational effort to build a fourth-generation nuclear power system that makes use of the very high temperature gas-cooled reactor."

General Atomics' reactor design, the GT-MHR, is one of the proposals under consideration by the U.S. Department of Energy for construction at the Idaho National Laboratory. A prototype GT-MHR which will burn weapons grade plutonium is under development in Russia.

U.S. Health Cost

Quarter of Income Goes to Health Insurance

As of July 2005, the average American family of four paid \$10,880 a year in premiums for health insurance, according to a Kaiser Foundation report. This is one-fourth of the median household income for 2004, and more than an annual minimum-wage income. The cost of premiums rose 9.2% in the year between July 2004 and July 2005. The portion of U.S. employers providing some health insurance fell from 63% to 60% in the same period, as a result of many small businesses being unable to continue insuring their workforce.