

# Are we there yet?

## Economic Justice and the Common Good

Bob Goudzwaard

May 12, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMqdeqwGldk>

Dr. Goudzwaard's keynote address to the conference titled "*Are We There Yet? Economic Justice and the Common Good*" at the King's University College in Edmonton Alberta, CANADA.

This transcription is being made available to assist those who watch the above lecture via the above link of the YOUTUBE video. It has been provoked by the less than satisfactory AI-generated transcript of the lecture that can be found with it at that site and offered to assist students who are seeking to study economics in a normative way that emphasizes our human calling to be generous in our search for public justice..

Those students wishing to render the lecture in clear English, with due respect to the authorship of the lecturer, and thereby find a useful way to challenge fellow students might undertake a worthwhile exercise by rendering this transcription in a form fit for further publication and distribution via the Bob Goudzwaard pages at All of Life Redeemed.

Bruce Wearne [bcwearne@gmail.com](mailto:bcwearne@gmail.com)

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# Are we there yet?

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Dr. Goudzwaard's keynote address to the conference titled "*Are We There Yet? Economic Justice and the Common Good*" on May 12, 2014 at the King's University College in Edmonton Alberta.

Bob Goudzwaard is an internationally recognized economist whose influence extends well beyond the circle of his disciplinary expertise. Throughout his career, he has purposefully designed his lectures and publications to reach all people who seek wisdom in finding their way in our culture. His texts stand out as widely accessible, creative approaches to the deep economic fault lines that divide and alienate us. He not only makes our problems understandable, but his alternative suggestions open paths that inspire hope for a better future.

Dr. Goudzwaard is Professor Emeritus of Economics and Social Philosophy at the VU University, Amsterdam, and a former member of the Dutch Parliament. From 1959-1965, Dr. Goudzwaard served as a Policy Researcher for the Doctor Abraham Kuyper Foundation, the intellectual arm of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), for which he also served as a member of Parliament from 1967-71. In 1971, Dr. Goudzwaard was appointed Professor of Economics in the Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam (now called VU University), a position he held until his retirement in 1999. Dr. Goudzwaard also played a formative role with several Christian social institutions in Canada, including the Christian Labour Association of Canada, Citizens for Public Justice, and the Institute for Christian Studies. A passionate advocate for "an economy of care" that looks beyond traditional market growth indicators, Dr. Goudzwaard is the author of many books and articles, including (in English) *Capitalism and Progress A Diagnosis of Western Society* (1979), *Beyond Poverty and Affluence* (1995, with Harry de Lange), and *Hope in Troubled Times A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises* (2007, with Mark Vander Vennen and David Van Heemst).

Thank you all for this warm welcome. Specially to John and Ron. I am happy to be back here again; three times before I was here as well. This is a nice context to come back. Of course we are here to speak about the question of justice and economic justice and we have to consider the question: Are we there yet? But first comes the question are we still here? <sup>1</sup>

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, I think that we all came here with a desire, and even as people with a longing for justice, for more economic justice in our hearts, for there are still many shortcomings and abuses which need to be corrected - so many people need to be helped.

But when someone comes up to us and asks us from what concept of justice we have come to our opinions and how we are thinking to imply what we think is necessary, we then begin to stumble, as I am beginning to stumble a little bit, and we begin to say something about fairness, dignity and about shared values and at the same time doubt a little the fairness of such a question. Is justice not more then, a thing of the heart, but a difficult description of what should be done? Is it not more a question of stepping stones which we have to take, than just reaching out in a well-defined way to ultimate goals? That is for me how I would put an opening set of questions for our day.<sup>2</sup>

Let me then try to explain it. It was for some years that I was a member of parliament and also chairing an inter- church aid and development organisation, ICCO.<sup>3</sup> We were often confronted with the problem - me too - how to relate economic justice to goals which

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<sup>1</sup> **BCW Note:** since this text version of Goudzwaard's lecture has been produced (to offset the dreadful misrepresentations of the YOUTUBE transcription) to be read while listening to the lecture, I have not presumed to improve the English grammar and only "lightly" improve its legibility.

<sup>2</sup> Goudzwaard here has summarised his presentation. It is an exposition of how we should begin to address the problem of justice. These opening lines also deal with the problem of **discussing** this problematic topic. Goudzwaard the teacher is setting the stage for our consideration not just of what he will say but of the discussions that were then planned to take place.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Dutch *Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation* (ICCO), founded December 31, 1964. It was established by Protestant churches in the Netherlands to unite development-aid activities and improve the likelihood of efficiently securing government co-funding for much-needed overseas projects. See Bob Goudzwaard "On the occasion of Marnix Niemijer stepping down from the position of Director of Philadelphia to become Operations Manager of TEAR NL 2003."

you want to achieve. Max Weber had that idea of *Zweckrationalität*, goal-oriented rationality<sup>4</sup> and you usually take a goal-oriented approach so that you choose to think about common values that you share; then you select your goals - shall we say the goals of diminishing poverty, something like that, and in this view in selecting these goals you also have to select the targets you want to achieve and then we look to methods or instruments of how to achieve those goals. And finally then you indicate by what time and what will be the measures that will be needed to be implemented for it to be done. That is the usual approach and also in relation to economic justice often it is a useful one.<sup>5</sup>

But it has its limitations. It has been an approach that has led for me, and maybe also for you, to some disappointments. For often the instruments or the measures which we have in mind, both political and economic, are insufficient and actually elude our ability to shape them.

It often presupposes too much cooperation by others. It has happened for instance to the so-called millennium goals agreed solemnly by many leaders and heads of state in the year 2000 with the targets of less global poverty, more health care, better education for all, ultimately, so they said, to be achieved by the year 2010 or by 2020.

What is now clear is that most of these chosen goals will not be fulfilled, cannot be met. So that this global programme of economic justice was no doubt well-intentioned, it has nevertheless led to disappointments at a number of levels.

To many young people it therefore now appears that the goal or concept of economic justice is simply too idealistic to be ever fully

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<sup>4</sup> *Zweckrationalität*. See Max Weber 1949. **The Methodology of the Social Sciences**. Translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. New York: Free Press.

<sup>5</sup> Bob describes how, according to contemporary standards of corporate decision-making (managerialism), a discussion will unfold. It is as much a process adopted by a group of academics planning their year's curriculum as it would be of a Parliamentary cabinet arranging its priorities, let alone of the Board of an Aid-and-Development association.

achieved.<sup>6</sup> In any event, their basic fear is not satisfaction over any progress that has already been made. I suggest therefore that as a start of our discussions of these days that we take the painful step of digging somewhat deeper.

Let us consider the intriguing question, of whether, in its essence, a typically modern approach is in itself in some respects an obstacle for achieving economic justice? [With this in mind] Some questions will pop-up at the very beginning [of our enquiry, our digging deeper]: is the best starting point [to be found] in the idea of selecting some shared goals and values about justice? I mean, do largely neutral goals and standard concepts of economic justice reach far enough to tackle the concrete forms of injustice in present day in society? Is an approach that is derived from an instrumental or mechanistic worldview simply accepting behaviour as it is - without providing any critique? Is it wise to choose your goals in the far distance, making the path to it very difficult? Should not there be some acknowledgement that there is always some connection between social and economic injustice in the presence of guilt and sin? These are religious words.

We are here gathered in the context of an academic and public conference where we are still all aware, I hope, that academicians and politicians are always led by some kind of faith. An old Latin expression of that opinion is the principle *fides quaerens intellectum* (FQI) “Faith seeks knowledge”. This principle can however also be read as faith must complete and deepen our intellectual approaches.

So, in the style of that old good Christian tradition let me try to make some remarks which could lead to a somewhat different approach to tackling problems of today and trying to suggest what economic justice could be for today. And I hope it will serve as a kind of help in our discussions. Three observations I will make and they can be seen as three stepping stones.

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<sup>6</sup> Goudzwaard here as university professor attests to the results of his listening to the students he has taught. This line of enquiry, for him as an emeritus professor, was further developed in his book with his 2017 book with Craig G. Bartholomew. **BEYOND THE MODERN AGE: An Archaeology of Contemporary Culture**. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. That timely book is a call to academics, senior students to systematically investigate the worldviews of junior students..

My first remark is that at the heart of all religions neither the word economic nor the word justice belong just to the realm of subjective values or personal evaluations. They have their origin in God-given meaning, so that they do not originate in what we may chose as meaning; justice is like love one of the characteristics of a living God who is a shield for the poor and a protector of widows and who does not leave unpunished those who are corrupt and who oppress the poor and the weak. We are all, I think, acquainted with this strong Biblical language which is so different from the later Greek and Roman concepts of justice. Indeed, here we are no longer in the domain of mostly static, subjective conceptualizations of justice; we are confronted instead by a highly dynamic mandate, different mandates or callings in life. Governments and economic agents addressed to do justice.

So the most compelling Biblical metaphor of justice is that of a mighty river which flows downward from the mountains to fill the entire landscape underneath. Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream. This is what Amos said. I think this is an important insight especially during our time of increasing globalization. Globalization has, of course, its own dynamics and that correct. But globalization should never be allowed to ignore or neutralize this other, even more fundamental, dynamic, the dynamic river of social and economic justice. It also seeks to fill the earth and it has to be respected in the way in which we are furthering globalization.

Something similar can be said about the word economic. So often the word is trivialized into a matter of money or the distribution of money - which is not without importance but is not the entire story. The problem of economic justice then boils down to the question of how much money should be reserved for provisions for the poor. But it is poverty which lurks behind this view of poverty because in the Biblical context the word economy or *oikonomia* is always related to the mandate of stewardship which means the responsible governance of all goods and resources of the earth including vulnerable ecosystems. Justice has to be related, as economic justice has to be related to the possibility that all people - women and men - can sustain their own lives and the lives of their families in such a

way that also nature can survive and future generations can live with dignity.

We can hear in such formulation of economy, as an acceptable description of the common good, how it deepens the idea of justice. Economic justice is not just about pursuing more provisions for vulnerable people. It also deals with the needs of future generations and demands continuous care for vulnerable ecosystems and for the preservation of threatened species. There is no economic justice in a country or religion where these interests are systematically ignored or neglected.

That is my first remark. If we speak about justice, and economic justice, let us take them both in a normative setting - which is more than just giving everyone his/her legal rights - and as a dynamic that fills the earth to bring forth good things for those who are vulnerable.

My second remark deals with the significance or stepping stone deals with the significance of a “way oriented” approach. I began by speaking about the weakness of just having goals, ultimate goals that you want to reach by all manners and in all ways. But a “way orientation” is different. It starts from the fact that even your own goals have to listen to given mandates, given ways to walk on. Often people today identify their own goals, private or public, goals that they choose, with the true meaning of their lives. You want to reach what you have set for yourself as ultimate goals. And hence they can be very busy discussing norms and values in that context expecting others should also support their goals. But the Bible confronts us with another meaning; with a different terminology. The basic metaphor is “the way”. When Jesus speaks about Himself as “the way” and following Him on his way or connected ways that is what makes life truly meaningful. Justice is one of those ways on which we are expected to walk. Justice therefore cannot be identified with targets to which we should reach. It is like peace; it is a path to walk on, not a goal to be achieved - a path we move along step by step.

I quote here from Psalm 119:67 in a translation that is similar to Martin Buber’s translation of the Old Testament. *“I have seen an end to everything but your ways keep widening while we are going step by step.”* The way is widening under our going. Justice

and stewardship are ways, given ways to walk on. And this appears to me of truly great importance in our time.

We are often deeply disappointed when we cannot achieve our own goals or purposes that we chose for others and for ourselves. But if justice like stewardship is a way, then it is not our effort to achieve final goals that is the most important thing but rather the courage to take first steps.

For the Biblical promise is that from a concrete<sup>7</sup> beginning, the way on which we walk becomes wider. It widens so that from that new vantage point we see more opportunities for us to move on step after step. It is indeed like the river's flow - the possibilities may then grow to implement justice in society. Justice grows not only in GDP terms.

A third and final remark deals with the relevance of accountability. The interpretation of justice implies recognition of concrete responsibilities to do justice and to maintain justice. Justice always has the quality of addressing - it summons those who have power to do justice and to refrain from abuse. And that implies accountability.

I noted earlier, however, that the usual approach to solving problems - of poverty for instance - just the opposite is the case. Each person's role, each government's role is accepted as it is, which in my view should strike us as awkward. Somehow, somewhere, also in the analysis of economic injustice, we must discuss the role of wrong-doing, and study the consequences of human actions, including for example the consequences of the evil actions of corrupt governments. If everyone is fully tolerated in our analysis, for what he or she is doing, can we ever expect or hope that economic justice will come to **reign** on this earth in its own dynamic force?

And now let's take a small excursion: because it has been a theme that I have been a theme I have been studying for these past few years. If we look for the causes, the origins of this prevailing attitude to let everyone do what they will do, for it is only their responsibility - to the causes of this prevailing attitude in economics as a science and also in political science we touch upon a century-old tradition.

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<sup>7</sup> Here "concrete" is as an actual step - not an abstract idea.

Even today, if economists discuss rising inequality in the world, they systematically use static and neutral terms like *wealth* and *poverty*, often refraining from using sometimes more adequate terms like *enrichment* and *empoverishment*. They are afraid to use such terms because for them it seems like they are leaving the domain of a truly objective, neutral academic economic analysis.

I will try to show a bit later how this academic attitude of fear is decidedly incorrect. But for the moment let me leave you with the intriguing questions of the historical origin of this academic attitude. The origins go back to the time of the Enlightenment. And at that time whenever leading philosophers discussed the place of *causality* - the matter of the causes and consequences in the sciences, including social sciences like economics - they have developed an outspoken resistance to all types of *causality* - it sounds somewhat difficult - that were not of a mechanistic nature - that were not the same kind of *causality* you will find in the natural sciences.

Other broader types of causality,<sup>8</sup> that had existence since the Middle Ages, were banished completely like the questions of ***who*** might have been the cause of a certain crisis or disaster to have happened. And so only the question of “***what*** could have caused this or that to happen?” was considered as a legitimate academic question.

According to Nobel Prize winner John Hicks it all started - it sounds all so very remarkable - with a great earthquake that destroyed Lisbon in 1755. Great Enlightenment philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Voltaire published articles about the possible causes of the earthquake and they came to the conclusion that a ***who*** type of causality would lead to God as its prime origin and they either did not like that notion or simply refused to believe it. The only question that remained therefore was: ***what*** could have caused the earthquake to have happened? Immanuel Kant came to give a correct answer namely that it happened because of a dislocation in the deeper layers of the earth. But that modern idea of

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<sup>8</sup> Note Goudzwaard is referring to *discourse* about abstract concepts which had not been constrained by Enlightenment views excluding all non-mechanical view of causes..

causality was thought to be binding for *all* sciences, also of the social sciences including economics and political science.

You may wonder why I am telling you these old stories at the beginning of such an important conference. But an answer is relatively easy: it is illustrated, by even today, that today the vast majority of economists systematically refuse to ask the *who* question whenever people ask them to say more, for instance, about the causes of the present economic crisis. They will almost never tell you what they think about those economic agents, like speculators, who have brought this crisis about. And so they similarly are not at all interested in a so-called causal relationship between persons and nations, that at this very moment, are actively busy enriching themselves to the detriment of other persons or nations which are then impoverished. That is a question of economic justice.

So this position cannot be our final academic position.<sup>9</sup> Especially not if we see justice as a Divine Mandate that is valid for all economic subjects or agents, regardless of whether or not they believe in God. Because in this case that is indifferent. All agents must be held accountable and addressed in relation to their own responsibilities.

Let me try to make this somewhat more concrete: in the dynamic, even dynamistic universe, such as the one in which we are now living within, in which the dynamic development the heart of what we are now living within, it is simply not appropriate to speak only about poverty in static terms or in terms of our research that some people just happen to be poor. While others just happen to be rich. Dynamic terms like enrichment and impoverishment should have a legitimate place in economic analysis.<sup>10</sup>

It is therefore with honour and respect that I mention here the excellent work of Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen.<sup>11</sup> It was in his thoroughgoing study titled **Poverty and famines : an essay on entitlement and deprivation** (1981), Sen concluded on the basis

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<sup>9</sup> i.e. this position which is to decidedly analyze economics in *what* terms.

<sup>10</sup> Note the language using normative terms (should) about the discipline of economics itself as a normative science.

<sup>11</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amartya\\_Sen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amartya_Sen) **Poverty and famines : an essay on entitlement and deprivation** ILO/Oxford 1981

of strict academic and objective analysis that recent periods of deep hunger in countries like Egypt, Burma, India were directly caused by continuous effort of enrichment by landowners, in Burma the military establishment, and in India by corrupt municipal authorities. Here sin and guilt is finally recognized in economic analysis, as relevant causes of hunger and of deprivation. And would it not be lovely if politicians and economic leaders would follow this approach also in practise. But here, I am also approaching the territory of asking concrete questions about possible implementation.

Let me say therefore to try to summarise shortly and possibly combine this to the three remarks that I have just made.

We saw, that firstly both the economic norm and the norm of justice have a vivid, dynamic and far-reaching content. Alongside of the struggle against unjust poverty and possible oppression, we must also deal with the legitimate demands for ecological justice and justice between generations - such with an economic aspect coming in.

Secondly, we noticed that a “way-orientation” of justice invites us to take concrete first steps, starting now, here, instead of only striving for long-term goals that may never will be realised.

And thirdly, we saw that justice requires an accountability approach for all economic subjects including ourselves. This is an approach that can be strengthened remarkably by a normative study of a **who**-oriented analysis of economic causation.

And I sincerely hope that these three observations are a little bit useful in our discussions in the coming days guiding us to some extent.

It may be good however that I also try to give some illustrations of what this could imply. And firstly, I will make a comment about the remarkable paradox, that in most countries, and also regions, rising economic growth on the one hand and rising inequality on the other hand go so easily together today. Rising growth and rising inequality - you should expect are different. Some of you will also recognise this dilemma, this question that puzzled the French

economist Thomas Picketty<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps you have heard about his historical book, best-seller **Capital in the Twenty-First Century**. He has also asked how it is that economic growth can be spread naturally so that it increases the level of poor people? But indeed the paradox is a vivid one.

Let me take South Africa as an example. Because we cannot suppose that the majority government of the ANC would surely act against the interests of poor people, will act in favour of poor people. A 2013 United Nations report states that the wealth-gap in South Africa is so large it has become a chasm. Over half of South Africa's children live in absolute poverty.

In the United States it is reported that in each year since 2007 there has been an increase in the number of people who live in absolute poverty. The number grew from 37 million to 47 million now and one in five children are considered to be poor and to be in hunger,

In India the income inequality is also still rising.

Why is it that poverty deepens in this way? Does the analysis of Thomas Piketty, which is a very good analysis, reach far enough so that it is a question of a good, correct level of taxation or the best development of interest levels? Taking my starting point here from the analysis of Amartya Sen, we may then expect that if that paradox is becoming alive that there are elements of enrichment present in a society. Otherwise, that chasm should not happen.

But that can only be explained if one form or other of enrichment in fact worsens the poverty that are already existent. But how could that take place?

Let me give two examples. The first way runs via the use, or better said the mis-use of economic power: in Sen's analysis this is seen as the most important vehicle, by which some people are robbed of their entitlements. Their access to work, to have income, food.

In business life these days, the practise has grown that CEO's and other leading people can choose and should choose their own level of profits and bonuses. That of course, diminishes the share for the

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<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Piketty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Piketty) Thomas Picketty **Capital in the Twenty-First Century** 2013.

working population, that can then increase their cost of living by for instance by causing the costs of products to rise.

Continuing discrimination between people of different gender or race can also be seen as a kind of misuse of economic power and it still occurs almost everywhere. Also in South Africa.

Finally, let us consider the so-called terms of trade, and consider how the prices of imported goods go versus the prices you receive of your exports, and so your terms of trade remain unfavourable because of protection in markets. Then also protection can be seen as a kind of mis-use of economic power. Because economic power is also an element which can stimulate economic processes of enrichment and impoverishment.

But without question, one of the most important factors of our time is also the remarkable role played by the financial circuit. In the last decade a great deal of money creation has taken place, mainly by private big banks of the world's richest countries and the estimates are that over 80% of that newly created in the last decade was of a purely speculative character, that was then used to speculate and finance so-called hedgefunds. This fed a whole balloon of new financial derivatives by which one person could easily learn one million dollars or more per week, or sometimes per day. A recent OXFAM report has calculated that now, I quote, the 85 richest persons in the world have a combined wealth equal to that of the bottom 50% of the world's population.<sup>13</sup> and that is 3½ billion people. Here also greed is one of the dominant motives.

Sometimes it is suggested that such forms of enrichment simply add to the wealth of such a relatively small group of people without harming the interests of others. In my view this is just a form of wishful thinking. For the working of the economic process as a whole, harming others is an inevitable result.<sup>14</sup> I would remind you that the present financial crisis started with a mortgage crisis, in which people were accepting mortgages which could not be expected to be solved, or paid in the long-run. And so they have had

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<sup>13</sup> OXFAM report. <https://frompoverty.oxfam.org.uk/anatomy-of-a-killer-fact-the-worlds-85-richest-people-own-as-much-as-poorest-3-5-billion/>

<sup>14</sup> Goudzwaard is not arguing that harm is a fate but is commenting upon the kind of fatalistic economic system that prevails with such wishful thinking.

to leave and still are leaving their houses. This is a link of causality between enrichment and impoverishment.

It will be of no surprise therefore that public attention is now being paid more to the role of too greedy forms of finance. While greed is a moral category it presupposes a kind of economic causation it implies there is a category of economic justice in which economic actors are held accountable for their deeds. It's a way of doing justice, however, is not dealing with symptoms. It needs to deal with the roots as well. But how can that be done?

We have reasons to be careful here. It is one thing to conclude that there are various forms of causality in our societies between concrete economic harm for vulnerable people but quite another thing to propose concrete government measures that must then remain within the sphere of public justice. Let me remind you, my dear listeners, that in the Christian democratic social tradition, in both the Catholic and Protestant wings, always gave some priority to first addressing the civil sectors, that include organizations and institutions with branches of banking and industry which can be supposed to deal with concrete forms of injustice in their own realms, circle - *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*. Social economic organizations or associations can sometimes deal far better with their members than the Government is able to do. Should however these groups remain fully inactive, then with a careful weighing of interests, including the interests of the poor, then the Government can decide to enter, not just to correct, but even possibly to bring some healing. Justice has an healing aspect. Then justice is indeed done, rolling down like a mighty stream in a thirsty, barren land.

If we explore further the forms of enrichment with the costs of justice it is possible to conclude in my view that indeed banks have in themselves have in fact undertaken some important actions within the banking sector. For example by reducing the misuse of economic power in the enforcement of mortgages upon poor people. But this does not yet address the root problem of creating money too easily and too much for speculative purposes.

An awareness has to grow that money is as I see it a public good which always requires a public protection. Instead of being used as a

football for private interests - hedgefunds should be highly restricted in what they can do.

So too, also in the industrial sector - the reactions against the setting of exorbitantly high incomes and bonuses for oneself and one's colleagues have been too weak. Public government actions should always be considered as possible interventions but then in the way of an early-warning system that if no responsibility is taken that then the Government will be obliged to come in. For "jumping in" to that sector is not acceptable.

In the international domain it is the norm of public justice which calls for the elimination of tax havens and of the highly destabilizing speculation against currencies. There is always a great support for such Government if the press and the churches are willing to expose such concrete abuse of power to the public.

Yes we can act if we do it step-by-step, with a true longing for more justice in the world.

I now briefly will discuss some forms of economic justice I have scarcely mentioned: justice between the generations and the justice that is needed viz-a-vis our vulnerable environment. Here we touch upon the importance of care for the common good.

In the immediate association it is a term that was once known as, and is to some extent still valid, as "the commons", pieces of land held in common, large pieces of land in Africa are still in common use. And it is remarkable to see such common lands are often better taken care of than the large parcels of land that are held as private property. For instance, every person or family attached at least some value to the condition of the land *after* they have used it for it is to be left behind for the next family person to use it. So different from what is usually thought. Communal property can be ethically more demanding than just private property, to take care of yourself but also of others.

So the question is whether we do not need to return to this kind of concern for others in the commons, not just for the sake of our own future but for the sake of the future of our children and our grandchildren.

I hope that you agree that today is a natural environment including countless vulnerable eco-systems is severely threatened.

Let's think about for a moment, not just about Alberta, but about the Great Barrier Reef - it is the largest coral shoal in the world and 20% of that is already dead. Or consider the great primates are on the brink of being eliminated because tropical forests are shrinking due to deforestation.

Climate change as a whole is leading efforts to increasing desertification and more hurricanes and more extreme weather volatility. What kind of earth - common - are we leaving behind for our children and grand-children as the stocks of natural resources are rapidly declining? Are we then doing justice to our children and grand-children. A good index is the footprint which we leave behind after our current consumption patterns. Careful calculations show that if all of today's inhabitants of the earth were to have the average consumption pattern of the Canadian citizen then three globes would be required.

I said earlier that justice always has the quality of addressing - and we should of course not avoid letting the requirements of justice to address others but also ourselves - even if that is painful. We have to address economic justice as a calling for ourselves. We cannot simply ignore that our material consumption pattern has become too high, on the average, and that the command of the day to all of us is to have and accept more simple lifestyles.

We live within an economy of enough, which is also an economy of contentment and can be an economy of joyful pleasure.

Let me make some concluding remarks about your region, while we are here, in Alberta. We all know that economically Alberta is one of the most dynamic regions in Canada, because of its rich resource base. But in Alberta, the statistics also tell us, that the level of economic inequality is still rising together with homelessness. So in terms of economic justice, Alberta's progress has its shadow sides. And as far as the native people of the province are concerned let us remember that economic justice has more dimensions than income equality alone. Alongside of the rich-poor ambivalence lies the question of ecological justice and inter-generational justice and as a relative outsider I am struck by the great extent by which three forms of possible injustice overlap each other and come together to affect the position of the First Nations peoples, of Metis, and Inuit

heritage. It is not only in relation to the first level of direct poverty, but secondly of the diminishing role of control of their own heritage and lands. And thirdly there is the concern about the future of their own young people - inter-generational concern - which usually are less educated than others and so have less opportunities in the labour market. These are three forms of possible vulnerability and economic justice coming together.

Don't you agree that this accumulation of three forms of social and economic vulnerability poses a challenge to all of us. Perhaps all of us here are those who need to take steps on the way for more justice.

Thankyou for your attention.

BCW 11.8.26

Transcribed from the YOUTUBE video.