Workshop Material for

Baha'i Writings on Economics

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Introduction

There is no doubt that the subject of Economics is one of the most important and overwhelming questions of our time. Whether at the individual level or at the national level, everyone is trying to solve their economic problems. The economic situation of the world at present is in a state of confusion and mankind is looking for a solution. But there does not seem to be a solution in sight except in re-examining the fundamental values and standards of the present economic system and replacing them. We have to keep in mind that the present economic system is a by-product of the old order which is dying out. It is dying because of the separation of economic advancement from spiritual advancement and because of the exclusion of spiritual and human values in the formulation of economic theories. The present economic system is a system without life and spirit. In 2008 the economic system of the world almost collapsed due to greed and a lack of morality in the system. Even though some insiders knew that their actions were wrong, they did not do anything to correct them. In spite of economies becoming more interdependent due to technological advancement and the flow of information, the hearts of people are far apart.

We are in the stage of transition from a system that is fundamentally decaying to a new system but its outlines have yet to be defined. As Baha'is we are assured that the World Order of Baha'u'llah will bring with it a new economic system with its foundation in the hearts of people. But until then, it is essential for us to increase our understanding and knowledge of the Writings on the subject. We know that there is no "Baha'i economic system" at this time but there are guidelines within the Writings. In future, the Universal House of Justice, in consultation with Baha'i economists, will formulate a Baha'i economic system. In the meantime, we need to examine the present economic system in the light of the Baha'i Writings and get involved in the economic life of our society. Our participation will set the example for the rest of the world and at the same time prepare the ground for the time when the World Commonwealth will come into being. The Universal House of Justice reminds us that time has come to pay greater attention to our economic side of our lives and take steps to improve the economic prosperity of the world.

"Although Baha'u'llah does not set out in His Revelation a detailed economic system, a constant theme throughout the entire corpus of His

teachings is the reorganization of human society. Consideration of this theme inevitably gives rise to questions of economics. Of course, the future order conceived by Baha'u'llah is far beyond anything that can be imagined by the present generation. Nevertheless, its eventual emergence will depend on strenuous effort by His followers to put His teachings into effect today. With this in mind, we hope that the comments below will stimulate thoughtful, ongoing reflection by the friends. The aim is to learn about how to participate in the material affairs of society in a way that is consistent with the divine precepts and how, in practical terms, collective prosperity can be advanced through justice and generosity, collaboration and mutual assistance."

-The Universal House of Justice, March, 1, 2017

Great care should be taken, while doing so, not to get lost in discussing details and the technicalities of economic systems and in keeping the focus on the full picture. The economic field is vast and traditionally a setting for long and argumentative discussions with no definite conclusions. Avoiding this pitfall is important. It should also be made clear that our aim is not to discredit the economic thoughts or the economists of the past and present. Instead, we can appreciate their hard work in formulating economic theories which have led to the present system. To the best of their abilities, they have tried to solve the problems of an ever-changing world. Their failure to do so is humanity's failure to recognize the spiritual needs and destiny of man. Their solutions to the problems without divine guidance were doomed to fail.

Through this study of the Writings, we will increase our understanding of the importance of the changes that needed to happen and to what extent we are the agents of change. We are witnessing the turning-point of human history and standing by is not the solution. Actions based on sound understandings of the Baha'i Writings and whole-hearted commitment to transform the economic side of our lives is needed. In that way we are laying the foundation for the new system that has been promised throughout the ages – the golden age of human history.

The material is divided into four parts:

Part one: *Deals with the study of the Writings on the nature of economic problems and their solutions. This study should help to create a framework to guide us through the rest of the material*

Part two: *Emphasizes the spiritual values that are essential to visualize a "Divine Economy".*

Part three: *Concentrates on specific economic principles in the Writings.*

Part four: *Focuses on Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a World Commonwealth.*

PART ONE

'Abdu'l-Bahá summarizes the state of our world's affairs and explains the nature of the problems:

> ***"Although the body politic is one family yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direst misery, some members are satisfied and some are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some members are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not ensure happiness. They do not provide comfort."***
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> *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: Foundations of World Unity, p. 38; and Star of the West, Vol. XIII, p. 227–228.*

Questions:

1. *What is the result of lack of harmonious relations?*
2. *What does the human family lack?*
3. *Why is this household not well arranged?*
4. *Do legislated laws alone ensure happiness?*

"Economic plans of reconstruction have been carefully devised, and meticulously executed. And yet crisis has succeeded crisis, and the rapidity with which a perilously unstable world is declining has been correspondingly accelerated. A yawning gulf threatens to involve in one common disaster both the satisfied and dissatisfied nations, democracies and dictatorships, capitalists and wage-earners, Europeans and Asiatics, Jew and Gentile, white and coloured."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p.190.

Questions:

1. *What has happened in spite of carefully devised and meticulously executed economic plans?*
2. *Who will be involved in one common disaster?*
3. *What threatens to involve people in one common disaster?*
4. *Can you think of any economic plan that was devised but failed?*
5. *Name a few economic crises of our century.*
6. *Do you think economic problems can only be found in developing countries?*
7. *Can you name a few economic problems that industrial countries face or have faced?*

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains one of the problems that has had great economic consequences on the world's nations:

> ***"Peace is the pretext, and night and day they are all straining every nerve to pile up more weapons of war, and to pay for this their wretched people must sacrifice most of whatever they are able to earn by their sweat and toil. How many thousands have given up their work in useful industries and are labouring day and night to produce new and deadlier weapons which would spill out the blood of the race more copiously than before.***
> ***"Each day they invent a new bomb or explosive and then the governments must abandon their obsolete arms and begin producing the new, since the old weapons cannot hold their own against the new."***
> *- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 61.*

Questions:

1. *Why do people have to sacrifice most of whatever they are able to earn?*
2. *Why have thousands given up their work in useful industries?*

3. *What happens to old weapons once new ones are devised?*

Now let us examine 'Abdu'l-Bahá's vision of a world without war:

"Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required -- no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction..."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 65–66.

Questions:

1. *What is the "happy situation" that 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to?*
2. *What is the alternative to the piling up of weapons of war and the continuing production of new military weapons?*
3. *What changes would the entire population experience?*
4. *What would be the size of a military force of the future and what would be its function?*
5. *How would people spend their time if they were not producing weapons of destruction?*
6. *Suggest ways of using money saved by reducing military expenditures.*

Another problem, that of the survival of the fittest, which originates in human nature, has been man's legacy from the days when he lived a primitive life in the jungles to the present time. Today it is called competition.

"In the world of nature we behold the living organisms in a ceaseless struggle for existence. Everywhere we are confronted by evidences of the physical survival of the fittest. This is the very source of error and misapprehension in the opinions and theories of men who fail to realize that the world of nature is inherently defective in cause and outcome and that the …."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 400. (Talk dated 7 November 1912 in Washington, D.C.)

Questions:

1. *How is the law of the survival of the fittest the origin of all difficulties?*
2. *Is survival of the fittest the cause of economic problems?*

The following are 'Abdu'l-Bahá's directives to overcome this problem:

"This [survival of the fittest] is the very source of error and misapprehension in the opinions and theories of men who fail to realize that the world of nature is inherently defective in cause and outcom…and that the defects therein must be removed by education."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 400. (Talk dated 7 November 1912 in Washington, D.C.)

"In nature there is the law of the survival of the fittest. Even if man be not educated, then according to the natural institutes this natural law will demand of man supremacy. The purpose and object of schools, colleges and universities is to educate man and thereby rescue and redeem him from the exigencies and defects of nature and to awaken within him the capability of controlling and appropriating nature's bounties."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 353.

Questions:

1. *What remedies have been offered to solve this problem?*
2. *What is the purpose and object of schools?*
3. *Does man have the capability of controlling and appropriating nature's bounties?*
4. *Do you think that the economic systems of the world work on the basis of survival of the fittest?*
5. *What is the opposite of survival of the fittest?*

What makes the "divine economy" different from all the economic systems of the world is its approach to the source of the economic problems and their solutions. In this way it differentiates itself from all the past and present economic theories and thoughts. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

> ***"The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá'í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Bahá'ís will bring about this improvement and betterment but not through sedition and appeal to physical force—not through warfare, but welfare."***
>
> *- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 238–239.*

Shoghi Effendi further explains the above statement:

> ***"… By the statement 'the economic solution is divine in nature' is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man's nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society. It is only in this way that man can control the economic forces that threaten to disrupt the foundations of his existence, and thus assert his mastery over the forces of nature."***

-Shoghi Effendi: Lights of Guidance, p. 551. (From a letter written of behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 26 December 1935.)

Questions:

1. *What is the secret of the whole economic question?*
2. *How can we control economic forces?*
3. *Is there any way other than the Bahá'í Teachings to solve the economic situation of the world?*

"'Abdu'l-Bahá … has said: 'All economic problems may be solved by the application of the Science of the Love of God.' That is to say: If the Rule called golden … were actually applied to the world's economic problems, which if not solved bid fair to destroy us, and the love of God, the sort of love which makes a home life happy, were used as a scientific measurement to regulate our international and national affairs; to settle all relations between labour and capital, between rich and poor: to regulate all coinage and commerce, can there be any doubt that the results would be far more conducive to human welfare than our present policies have produced?"

-Howard Colby Ives: Portals to Freedom, p. 156.

Bahá'u'lláh has explained the Golden Rule:

"O SON OF BEING!
"Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it."

-Bahá'u'lláh: The Hidden Words, Arabic No. 29.

Questions:

1. *What is the Golden Rule?*
2. *Is the Golden Rule applied today?*
3. *How can the Golden Rule bridge the gap between the rich and the poor?*

PART TWO

In this section we will study Writings that are a foundation for a divine economy.

A key feature of the divine economy that differs fundamentally from current economic theories is the recognition of the importance of the spiritual advancement of man, along with his material advancement.

> ***"Material civilization has reached an advanced plane, but now there is need of spiritual civilization. Material civilization alone will not satisfy; it cannot meet the conditions and requirements of the present age; its benefits are limited to the world of matter. There is no limitation to the spirit of man, for spirit in itself is progressive and if the divine civilization be established, the spirit of man will advance."***
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> *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 101.*

> ***"As heretofore material civilization has been extended, the divine civilization must now be promulgated. Until the two agree, real happiness among mankind will be unknown. By mere intellectual development and power of reason, man cannot attain to his fullest degree—that is to say, by means of intellect alone he cannot accomplish the progress effected by religion."***
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> *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 170.*

Questions:

1. *What are the limits of a material civilization?*
2. *How will the establishment of a divine civilization affect man?*
3. *Is spiritual civilization in balance with material civilization in the world today?*
4. *Has material advancement brought happiness to mankind?*

Unlike the popular belief today that material advancement brings happiness, Bahá'u'lláh reminds us:

> *"**O SON OF BEING!***
> ***"Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test our servants."***
> *-Bahá'u'lláh: The Hidden Words, Arabic No. 55.*

> ***"O SON OF MAN!***
> ***"Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?"***
> *-Ibid. No. 56.*

Questions:

1. *Why does Bahá'u'lláh want us to be detached from the material world?*
2. *What is real richness?*

> ***"...In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil."***
> *-Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 69.*

> ***"Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant."***
> *-Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 251.*

Questions:

1. *In what matters is moderation desirable?*
2. *Why does moderation have to be observed in all matters?*
3. *Is moderation a popular idea among people?*

The most crucial mistake that the economists have made is their failure to recognize man's high station. Hence, it is not surprising to see man being reduced to one of the factors in production (labour), along with land and capital. Their theories have used a

very limited definition of man. He has been depicted most of the time as a selfish and greedy being who has no other goal except to satisfy his own needs (consumer) without regard for the welfare of others. This view is far removed from what God has ordained for man. Bahá'u'lláh explains:

> ***"Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause. … His is the loftiest station, and his influence educateth the world of being."***
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> *-Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 220.*

'Abdu'l-Bahá adds:

> ***"If … the spiritual nature of the soul has been so strengthened that it holds the material side in subjection, then does man approach the Divine; his humanity becomes so glorified that the virtues of the Celestial Assembly are manifested in him; he radiates the Mercy of God, he stimulates the spiritual progress of mankind, for he becomes a lamp to show light on their path."***
>
> *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pp. 97–98.*

Questions:

1. *How can man attain a great station?*
2. *Describe the potential of man once his spiritual nature has been strengthened.*
3. *Is man's true potential recognized in the present economic system?*

This is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance to assist man to achieve his true station by balancing his spiritual and material efforts.

> ***" ... Share your time with God. … Spend half of the day in search of livelihood, guaranteeing your material life and dignified appearance, and dedicate the other half in the***

acquisition of moral virtues and service at the threshold of God...”

-‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Printed in the Persian magazine Payameh-Bahá’í, #116 (France).

Questions:

1. *What areas should be the focus of our lives?*
2. *Do you think that we are responsible for earning our livelihood or is it the role of the government to provide it for us?*

Many economic systems have laid great emphasis on equality without recognizing the inherent inequalities in the abilities of man, and in emphasizing absolute equality rather than equality in opportunities.

“Social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of man. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be abolished...”

-Shoghi Effendi: Directives of the Guardian, p. 20.

“For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and labourer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent—each in his function according to ability but with justice of opportunity for all.”

-‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 216.

Questions:

1. *Why are people not equal?*
2. *In your opinion, should people with lesser abilities have a lower quality of life?*
3. *Can differences in functions and economic status be used as spiritual criteria?*

Although there has been some recognition of the role of women and the contributions they have made to the advancement of our civilization, their real potential has not been recognized nor utilized.

> ***"… there must be an equality of rights between men and women. Women shall receive an equal privilege of education. This will enable them to qualify and progress in all degrees of occupation and accomplishment. For the world of humanity possesses two wings: man and woman. If one wing remains incapable and defective, it will restrict the power of the other, and full flight will be impossible. Therefore, the completeness and perfection of the human world are dependent upon the equal development of these two wings."***
>
> *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 318.*

Questions:

1. *Do women presently have an equal opportunity of education everywhere in the world?*
2. *Are women prominent in all spheres of human affairs?*
3. *What do you suggest will improve the role of women in society?*

The idea of the equality of men and women has been included in some economic theories, but as we can see in our world today, they have failed to achieve it. The Bahá'í Faith not only stresses the importance of equal opportunities but encourages mankind to go one step further:

> ***"… the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalization of wealth. For equalization must be imposed from without, while sharing is a matter of free choice.***

"Man reacheth perfection through good deeds, voluntarily performed, not through good deeds the doing of which was forced upon him. And sharing is a personally chosen righteous act: that is, the rich should extend assistance to the poor, they should expend their substance for the poor, but of their own free will, and not because the poor have gained this end by force. For the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order. On the other hand voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 115.

Questions:

1. *Why is voluntary sharing greater than equality?*
2. *How will voluntary sharing change human affairs?*
3. *Does the present economic system encourage voluntary sharing?*

No vision of a divine economy is complete without a foundation of justice.

"We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Foundations of World Unity, p. 43; and Star of the West, p. 230.

"Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest

throughout human affairs, and human equality will be universally established. …

"The essence of the matter is that divine justice will become manifest in human conditions and affairs, and all mankind will find comfort and enjoyment in life."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 132.

Questions:

1. *What are the effects of justice on human souls?*
2. *How can justice provide comfort for all?*

PART THREE

In this section, Writings on some specific economic topics will be presented:

CAPITALISM

There is a strong belief in the world that capitalism is a solution to all economic problems. However, we know that no system is perfect, whether it be capitalism or communism, if the foundation is not built on divine principles.

"There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism; its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made."

-Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, p. 20.

Questions:

1. *Is the present form of capitalism perfect?*
2. *What adjustments have to be made to capitalism?*

AGRICULTURE—THE FARMER

"To solve this problem [welfare and well-being] we must begin with the farmer; there will we lay a foundation for system and order because the peasant class and the agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service." -

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Foundations of World Unity, p. 39.

"The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes inasmuch as

the number of farmers is greater than all the classes, many many times greater. Therefore, it is fitting that the economic problem be first solved with the farmer, for the farmer is the first active agent in the body politic."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: Lights of Guidance, p. 548. (Extract from a Tablet to an individual believer, 4 October 1912, translation corrected in the World Centre, December 1985)

Questions:

1. *Why are the farmer's services more important than the services of other workers?*
2. *Why should we start with the farmer?*

WORK AND PROFESSION

"Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, especially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh, a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer to God, and enables us to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work."

-Shoghi Effendi: Directives of the Guardian, p. 83. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of USA and Canada, dated 22 March 1937.)

"… Whatever the progress of the machinery may be, man will have always to toil in order to earn his living. Effort is an inseparable part of man's life. It may take different forms with the changing conditions of the world, but it will be always present as a necessary element in our earthly existence. Life is after all a struggle. Progress is attained through struggle, and without such a struggle life ceases to have a meaning; it

becomes even extinct. The progress of machinery has not made effort unnecessary. It has given it a new form, a new outlet."

-Shoghi Effendi: Lights of Guidance, p. 551. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, dated 26 December 1935.)

Questions:

1. *What purpose does work serve besides earning a livelihood?*
2. *Are rich people exempt from working?*
3. *How can work be a form of worship?*
4. *How can work bring us closer to God?*

Wages

"… The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability, and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources. This view seems to contradict the opinion of some modern economists. But the friends should have full confidence in the words of the Master, and should give preference to His statements over those voiced by our so-called modern thinkers."

-Shoghi Effendi: Lights of Guidance, p. 551. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, dated 26 December 1935.)

"…The workers could either be granted a wage that adequately meets their daily needs, as well as a right to a share in the revenues of the factory when they are injured, incapacitated, or unable to work, or else a wage could be set that allows the workers to both satisfy their daily needs and save a little for times of weakness and incapacity"

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, p. 317.

"Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the Divine law, employees should not be paid merely by wages. Nay, rather they should be partners in every work." *- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Bahá'í World, Vol. IV, p. 454.*

Questions:

1. *Should wages be equal?*
2. *Will people earning less be deprived of opportunities?*
3. *Can workers be partners with their employers?*

TAXATION

Once work is done and money is earned, then the question of taxation arises.

"We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples."

-Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 253; and The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 12.

'Each person in the community whose need is equal to his individual producing capacity shall be exempt from taxation. But if the income is greater than his needs, he must pay a tax until an adjustment is effected. That is to say, a man's capacity for production and his needs will be equalized and reconciled through taxation. If his production exceeds, he will pay a tax; if his necessities exceed his production, he shall receive an amount sufficient to equalize or adjust. Therefore, taxation will be proportionate to capacity and production, and there will be no poor in the community."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 217.

Questions:

1. *Should people be taxed equally?*
2. *Can graduated taxes help the poor?*
3. *Is it possible that some people will not pay tax in a divine economy?*

RETIREMENT AND PENSION

"As to the question of retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it."

-Shoghi Effendi: Directives of the Guardian, p. 83; Lights of Guidance, p. 626; and Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12. (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, 22 March 1937.)

"Even though you are 79 years old, that does not seem in your case to be any handicap; and in this Cause, as the Guardian has told us there is work for everyone of some sort, of whatever age he or she may be."

-Shoghi Effendi: Lights of Guidance, p. 626. (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, 23 August 1954. Cited by the Universal House of Justice, 14 December 1970.)

"The workers could either be granted a wage that adequately meets their daily needs, as well as a right to a share in the revenues of the factory when they are injured, incapacitated, or unable to work, or else a wage could be set that allows the workers to both satisfy their daily needs and save a little for times of weakness and incapacity." *-'Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, p.317*

Questions:

1. *How can workers get support when they become feeble or helpless?*

RATE OF INTEREST

Presently, governments and economists use interest rates as an important tool to regulate economic activities. However, there are economies in the world that do not agree with the idea of any interest (e.g. some Islamic countries).

'Most of the people are found to be in need of this matter; for if no interest be allowed, affairs (business) will be trammelled and obstructed. … A person is rarely found who would lend money to anyone upon the principle of 'Qar-i-hasan' (literally 'good loan', i.e. money advanced without interest and repaid at the pleasure of the borrower). Consequently, out of favour to the servants, We have appointed 'profit on money' to be current, among other business transactions which are in force among people. That is … it is allowable, lawful and pure to charge interest on money … but this matter must be conducted with moderation and justice. The Pen of Glory has withheld itself from laying down its limits, as a Wisdom from His Presence and as a convenience for His servants. We exhort the friends of God to act with fairness and justice, and in such a way that the mercy of His beloved ones, and their compassion, may be manifested toward each other. …

"The execution of these matters has been placed in charge of the men of the House of Justice, in order that they

may act in accordance with the exigencies of the time and with wisdom."

-Bahá'u'lláh: Quoted by J. E. Esselmont in Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, The Ethics of Wealth section, pp. 136–137.

Questions:

1. *What is a good loan?*
2. *What is the importance of interest rates?*
3. *Are you paying any interest? If yes, do you think the rate is fair?*

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

"The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

"… The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 204.

Questions:

1. *How can economic resources be used for the*

improvement of human life?

2. *To whom do the economic resources of the world belong?*
3. *Can economic resources be used to assist in the prolongation of human life?*

ECONOMIC BARRIERS

"That a narrow and brutal nationalism, which the post-war theory of self-determination has served to reinforce, has been chiefly responsible for the policy of high and prohibitive tariffs, so injurious to the healthy flow of international trade and to the mechanism of international finance, is a fact which few would venture to dispute." –

Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 35.

"A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labour definitely recognized; …"

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 41.

Questions:

1. *Do tariffs harm economic development?*
2. *Why are tariffs imposed?*
3. *Can you think of any country that is removing its economic barriers?*

World Currency

"… a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 203.

Questions:

1. *How can a universal system of currency, weights and measurements help mankind?*

PART FOUR

In the light of the Writings we have studied, it will now be easier to understand the vision of Bahá'u'lláh's world commonwealth.

"From every standpoint the world of humanity is undergoing a reformation. ... scientific ideas and theories are developing and advancing to meet a new range of phenomena; invention and discovery are penetrating hitherto unknown fields, revealing new wonders and hidden secrets of the material universe; industries have vastly wider scope and production; everywhere the world of mankind is in the throes of evolutionary activity indicating the passing of the old conditions and advent of the new age of reformation."

-'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 439.

"The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed."

-Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, para. 181, p. 85

"It is the superstructure of that self-same Order, attaining its full stature through the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth—the Kingdom of God on earth—which the Golden Age of that same Dispensation [Bahá'í] must, in the fullness of time, ultimately witness."

-Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 26.

Questions:

1. *What re-formation is the world of humanity*

undergoing?

2. *What has upset the world's equilibrium?*
3. *How will the new World Order revolutionize mankind?*
4. *Can you define the Bahá'í World Commonwealth.*

We have been assured that the advent of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth is inevitable. However, it is essential that mankind knows the stages of the process that he must pass through to reach that goal. Shoghi Effendi clearly explains:

" … the precautionary and defensive measures to be devised, co-ordinated, and carried out to counteract the full force of the inescapable attacks which the organized efforts of ecclesiastical organizations of various denominations will progressively launch and relentlessly pursue; and, last but not least, the multitudinous issues that must be faced, the obstacles that must be overcome, and the responsibilities that must be assumed, to enable a sore-tried Faith to pass through the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Bahá'í state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the world-wide Bahá'í Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Bahá'u'lláh."

-Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 14-15.

"This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve centre of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 203.

Questions:

1. *What power will animate the Bahá'í World Commonwealth?*
2. *What will be the responsibility of the members of the World Legislature?*
3. *What body will have the final verdict in all disputes?*
4. *What will act as the nerve centre of the world civilization?*

"And as the Bahá'í Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future super-state."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 7.

"The Declaration of Trust [and By-Laws of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States,] … stands in its final form as a worthy and faithful exposition of the constitutional basis of the Bahá'í communities in every land, foreshadowing the final emergence of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future."

-Shoghi Effendi: Bahá'í Administration, pp. 134–135.

Haifa, Israel, the "… permanent world Administrative Centre of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, destined never to be separated from, and to function in proximity of, the Spiritual Centre of that Faith [Bahá'í] …."

-Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 348.

Questions:

1. *When will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power?*
2. *What will act as the constitutional basis for the Bahá'í communities of the world?*
3. *Where will the permanent world Administrative and Spiritual Centre of the Bahá'í Commonwealth be?*

The last question! Who has the bounty of assisting the establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's World Commonwealth? Shoghi Effendi gave us this answer:

"To us, the 'generation of the half-light', living at a time which may be designated as the period of the incubation of the World Commonwealth envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, has been assigned a task whose high privilege we can never sufficiently appreciate, and the arduousness of which we can as yet but dimly recognize."

-Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 168–169.