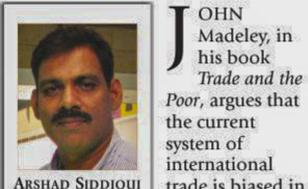


How fair is fair trade?



JOHNN Madeley, in his book *Trade and the Poor*, argues that the current system of international trade is biased in favour of wealthy northern nations. It was British economist John Stuart Mill who said, "Colonies should not be thought of as civilisations or countries at all, but as agricultural establishments whose sole purpose was to supply the larger community to which they belong." Today, in a similar approach, international financial institutions reinforce the emphasis on export driven economies in developing nations. Countries who receive loans from them are typically encouraged or required to gear their economies toward export of commodities. Different types of trade regulations, including tariffs and the lack of capital, make it difficult for developing nations to move from simple commodity production to a more diverse economy. Madeley writes, "While most primary commodities are allowed into the markets of industrialised nations without restrictions, the doors of the North are closed to all but a comparatively small amount of Third World manufactured goods". These barriers are designed to hamper competition between industrialised and Third World workers. Developing country governments, burdened with heavy debt and encouraged by western dominated lending institutions to reduce social spending and end agriculture subsidies, are unlikely candidates to provide much needed investment capital. Consequently, capital-intensive manufacturing is very difficult to establish. Farming and then handicraft production make up the largest sources of income for rural producers in the Third World. However, farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to earn an adequate living. In addition

to seeing low prices for commodities, we see the withdrawal of government price supports, technical and other advisory programmes, and virtually all state-sponsored protection for agriculture. This has happened in the face of direct and often inequitable competition from imports. Changes in banking systems and an end to state support for agriculture credit have also meant a rise in exploitative loans and the consequent privatisation of land via forfeitures. In other cases, land is being abandoned, with migration away from rural areas to the cities being the sole option. These circumstances have led to greater reliance on craft production for much needed income in rural areas. As Littrell and Dickson write, "Shifts to craft production are closely linked with dramatic declines in access to land as a source of income. Family holdings have suffered through subdivision, overexploitation, soil erosion, and adverse climatic conditions". However, artisans, like small farmers, face serious challenges to participation in the global economy. Lack of capital, distribution channels, an adequate transportation infrastructure, and market information regarding demand, pricing, and country specific regulations all contribute to making entering global markets almost impossible. There have been various efforts to find alternatives to this unequal trade regime. Alternative trade puts special emphasis on improved quality of life for struggling producers in non-industrialised nations. In their book *Social Responsibility in the Global Market: Fair Trade of Cultural Products*, Mary Ann Littrell and Marsha Ann Dickson describe the ideological focus of paying "as much as possible rather than as little as possible". This is in sharp contrast to mainstream business. The authors describe an emphasis on social responsibility where careful consideration is given to how business transactions will affect issues including natural resources, cultural traditions, working

conditions, worker income, and business sustainability. The key to alternative trade is a sense of 'fairness' in the exchange between producer and buyer. Alternative traders believe that through producing various goods and selling them at fair prices, Third World producers can finance their own rise from poverty and in the process, build skills, confidence, and self-esteem. Despite a diverse mixture of fair trade throughout the world, some

promotes community health services, education, affordable housing, and influencing area politics. Empowerment of individuals, especially women, is another means of improving living standards. The most important role of the fair trader may be in helping small-scale producers to get organised, to become a stable group and to join up with other local groups. Second, the fair trader must provide information which will almost certainly not be

producers is by providing credit. By providing credit at reasonable rates of interest and by paying 50 percent when orders are made, fair trade helps producers make necessary business decisions, which affect growth and efficiency. The shrinking viability of farming has led to more reliance on the craft industry. The effect of this has been described aptly in the book *Crafts in the World Market: The Impact of Global Exchange on American Artisans*, edited

with these concerns is through the use of cultural advisers or design consultants, who determine how traditional methods can be used to meet consumer demand. Fair traders take special care to ensure environmental impacts of craft production and farming. For example, fair trade encourages the use of natural dyes, which are locally available and do not negatively impact the environment (*Social Responsibility in the Global Market: Fair Trade of Cultural Products*). In the eyes of many, alternative trade offers a creative and efficient means of improving life for rural producers in the Third World. A common criticism of development efforts is that they are reactionary and are unable to challenge basic structures that are believed to be the root of much poverty and suffering. Are fair traders justified in saying that they provide a 'fair' system, and implying or stating outright that others do not? They themselves are not in full agreement on what the standards of 'fairness' are. Some fair traders pay whatever the asking price is. Others make sure to pay higher than the local average. A reasonable split of profits between the retailer and producer is another used criterion. What if the price paid is not enough to supply a healthy standard of living for the worker, is it still fair? These are some questions worth considering even now. Fair traders, however, are working for greater equity in international trade, for better training conditions, and for securing the rights of marginalised producers and workers. They believe that in order for trade to be sustainable, social, environmental and economic costs of goods and services must be taken into account. As for the disputes, we need to remember that we live in an interdependent world, where regardless of our preference, we will be influenced by each other. The writer is Knowledge Management Coordinator, CARE Bangladesh.



SOURCE: WORDSINTHEBUCKET.COM

shared goals permeate the majority of organisations. The primary method fair trade organisations utilise in their effort to help small producers in non-industrialised nations is providing valuable income through the purchase of goods. Another advantage of cooperatives is that they are able to pool earnings and invest in areas such as education, health care, infrastructure development, and so on. This trade mobilisation also

available locally - about prices, markets, styling, packaging, quality control, health and safety standards, new uses for old products, transport and shipping and tools, machines and plant for processing - all based on an open and fair basis. Fair trade seeks ways to add value to producer products. This includes things like "manufacturing garments from cotton, furniture from timber. Another way fair trade assist

by June Nash, which states, "As a result of the increase in price of raw materials, they [artisans] must either charge more or reduce the quality of their work which leads to dilution of their cultural methods that make them unique and thus marketable." Similar problems have occurred from a flood of cheaply made, machine produced crafts, which are in competition with handmade products. One way fair trade has dealt

PROJECT SYNDICATE

A long way from Comey to Watergate



PRESIDENT Donald J. Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey is unprecedented, as is much of what Trump has undertaken as president. Despite similarities with President Richard M. Nixon's infamous "Saturday Night Massacre" 44 years ago, during the Watergate scandal, the political situations are utterly different. In October 1973, Nixon, waiting until a weekend, ordered the dismissal of a newly appointed special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, who had issued a subpoena demanding that Nixon hand over secretly recorded - and, as would become clear, highly damning - White House tapes. Nixon's defiance was direct, and the result was disastrous. Attorney General Elliot Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William French Smith resigned in protest rather than carry out the president's order. A federal judge ruled the firing of Cox illegal. Public opinion polls showed, for the first time, a plurality of Americans favouring Nixon's impeachment. It was the beginning of the end. Congressmen introduced impeachment resolutions. Nixon was

forced to appoint a new special prosecutor. The drama thickened for another ten months, until the Supreme Court unanimously ordered Nixon to surrender the tapes. A few days after that, Nixon resigned rather than face certain impeachment and removal from office. By contrast, unless the stars realign, Trump's firing of Comey may mark the beginning of nothing, or at least of nothing bad for the president. Trump, like Nixon, may well be guilty of grave impeachable offenses - even graver offenses than Nixon's. Trump, like Nixon, may have feared that unless he fired the person in charge of investigating him, some terrible revelation would be forthcoming. But, even if all this is so, Trump, unlike Nixon, may very well get away with it. The two events differ in many ways, including their timing. By the time Nixon fired Cox, the Watergate affair had been building for far longer than the allegations about Trump and Russia have, so nerves had been rubbed raw. The main differences, though, are political. In Nixon's time, there were solid adversarial Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress, and there were also some Republicans, especially in the Senate, who put concerns about the Constitution ahead of concerns for their party. The Senate appointed a special select committee, headed by Democrat Sam Ervin and Republican

Howard Baker, which heard testimony and gathered official evidence that led to the indictment of 40 administration officials and the conviction of several top White House aides, as well as to Nixon's resignation. Today's Republican congressional majorities, however, have seemed singularly devoted to slowing and narrowing any serious inquiry into the thoroughly substantiated reports of Russian efforts to throw the 2016 election to Trump. Although there has been talk, even from some Republicans, about appointing a select committee or a special prosecutor to look into the allegations about the Russians and the Trump campaign, the resistance has been extraordinary compared to 1973. Based on the events of last week, Republicans evidently would rather rail against insider leaks and, yes, Hillary Clinton's email server than

inquire into the White House's insouciance about former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's alarming links to Russia and Turkey. Without a significant shift, the congressional investigations will continue to remain confined to the standing House and Senate committees, where they will likely remain understaffed and under-motivated. Then there is the press. In 1973, dogged reporting by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the Washington Post kept the Watergate story alive, after most news outlets had dropped it. Once their reporting gained traction, the rest of the press picked up the scandal and kept up the pressure on the Nixon White House. Today, Trump can count on the fervent support of propaganda operations that Nixon could only have prayed for, including the unabashedly polemical Fox News and Breitbart News, as well as the

countless bloggers (and, for that matter, Russian-controlled cyberbots) pumping out pro-Trump propaganda. As I write this, one Fox commentator after another is parroting the White House's absurd claim that Trump fired Comey because of the terrible things the FBI director did to Clinton during the campaign. One almost expects the network's biggest star, Sean Hannity, to start leading on-air anti-Comey chants of "Lock Him Up!" The effect on anyone who recalls Trump's cheerleading for Comey last October - followed by the red-hatted crowds' ritualistic baying to jail 'crooked Hillary' - is psychedelic. But fans of Fox News usually believe what the channel reports. And while Nixon had his future Svengali, a young Roger Ailes, behind him, Fox News and the rest were still two decades away. It is possible, of course, that Trump's firing of Comey will push some Republicans to decide that enough is enough and follow Baker's example. The early responses have been mixed: although Republican Senators Jeff Flake, John McCain, and Ben Sasse have expressed varying degrees of disappointment, normally independent-minded Senators Susan Collins and Lindsay Graham have backed Trump's decision. There is always a chance, in such a volatile climate, that deals will be broken, witnesses will flip, and facts

will emerge that are every bit as incriminating as the evidence that felled Nixon. International developments might also awaken some Republicans to the magnitude of the Russian offensive on Western democracies, an offensive which, in the wake of the French elections, feels like an undeclared war. For the moment, though, there is no reason to see Trump's firing of Comey as a re-run of Nixon's "Saturday Night Massacre," or any other event in American political history. The president may be acting as if he has something terrible to hide, just as Nixon did, but that won't be enough under the circumstances to cause the exposure of whatever it may be. Ironically, Trump, the self-declared outsider who lost the popular vote and squeaked into office by winning the Electoral College, finds himself, for the moment, in some ways more protected than the party man Nixon, who won the 1972 election by overwhelming popular as well as electoral margins. It may be unsettling to acknowledge, but history is not repeating itself, no matter how tragic or farcical things might appear. Trump may yet fall, but a lot will have to change. The writer is Professor of History at Princeton University and the author, most recently, of *The Politicians and the Egalitarians*. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2017. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

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A WORD A DAY

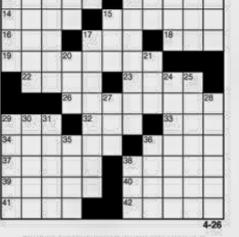


DIASPORA
noun
the dispersion of any people from their original homeland.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Minor mistake
 - 6 Brewer's need
 - 10 Mistake
 - 11 Severity
 - 12 Make amends
 - 13 Sioux language
 - 14 Dance moves
 - 15 Texas capital
 - 16 Mex. neighbour
 - 17 Maximum amount
 - 18 Purpose
 - 19 Storage rooms
 - 22 In the neighbourhood
 - 23 Minor argument
 - 26 Launch pad sights
 - 29 Pendulum path
 - 32 Maiden name
- DOWN**
- 1 Preparatory stage
 - 2 Craftsman
 - 3 Fuel gas
 - 4 Some heirs
 - 5 Before, to bards
 - 6 Fail to see
 - 7 Fancy marble
 - 8 Enter a password,
 - 9 Pollster's find
 - 11 Casino game
 - 15 Boxing great
 - 17 Music pro
 - 20 Price place
 - 21 Knight's title
 - 24 Fellow with an ax
 - 25 Suspicion
 - 27 "The Matrix" hero
 - 28 Shows malice toward
 - 29 Rework
 - 30 Cowboy contest
 - 31 It's worth ten sawbucks
 - 35 "-- bien!"
 - 36 Fred and Wilma's pet
 - 38 Set Fire to

BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



BY MORT WALKER



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

