

Practical Economic Suggestions for Everyday Use

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It is becoming more evident that the present economic system is dying out and cannot meet the needs of humanity. The gap between rich and poor is getting wider and wider, which has increased the suffering of the masses. The solutions that can heal it have been ignored. It is time to try a different course of action. We know that the Baha'i economic system will occur when the transformation of man and society has been accomplished and with it man's awareness of his spiritual station and his destiny are realized. He will have subordinated his animal nature and will therefore behave less selfishly. At this time it is almost impossible to imagine a society that will have spiritually grown to that extent. Since we do not have the Baha'i economic system in place as yet, we may think that we cannot do anything to bring it about and we must wait for its arrival. But by introducing more of the spiritual qualities in our economic lives we are laying the foundation for such a system.

Abdu'l-Baha explains the nature of economics, and the remedy for its problems:

The secrets of the whole economic question are Divine in nature, and are concerned with the world of the heart and spirit. In the Baha'i Teachings this is most completely explained, and without the consideration of the Baha'i Teachings, it is impossible to bring about a better state.¹

Shoghi Effendi sheds more light on this:

...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.²

Our participation in economic activities 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 our economic actions should reflect our spiritual beliefs.

Nevertheless, there are certainly practices a Baha'i would eschew, such as dishonesty in one's transactions or the economic exploitation of others. Faithful adherence to the divine admonitions demands there be no contradiction between one's economic conduct and one's beliefs as a Baha'i. By applying in one's life those principles of the Faith that relate to fairness and equity, a single soul can uphold a standard far above the low threshold by which the world measures itself...³

The following suggestions are intended to be clear and straightforward in order to encourage you to participate in economic actions with increased awareness. They are meant for everyone, whether or not you are knowledgeable about economics. Hopefully, you may find these suggestions useful and they will empower you to act and also help you realize what an amazing power we have as Baha'is to transform society and bring about the "fundamental change" as Shoghi Effendi stated.

- Focus on the important questions of life such as "who am I", "what is the purpose of my life" and "how much is enough"
- Live a simple life, a life like Abdu'l-Baha's
- Do not lie about a product
- Pay a fair price, even if it's more than the market price
- Share profits with employees, provide medical coverage and pay fair wages
- Be honest in your dealings
- Provide the best quality of service
- Make customer satisfaction a goal
- Look for opportunities to extend help to co-workers and competitors
- Be content with a reasonable margin of profit
- Update yourself with the latest information in your field
- Be punctual in business and other meetings
- When lending money, ask for a reasonable interest rate

- Resist the consumer mentality
- Be knowledgeable about advertising and read between the lines
- Spiritually justify every expenditure
- Avoid wastage in the workplace
- Protect the environment
- Increase your economic and business knowledge
- Volunteer whenever possible in the spirit of service
- Give to the Baha'i Fund
- Adopt a financial goal in life
- Avoid debt
- Create a habit of saving
- Spread the word about honest and fair businesses and professionals
- Don't buy the latest models if the old ones are in working condition
- Avoid "keeping up with the Jones" or accumulating material goods for the sake of appearances
- Support the concept of one world currency
- Don't follow society's shortcuts with regards to taxation
- Make honest insurance claims
- Make fair expense claims at work
- Do not abuse sick leave
- Report when you have been undercharged or paid too much
- Resist society's corrupt practices such as bribery
- Regard service first and profit second
- Participate in social and economic projects
- Do not support the idea of the end justifying the means
- Be honest in a job interview
- Be truthful in filling out forms or tenders
- Do not sacrifice your values in order to get a promotion or contract
- Use good quality material in production and no harmful ingredients
- Protect the poor and underprivileged
- Give with a sense of sharing rather than a sense of loss
- Create a consciousness that your welfare, wellbeing and happiness depend on the welfare, wellbeing and happiness of every poor, needy and underprivileged person in the world

- Spend as much energy in becoming detached from material possessions as you spend getting them
- Remind yourself of your spiritual destination while pursuing financial goals
- Live the Baha'i Life
- Be considerate of the needs of those who rent from you
- Practice the virtues
- Manage your insistent self or ego
- Be more vocal in a loving way about social issues

These ideas are an abridged version of a chapter in my book, [Economics of the Future Begins Today](#). What do you think of these suggestions? Are they practical? Have you implemented any of them? They may seem overwhelming and you may not be able to practice all those that apply to your situation. But you have to remember that it is not about the results, it is about sincere and wholehearted efforts. It is the pure intention that counts.

1. Abdu'l-Baha, *The Baha'i World*, Volume 1V, p. 448 []
2. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 26, 1935, *Lights of Guidance*, p.551

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3. The Universal House of Justice, *Ridvan Message 2012* []