

and of their lack of control over WIPO's agenda. These types of problems will undoubtedly be one of the largest stumbling blocks for any collective action to be taken on alternative financing, for the governance structure is weighted against those countries whose citizens (in the case of WIPO) contribute the greatest amount. Do member states actually want United Nations bureaucrats to have more independent decision-making ability? One would expect that G7 countries (the most likely principal payers in a variety of schemes) would not be particularly interested in ceding more control to the Secretariat (which frequently has a G77 agenda). Former Canadian Ambassador to the UN and President of the Security Council, William H. Barton, makes several telling points about UN financing:

*The idea that the UN should have an independent source of revenue has a superficial attraction. But governments would not want the UN to be completely independent of their power to exercise control by way of the power of the purse...But to the extent that such a levy did exist, I am afraid that all that would happen is that governments would reduce their contributions accordingly.<sup>9</sup>*

#### **Are the Possibilities for Action Endless?**

The options which present themselves under the broad heading of alternative financing are indeed varied. If member states believe that the UN is an institution worth saving and can accept the difficult philosophical challenge that alternative financing represents, then action may be possible. What is required at the present time, if any initiative is to be effective (i.e., boost UN finances), supportable (meet with approval from member states and the Secretariat) and workable (a concrete program with a fixed term for implementation), is to focus on a small number of programs.

From the discussion above, it is apparent that there are obvious problems with the Tobin tax or any of its derivatives on both theoretical and economic efficiency grounds. However, there will be considerable attention given to the proposals resulting from the UNDP Policy Centre's forthcoming paper. If enough political will is mustered, and member states can be convinced that the UN needs its own source of financing, then this venerable idea may still have some staying power.

From a political perspective, both at the UN and in member states, there is probably more mileage in assessing the various proposals for taxing the global

---

<sup>9</sup> "Commentary on Recommendations to the Commission on Global Governance", in United Nations Reform: Looking Ahead After Fifty Years, Eric Fawcett and Hanna Newcombe Eds., Science for Peace, Toronto, 1995.