

# Inter Pares

B U L L E T I N

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## To Remake the World: *Canada and Global Justice*

Ask Canadians about the role of Canada in the world, and generally you will get a response that is positive and uplifting. We tend to believe that the actions of the Canadian government, and of Canadians in general, are benevolent and humane – a constant force for decency, human dignity, and the global common good. Our national self-image is one of civilized good will and generosity.

The symbols of such benevolence are everywhere, profiled dramatically by the Canadian government, and by Canadian voluntary organizations – including Inter Pares – who highlight Canadian action in the world to raise funds from the public.

And there is much to reinforce this self-image. We see ourselves at the forefront of the promotion of children's rights internationally, of the much-lauded international action to eradicate landmines, and of diplomatic efforts to promote peace and reconstruct war-torn societies. We congratulate ourselves for the generosity of our humanitarian assistance, for our support to the struggle to eradicate debilitating disease worldwide, or the apparent openness with which we welcome refugees fleeing repression and war in their homelands.

It is a comforting image. Yet, compared to what we have – which most of us consider a birthright – what Canada offers the world is a mere pittance: largesse without sacrifice. What we give back to the world – for example through overseas development assistance – is a tiny proportion of the wealth Canadians take from the world with little thought to the human and ecological cost, or the pressing ethical dilemmas concerning who is paying these costs. Meanwhile most of us enjoy security and opportunity that are staggering when compared to the conditions of deprivation in which the majority of people presently live.

This is not to say that Canada and Canadians do nothing good and right. Of course we do. But while

we contribute to poorer countries, what we offer is woefully inadequate to the scale of human need in the world, and absurdly below our means. While we participate in peacebuilding exercises, and promote respect for human rights and the security of the individual, Canada's foreign policy often is in clear concert with the very forces that promote militarism and repression around the globe. Canada's complicity with the global trade in military arms is direct and lucrative. Our political and economic ties with some of the world's most vicious regimes have belied Canada's commitment to democracy and human rights, and undermined the moral force of our efforts when we have tried to stand on principle in times of crisis and transition. Twenty-five years of unquestioning support for the murderous Suharto regime in Indonesia, now brought down by a courageous democracy movement, is one ignoble example. And Canada's complicity with the interests and foreign policies of the United States often undermines the very principle of rights and democracy that our country professes.

In terms of domestic policy, Canada's image as a haven for refugees is deserved when compared with the bitter record of most industrial nations.

But the few thousands allowed to stay in Canada every year cannot be a cause for pride when tens of millions of refugees and displaced people languish in camps and slums around the world. And of course, the number of jobless and homeless in our own society increases daily, as does that grimmest of statistics, child poverty.

Increasingly, Canadians are becoming aware of the gap between how we see ourselves and the real limitations of our own actions, and the actions of our government, in Canada and in the world. And many Canadians have begun to challenge the role Canada plays in the world, and to promote actions and strategies that reflect more profoundly the values of universal social justice that underlie the various international conventions that Canada has signed and promoted in the past 50 years – most prominently, the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This *Bulletin* reflects on these realities, and highlights some collective efforts by Canadians, young and old, to bring our action as global citizens more in line with the human values that we promote, and the ethical vision of global justice that we share.



Left hand photo: Dominic Morissette

## A Summit of Solidarity

In April, Canada will host 34 Heads of State in Québec City at the Summit of the Americas, where they will debate

### Canadian Council for International Cooperation

Canadians express their commitment to global justice through hundreds of non-profit and charitable organizations across the country. People of all ages contribute time and money to organizations that carry out a wide range of activity in Canada and throughout the world. These organizations include religious and secular development NGOs, professional associations, trade unions, and citizen's groups, and are a diverse and dynamic element of our society. For over thirty years the Canadian Council for International Cooperation has been at the centre of the collaborative efforts by these organizations to make a difference in Canada and in the world.

The CCIC has a membership of over one hundred organizations. Working with a staff team based in Ottawa, this diverse group collaborates to carry out research, conduct public information campaigns and coordinate efforts to shape new models for world development. The CCIC also advocates with the Canadian government for national and international policies in the interest of global justice. In recent years, CCIC members have united around the **in common** Agenda to End Global Poverty.

The **in common** agenda was developed by the Council to provide a framework for collective action to work more effectively towards the eradication of poverty. The ten point agenda highlights areas of concern emerging through the work of CCIC members, such as promoting food security, human rights, gender equity, sustainable development, corporate responsibility, and citizen participation. Through the **in common** campaign, the members of CCIC assert publicly that ending poverty is a moral imperative and a practical possibility.

Inter Pares has been an active member of CCIC for over two decades. We are committed to continuing this collaboration with other organizations to strengthen Canada's contribution to global justice and peace.

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an action plan to strengthen democracy, promote prosperity and fulfill human potential in the hemisphere. Between the lines, however, the core agenda being discussed is the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), in which our governments see the relationship among the people of the Americas as essentially commercial.

To challenge this limited agenda, a People's Summit has been organized by scores of organizations from Canada, the United States and Latin America. Born of our common lived history, the alliances among these organizations have emerged from a recognition of our affiliation, and the desire to engage with governments to promote a different, more people-oriented, vision of our future.

Common Frontiers, a Canadian coalition of international development agencies, human rights organizations, churches, and unions, is working closely with its Quebec counterpart, *Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale*, to monitor the progress of the government negotiations for the creation of the FTAA. Both coalitions are members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), a multi-sector group of over 400 organizations from all over the Americas. On behalf of the HSA, they are presiding over the organization of a People's Summit, to be held parallel to the official Summit.

Common Frontiers, *Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale*, and the Hemispheric Social Alliance have joined forces in the "Release the texts" campaign, advocating transparency and public consultation in the current

negotiations. The HAS document, "Alternatives for the Americas", is the result of a vast hemispheric consultation process, and will anchor the various proposals coming from citizen's groups that promote development which serves the people of all our countries, especially the most vulnerable.

The Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) is also contributing to raising public awareness with its focus on trade and poverty – a connection too often masked by the alleged universal benefits of free trade. In Québec City, representatives of many Latin American countries, as well as Canadians, will testify to the impoverishment and growing marginalization of their people, the destruction of local economies and the environment, and the increasing fragility of food security – all consequences of deregulated trade.

Several thematic fora are being organized for the People's Summit. Among others, *La Ligue des droits et libertés du Québec* will lead a forum on human rights. The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace is facilitating one on agrarian issues, and one on communications. *Solidarité populaire Québec* is focusing on poverty and the disengagement of the State from social welfare.

All of these activities provide an opportunity to debate crucial challenges, both for Canadians and for our colleagues in the South, and to open a dialogue to ensure that our future is shaped by the needs and aspirations of all the citizens of the Americas.

## Africa Canada Forum

Many Canadian NGOs are active on the African continent, supporting the efforts of civil society organizations to promote local development, citizens' participation, democracy and human rights. Over the past couple of years, some of the people working in these organizations have begun to examine their work in the context of the increasing levels of poverty and conflict in many parts of Africa.

Last May, a small group of NGOs, including Inter Pares, invited colleagues

from other Canadian organizations to reflect on the issues and challenges they face and to create a shared agenda for promoting long-term development and social justice in Africa. Africa Canada Forum 2000 brought together over 30 people for three days of reflection and discussion about their work as Canadian development practitioners and social justice activists. These discussions led participants to launch an ongoing process of reflection and collaborative action that has expanded to

## The Energy of Solidarity

For more than a decade, the movement Tools for Peace/Outils de Paix profoundly influenced international solidarity in Canada. Created in the early 1980s, this network of thousands of individuals accompanied the Nicaraguan people in their attempt to re-build their country. In Canada, nearly 130 volunteer committees collected donations and goods that were shipped to community groups in Nicaragua. During the 1990s, the end of the revolution in Nicaragua and the lifting of the U.S. embargo gradually eroded the activities of most of the Tools for Peace/Outils de Paix committees.

But a group of people in the Maritimes have maintained their local Tools for Peace committee, as their way of continuing to act in solidarity with Nicaraguans working for social justice. Over the years, members have organized sessions to raise awareness about Nicaragua among local solidarity groups, at Dalhousie University, and in the media, often making use of tours of representatives of projects supported in Nicaragua.

Every spring, the group enthusiastically organizes a flea market to cover the costs of tours and mailings. In November, they send a newsletter to over 200 people in the Atlantic region, explaining the current Nicaraguan context and the projects supported with the donations collected. For more than 10 years, these donations have been sent to Inter Pares to support some of our programs in Nicaragua. These programs have included management training for the workers of coffee cooperatives, and a development

include colleagues and partners from Africa.

The Africa Canada Forum is now an official working group of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. Members are examining how to more effectively nurture action for peace and justice in Africa. This includes a critical look at the images of Africa that Canadian NGOs promote through their fundraising appeals, and advocacy with the Canadian government for policy changes concerning peacebuilding, trade and investment, food security, democratization, and poverty eradication.

and support program for organizations in the municipalities of Pueblo Nuevo and Esquipulas.

In 1998, the impact of Hurricane Mitch briefly revived international interest in Nicaragua. Since then, Peggy and John Matthews, the Committee's spokespersons, are seeking to rejuvenate solidarity work in Atlantic Canada. They also hope to mobilize Dalhousie University students, and the general public, and to re-ignite media interest in the Nicaraguan reality.



The Tools for Peace-Maritimes Committee

The energy and perseverance of Tools for Peace-Maritimes provides inspiring evidence that when Canadians mobilize, their solidarity and commitment can endure for many years.

## MiningWatch Canada: *Supportive citizen action*

A few years ago, Inter Pares' counterparts began to express concern about the activities of Canadian mining companies in their communities. In the Philippines, farmers and fishers sought compensation and clean-up of a disastrous mine tailings spill. In Nicaragua, exploration activities in a fragile rain-forest were being opposed by municipal councils in the area. And counterparts in the Peruvian highlands requested assistance to resist Canadian mineral exploration which was expanding into communal lands over the protests of indigenous communities.

In response, Inter Pares turned to environmental and aboriginal activists here in Canada. MiningWatch Canada grew out of discussions among social justice and environmental organizations concerned about the effects of mining on the environment, and the livelihoods and safety of people and communities in mining areas. Established early in 1999, MiningWatch brings together environmental groups, aboriginal organizations, legal specialists and social justice activists from across Canada to help communities respond to the threats posed by mining policies and practices in Canada and around the world.

Since its inception, MiningWatch has assisted communities in the Philip-

pinas in their efforts to force Placer Dome to take responsibility for the environmental and health disaster created by its activities. In cooperation with Canadian Friends of Burma, MiningWatch supported a major study on mining in Burma, which brought to public attention serious human rights violations and environmental destruction. Here in Canada, MiningWatch provides support to aboriginal groups and mining communities for technical and legal assistance in their negotiations with mining companies and governments on health and environmental concerns. MiningWatch is also collaborating with another of Inter Pares' long-time counterparts, Third World Network-Africa, to develop a global network of communities affected by mining, assisting them to acquire the technical capacity to monitor mining operations, and to hold companies and governments accountable for the impact of mining operations on their lives and livelihoods.

Inter Pares will continue to work with MiningWatch in its efforts to uphold the right of people to decide whether and under what conditions mineral resource extraction takes place on their lands, and to insist on the obligation of government to regulate the industry in the interests of local livelihoods and public safety.

## Restoring a vision of Canadian aid

Over its 35-year history, the Canadian government's aid agency, CIDA, has been a pioneer in international development. CIDA has helped initiate development programs which have become models for other countries to follow. CIDA has also been a world leader in promoting issues such as women's rights and poverty reduction programming.

CIDA's reputation for leadership and innovation, however, is at risk. Successive governments have resisted attempts within CIDA to develop a clearer, values-led mission and mandate. Instead, CIDA's role has been undermined by competing international trade and foreign policy priorities and the political expedencies of the day.

Like many other government agencies, the activities of CIDA are increasingly becoming privatized – turned over to the private sector – and its human development agenda giving way to trade and commercial interests.

Canada's bilateral aid program to Asia is a case in point. In recent years, Canadian policy interests in Asia have centered on trade promotion, despite the fact that Asia is home to the world's greatest number of impoverished people. In 1998-99, the largest category of Canadian assistance to Asia were activities aimed at “enabling private sector development”, and almost half of

the aid program was delivered by Canadian private sector contractors. CIDA support for activities most likely to have a direct benefit on the poor – such as education, health and nutrition – accounted for less than 15 percent of total bilateral expenditures.

This focus on the private sector not only applies in Asia. CIDA maintains a branch, known as CIDA Inc., specifically devoted to assist Canadian corporations develop commercial activities in the South. CIDA Inc. is an important source of support to Canadian companies operating internationally in the mining and resource extraction sector. At the same time that CIDA is supporting these activities, Canadian NGOs are being asked for help by local communities who are resisting the encroachment of their regions by many of the same corporate interests.

There may be a role for private sector contractors in some components of Canada's aid program. But development programming is complex and long-term, requiring commitment, relationships and knowledge that cannot be acquired in short-term contracts. Moreover, rarely does the private sector, in Canada or elsewhere, have the mission or values to challenge the social and political conditions that maintain poverty.

Inter Pares supports the proposal of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) to focus Canada's aid program on the elimination of poverty. The CCIC paper, “A Call to End Global Poverty”, advocates that at least 60 percent of the CIDA budget be devoted to programs that directly improve conditions and rights for people living in poverty.

For CIDA to regain its reputation in international development, it must be allowed to re-assert the primacy of its social development goals. There are some recent promising signs that this is occurring. The Government of Canada must support this reorientation. Nothing less is sufficient for Canada to reclaim its place as a leader in the international development field.

## Globalization — *Opportunity or Threat?*

*The False Dilemma*, published by ZED Books in association with Inter Pares, demonstrates how the economic framework of neo-liberalism and globalization is forcing a false dilemma on the nations of the South. Writing with clarity, wit and abundant empirical evidence, Oscar Ugarteche argues that the belief that nations must integrate their economies into the global economy by means of export-led growth or risk economic marginalisation and stagnation, runs counter to the evidence of economic history. Nor is it inevitable that the state and market must be in diametric opposition. The fundamental question, explains Dr. Ugarteche, is not *whether* to export, but *why?*. Arguing that the ultimate goal of any country's economic policy should be the development of the internal market and the pursuit of social well-being, Professor Ugarteche lays out the case for a strong, innovative state that mediates private interests with the larger national interest. The South must reject the false logic that there is no

choice, and recognise instead that the real folly is to integrate with the global market without developing the internal market.

*The False Dilemma* is written by Oscar Ugarteche, a former professor of international finance at the Catholic University of Peru, author of numerous books on foreign debt and development issues, and an adviser to Jubilee 2000. *The False Dilemma* was translated by Mark Fried.

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