

Committees

COMMITTEE FOR EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

We can make poverty history

Larry Bryan, Kimball Finigan and Ernie Hilland are members of the Committee for Equality and Social Action. They attended the Make Poverty History Conference organized by CoDevelopment Canada as part of its 20th anniversary celebration.

The members of the 2005/2006 Committee for Equality and Social Action are:

- Maureen Ashfield (Chair)
- Ernie Hilland
- Larry Bryan
- Kimball Finigan
- Thalia Vesterback
- Pam Bush (Staff)

For information on this committee, contact Pam Bush at 604/439.0994 or 1.800/663.2017.

Make poverty history: a simple statement that raises complex issues. What makes poverty? Where is poverty? What can we do about poverty?

If we are going to make poverty history we must understand the causes of poverty. Poverty is most prevalent in the south or developing countries.

Developing countries are often rich in resources, but the majority of the population live in poverty or extreme poverty.

It started with colonization, which was a way to extract wealth from the colonized countries at their expense. Then as colonies gained their independence it was perpetuated with trade agreements.

Following WWII, developed countries started to "help" developing countries with aid and loans. The way in which the aid was given only served to deepen the poverty.

The Make Poverty History conference topics were:

- More and better aid
- Fair trade
- Debt relief
- End child poverty

More and better aid

What do we mean by "More and better aid"? The United Nations called on countries to adopt its Millennium Development Goals, and Canada agreed.

The target for foreign aid is 0.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. Canada is currently at 0.34 per cent: that is down from a high of about 0.5 per cent two decades ago. That explains "more" aid. So, what is "better" aid?

In many cases aid is "tied" to a specific project or to specific conditions being met.

Say for example the project is to build a hydroelectric dam. Canada will contribute the required money for the dam contingent upon a Canadian company getting the contract to build the dam.

The Canadian company makes huge profits, the developing country gets electric power and the unskilled work force in the developing country gets some work. Better aid would train the unskilled workforce to do the project enabling the developing country to develop their own skilled workforce, keep the aid money in the country, and improve the lives of their citizens.

Fair trade

Everyone has heard of the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the US.

What do you know about the price of cotton? The US subsidizes its cotton farmers to such an extent that they sell cotton on the world market at less than it costs to produce in developing countries.

Those are two examples of unfair trade. The



from left: Larry Bryan, Kimball Finigan, Ernie Hilland

US seeks to extend "free trade" agreements to all of the Americas. The European Union uses subsidies and trade agreements in a similar way to ensure developed countries stay rich and developing countries stay poor.

Debt relief

In the 80s when inflation drove interest rates up extremely high, the debt carried by developing countries spiraled out of control.

The response from the lending countries was to impose structural adjustment policies on developing countries.

Those conditions reduced government spending, so that developed countries could take more of the developing countries GDP to service the debt. And it was at the expense of the poor and further eroded living standards.

The original debt of developing countries has been repaid in interest many times over – often 10-20 times. In many cases, the cost of servicing the debt is greater than foreign aid received. Lending countries can certainly afford to forgive the debt.

End child poverty

Child poverty in Canada has actually increased over the last decade. Changes to EI and welfare, lack of affordable housing, minimum wages not keeping up to inflation and high tuition fees have all contributed to child poverty.

Ending poverty

Poverty is created domestically and world wide by government policies. If we are to end poverty we need to change government policy.

The way to ending poverty is clear: more effective aid, truly fair trade, rational debt relief, and legislative and social action to eliminate child poverty.

Developed countries have the means to end poverty. Do we have the will? **R**

See makepovertyhistory.ca for more information.

Decision of the Labour Relations Board

December 8, 2005

In accordance with an order of the Labour Relations Board, HSA publishes the following statement:

At the HSA convention in April 2004, Derrick Hoyt was involved in an altercation. In response to that involvement the convention Ombudspersons conducted an investigation and recommended sanctions against Mr. Hoyt. The Board of Directors of the Union considered the Ombudspersons' Report and ordered:

Hoyt was barred from attending the Union's conventions for five years.

He was banned for not less than three years from any Union education course, regional meeting, or from representing the Union at any labour council, B.C. Federation of Labour or Canadian Labour Congress sponsored events, not including contract ratification meetings.

Before being allowed to return, Hoyt was required to sign a personal undertaking as to his conduct at future Union events.

Such an undertaking was to include probationary requirements, the consequences of any breach and restrictions with respect to the consumption of alcohol, personal guests and participation in social functions involving other delegates.

Hoyt appealed to the 2005 convention of the HSA and his appeal was defeated.

Hoyt complained to the B.C. Labour Relations Board claiming that his rights under Section 10 of the *Labour Relations Code* had been denied.

The Board has upheld Hoyt's complaint and quashed the discipline against him.

The basis for the Board's order is that Hoyt was denied procedural fairness. He was not given a meaningful opportunity to confront his accusers nor to tender evidence in his own defence. The appeal to convention did not cure these defects. Accordingly, the punishment cannot stand and must be quashed.

The Board has ordered that the Union publish this statement.

Complete reasons for the Board's decision can be found at www.lrb.bc.ca (BCLRB No. B322/2005)