

REPORT ON PANEL C-2:
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Subject: Globalization and Economic and Social Rights

1. SPEAKERS

- Moderator - Kerry Buck – Department of Foreign Trade and International Trade
- Speakers:
 - David Onyalo - Canadian Labour Congress
 - Ton Zuijdwijk - Department of Foreign Trade and International Trade

2. OVERVIEW

The panel's discussion focused on the positive and negative effects of globalization on trade, economy, people and labour. The panel also touched on the question of whether the increase in globalization may increase the international community's awareness of human rights norms, such as the right to development and economic, social and cultural rights. Finally, the panel discussed the difficulties and solutions in interpreting and enforcing economic, social and cultural rights at both the Canadian domestic level and at the international level.

3. DISCUSSION

Labour Rights and the Threat of Globalization

Mr. David Onyalo discussed the contributions that unions and labour groups have made to the language of civil rights. It is unions that have raised awareness of maternity rights, sexual harassment, increase in gender responsibility, and the concept of 'social condition' as a right. Unions recognize the importance of linking economic, social and cultural rights to civil rights and workers rights. With the links made and the growth in economics, there have been improvements - there has been a growth in union membership, social welfare, and health care.

Mr. Onyalo views globalization, free trade, de-regularization and increased taxes as clear threats to advancements in social welfare and human rights. In free trade, multinational corporations have the clear advantage over workers. This is a major threat to civil liberties and human rights, as a multinational corporation cannot guarantee proper distribution of wealth, safety of land or workers. Further, with increased globalization, international trade agreements are asking for privatization of education and health. Such requirements could also reduce the overall standards of living. Mr. Onyalo feels that to mitigate these threats, labour standards of unions should be included in free trade agreements.