

## The Presentations

### *"Economic Integration, Social Participation, and the Summit"*

*Ricardo Grinspun, CERLAC*

From the stand point of civil society, the process leading to the Summit and the FTAA is fundamentally flawed and problematic. The 1994 Summit was a great public relations event: it heralded a new era of equity, growth, and sustainable development. However, under the rhetoric of the Summit, we can perceive the creation of a new inter-American system, designed to suit the hegemonic needs of the US and those of large transnational corporations and financial capital. Canada, in general terms, has also been following policies that respond to the needs of corporate capital, disregarding the broader interests of Canadian civil society.

A new complex system of centre-periphery relations is being created which generates tremendous social imbalances and inequality. Politically, we must recognize the advance of democratisation since military regimes have been replaced by elected civilian governments. Nevertheless, the current system of liberal democracy enhances very narrowly conceived economic rights; moreover, there is a clear lack of accountability in the way in which the trade agreements are negotiated and implemented. Indeed, these deficiencies taken together have produced an informal institutionalism in which the interests of civil society are confronted with the elites' needs for legitimation. Thus, the efforts across the Americas to generate a democratic legitimation, ironically, go hand in hand with social marginalization.

For civil society, the meaning of its incorporation is different since it includes other components that are derived from ethical and moral norms. The road to a better future in the hemisphere is to create democratic spaces for participation, and the first step is to open up the process of the Summit and the negotiation of a FTAA. We must create integration from the bottom up and not simply from the top down. Otherwise, we face a new order which is not sustainable.

*Ken Traynor, Canadian Environmental Law Association*

On integration and sustainability:

- A false dichotomy exists in the separate treatment of economic integration and sustainable development. Economic integration cannot be discussed without reference to its environmental and social impacts.
- Economic integration in the Americas has "ecological footprints;" that is, it has dramatic environmental impacts. Real environmental limits and concerns do not inform the process today, as they should.

On the need for institutions that protect social rights and defend environmental causes:

- The lack of institutions, or the pressures to weaken them where such institutions exist, are of concern to civil society in the Americas.