

# Canada's Role in the Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

## Trade and Human Rights

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### *(Rapporteur's summary)*

Under unregulated free-market globalism in recent years, the poor have been getting poorer, the rich richer. These conditions can be contrasted with those of the quarter-century after World War II under the Bretton Woods system, when there was a certain amount of public ownership and more effective government intervention by individual nations. That was also a period of development of strong trade unions.

In the past quarter-century, the resort to unregulated globalism to advance the world from the stagnation associated with the oil crisis of the seventies has not led to the high rates of growth and low rates of inflation predicted for it, except in parts of Asia; and ironically, the Asian economic spurts have been managed not through free markets but through state intervention. And this was where the present economic crisis started owing to the unrealistic levels of private debt incurred by investing in excessive supply.

The main measures needed to secure workers' economic and social rights is a return to lower interest rates and to some financial controls and government economic strategies for the good of the people. Where human rights can be directly dealt with, follow-up mechanisms are needed to ensure that good resolutions and decisions are put into effect.

The committee has a number of shortcomings. It has a large backlog of cases. Country reports are often overdue. There are too few staff and too few of the professional resources it had 10 years ago. It needs to become more focused, more disciplined in its work and that of other committees dealing with human rights could be consolidated, such that the same human rights cases could be taken up under different UN conventions. The committee could work through smaller panels.

Human rights work at the UN suffers from a serious resource problem. Only 1.6 percent of the regular budget of the UN goes to human rights. It is not clear that is totally unacceptable. Countries should be asked to provide more timely information to various bodies in the human rights field where it is needed most. Canada's contribution to human rights programs is very good.

Canada should encourage countries without a tradition of human rights to look to the UN for help, where necessary they should be provided with technical and financial assistance.