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PEOPLE'S
SUMMIT

OPENING CEREMONIES

Dancing as the sun goes down

by Ven Neralla and Lara Nettelfield

Bet they didn't do the Round Dance at the APEC Senior Officials' dinner at Seasons in the Garden.

Seven hundred and fifty people from over 25 countries joined hands to officially kick off the 1997 People's Summit on APEC at the Plaza of Nations in Vancouver, British Columbia. While officials dined, a gathering of

activists and advocates convened to present an alternative voice to the fifth annual APEC Economic Leaders Summit.

Peasant and migrant workers' organizations, representatives from human rights and environmental groups will be meeting over the next five days to consider their strategies to ensure that they're not left out of the ongoing dialogue in the Asia-Pacific Region.

"We need a recognition that these agreements are unsustainable unless human values are a part of the equation."

— Bob White
Canadian Labour Congress

In the tradition of previous People's Summits in Manila and Osaka, speakers throughout the day set the tone for the remainder of the week by stressing themes such as people-centred development and opposition to societies based on market-driven values.

"There's no place for labour and civil society" on the APEC agenda, said Bob White, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, at a press conference earlier that day. "There must be a change of mind set," said White. "We need a recognition that these agreements are unsustainable unless human values are a part of the equation."

The keynote speaker for the opening ceremonies, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize laureate José Ramos-Horta, stressed that trade issues are inextricably linked to human rights. Horta received the prize for his work on East Timor.

Another opening ceremonies speaker, Maude Barlow, national chairperson for the Council of Canadians, said: We come together to tell each other our stories. We come together to share our visions. We come together to illustrate how corporate rule is replacing democracy.

Other highlights of the evening included a performance by the Old Fogies, a group of young singers, and an address by Irene Fernandez, a Malaysian activist who is on trial in her country for her recent efforts to expose the miserable conditions of migrant labourers.

The problems of migrant workers are but one of the effects of globalization, said Fernandez. Economic growth in her part of the world means shrinking rights.

"We dance as the sun goes down," a First Nations leader told conference participants as First Nations dancers performed the Round Dance near the end of the evening. But the audience hoped the sun was rising to shed some light on issues APEC has kept in the dark.

Open Markets, Open Media?

by Michael Decauef

"We are committed to strengthening civil society in Canada and around the world." So said Bronwyn Drainie, Vice-Chair of the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society, as she opened the "Open Markets, Open Media" symposium. Designed to examine the relationship between trade and free media in the Asia Pacific region, and to develop policy options to advance free media, the event was attended by a

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