

analysis

# Aid or development: which will benefit more?

by Vic Sharma

**O**n September 27, at the Royal Ontario Museum Theatre, the United Nations Association in Canada and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation sponsored a benefit film premiere entitled *Dialogue on International Development* produced by Franz Wong and directed by John Barclay.

The 20-minute film encompasses the views of eight spokespersons from such charitable organizations as OXFAM, Canadian Hunger Foundation and the Aga Khan Foundation on the subject of international development.

The spokespersons in the short film raised some important questions which were addressed after

the film by four panelists: Maureen O'Neil (North-South Institute), John Godfrey (Financial Post), Rosemary Brown (Match International), and Tim Broadhead (Canadian Council for International Cooperation). The panelists were chaired by Micheal Valpy, a correspondent for the *Globe & Mail*.

The main issues in this discussion were the major cuts in Canada's "charitable aid" portion of the Gross National Product (GNP) dropping from almost 0.7 per cent to 0.043 per cent. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was hoping to reach the 0.7 per cent goal by 1990. This goal will not be possible until the year 2040. The government feels there is no point in promoting international devel-

opment until the funds are sufficient enough for progress to occur, yet how can a country develop when none of its children get an education?

Broadhead said, "In the poor world, what we give is only a small portion compared with what we receive from them in interest payment. How can we call this aid?" Maureen O'Neil pointed out that even if the debt of the African and Latin American countries were removed, and sometimes it is (at the same time we forgive, but we don't forget), the other social, political and natural problems would not disappear. So, in fact, the aid we do send is still quite important.

Another question raised in the film was, "Can development succeed in the absence of social

justice?" The answer, quite simply, is no. How can we start to help these war-torn countries if they are undoing what we have done by means of their destruction of the land?

The most important question was, "How do we evaluate the effectiveness of development?" It is not measurable by the quantity of aid and development we contribute, but rather by the degree to which the development is maintained by its recipients. What good is spending \$20,000 to build a well and educate the users to maintain and service it, if we have to come back and take care of the situation for them? It then becomes a never-ending process. Development was designed to work for the people in need, to keep us coming back to aid them.

Brown was explaining the difference between aid and development, and how much more important development is. The non-government organizations (NGOs) want to sell community development, so the communities become independent. Many people, however, feel we should just give to the needy, and keep giving. The average person would rather give the needy food, or even show them how to grow food, than show them how to deal with poisons coming from the toxic dumpers destroying their irrigation water. Development is important because it lasts, thus the full effect of aid is evident.

Godfrey brought up an important issue, "How does one help Africa?" There are 35 million people experiencing famine. Many people feel this number is too large to handle. We can break down the large problem into small, manageable portions and use these portions of success as models. The scene of the big powerful white folks giving and the poor black folks receiving must stop. They must be seen working together in order to give people an opportunity to deepen their understanding and commitment.

This film, but most importantly the discussion afterwards, provided viewers with a whole new look at what aid really is and what it should be: development. Viewers come to understand that aid will only bring the "white-folks" back to give more aid. Development is an education which can help these most unfortunate people aid themselves.

## Quote of the week

*Lie, lie for all you're worth;  
something will come of it.*

*Olivar Asselin,  
Quebec journalist*



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