

Chris Bondy: "Supplementing the CRC: Subsequent Additions to International Law Regarding Children"

Chris Bondy spoke of the evolution of children's rights and discussed the goals and future of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He suggested that the focus of the international Convention should be a binding commitment to the rights set out in the treaty. In terms of advocacy, most of the work should be done on domestic implementation, although this can be done internationally. When NGO suggestions are not legally feasible, such as in a confederation, the government should engage in a dialogue with them to overcome the lack of technical (legal) knowledge and work towards a solution.

Peter Dalglish: "The Inadequacies of Legislation in the Protection of Rights of Poor Children"

Mr. Dalglish commented that, although the Convention is one of the most ratified treaties, it is also one of the most ignored. At least the U.S. is honest in its refusal to be a signatory. He also noted that the Convention does little to help street children, who view the State as corrupt. Mr. Dalglish stated how little faith he had in pieces of paper. To have any actual affect, one has to be involved in the lives of street children. The most effective action is at the local level. Treaties and laws are just an easy "out" for politicians; work on poor children must be more substantive. In addition, he noted that the U.N. Security Council has never taken action to limit atrocities perpetrated against children all over the world.

Recommendations for Canadian Foreign Policy:

- Chris Bondy noted that only two countries are not signatories to the Convention. Thus, the focus should be on implementation and not on redrafting.
- Canada should lobby for effective enforcement mechanisms for the CRC. Countries jump to ratify the Convention because they know that it cannot be enforced. For example, Canada could push for an international complaints procedure.
- Any redrafting to the CRC should only be made where there is international consensus and such revisions should flow from the principles embodied in the Convention.
- In addition, we should think laterally about children's rights to consider what other efforts would have a substantial impact on children. For example, the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty will have an enormous impact on the lives of children.
- Canada should lobby the UN Security Council to take action to limit atrocities perpetrated against children all over the world.