

## *Summary of Activities*

Some of the foreign trade policy issues which have raised ethical questions in recent media reports are of deep concern to young Canadians trying to form their political and national identities. These include the investment in and out-sourcing of labour to countries where human rights are abused and protective labour laws are marginal, the general loss of employment southward, and exports of products and technologies such as pesticides and nuclear reactors which are domestically regulated to countries where environmental regulations and review are weak. Conference participants spent two days considering some of these issues, and looking at ways to control abuses. If "We're not to blame, it's the system" is true, how do you change the system? Their suggestions for policy are included below.

After a welcome from a Coast Guard College Officer followed by an introduction of participants, Dr Brian Tennyson, Director of the CIS and history professor at the University College of Cape Breton, gave the history of local trading patterns and began to speak of ethics as applied to international trade. He was followed by Anthony Morris from the Mi'kmaq Justice Institute, who posed the question of ethics around twenty dollars worth of beads for Manhattan Island: who was deceiving whom, given the aboriginal belief that land cannot be owned.

Bob Thomson, from Fair TradeMark Canada, began the afternoon by encouraging everyone to look at labels and tell where their neighbour's clothing was made. Then, using overheads, he spoke about dependence on imported clothing and other goods, many of which are made by low-paid workers and even children, and asked how often we look at the "labour behind the label." He pointed out that Michael Jordan earns \$20 million per year (\$55,000/day) for endorsing Nike products which earn Indonesian workers \$2.60 a day. At home, he pointed out, Northern Reflections clothing, owned by Woolworths, is made by women at home or in small contract shops who earn an average of \$4.50/hour, or 65% of the Ontario minimum wage. He also explained the pros and cons of manufacturers' Codes of Conduct, noting that some consumer actions can cause more harm than good.

Bob explained that it is possible to monitor working conditions and to track products made under fair conditions using consumer labels. He described the two main characteristics of Codes of Conduct as 1) criteria or standards and 2) how standards are monitored and introduced. Fair TradeMark Canada, the Canadian affiliate of Fairtrade Labelling Organization International, which monitors and certifies fairly traded coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, honey and bananas. He concluded his presentation by defining the conditions of fair trade and fair trade monitoring.

The second morning began with the film, *Isle of Flowers*, giving a startling and thought-provoking fourteen minutes of human trade history. Coady International Institute students and staff presented Philippine, Dominican, and Kenyan perspectives. They spoke about the fishing industry in the Philippines, on being cut off from resources when land is bought up by foreign interests, and about the banana industry in Dominica and the impossibility of a level playing ground in the international market.