Contrary to Talisman's claim that its presence in Southern Sudan positively contributes to peace in the country, there is much evidence that the regime in Khartoum has almost turned its back on the peace process in recent months because of the oil revenues it receives from Talisman and the other companies. It is unfortunate that the efforts of the Canadian government in the peace process itself do not go far enough, because these efforts do not include pressure by the Canadian government on Talisman to end its participation in the oil exploitation in Sudan. Without the government of Canada exerting credible pressure on Talisman to disengage, it does seem futile to talk of a positive impact by Canada—in any form—on the peace process in Sudan.

We all know what happened to the Canadian-proposed resolution which we were told would be presented at the United Nations. We do not believe, nor does the present government in Khartoum believe, that the oil is being used either as a stick or a carrot to bring peace in Sudan. The regime simply knows that it has achieved an arrangement by which Talisman and the other oil companies exploit the oil and provide it with the revenue from this undertaking which enables it to prosecute the war.

The argument by Talisman—that if it withdraws from the oil business in Sudan then its place would be filled by another company from a less democratic and human rights-respecting background—does not hold much water either. It might have been plausible if Talisman had been working in Sudan long before the current regime embarked on its bad human rights record. But Talisman walked into Sudan when the credentials of this military, authoritarian and fundamentalist regime were being seriously questioned and its human rights record was already the subject of long-term international condemnation. It can be said, therefore, that Talisman did not care about democracy for the people of Sudan nor about the abuses of human rights perpetrated against them by the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime. No, Talisman was prepared to do business with that criminal regime irrespective of its record. If a change has occurred as a result of Talisman's presence, it is not that Talisman has induced the regime to moderate its appalling human rights record—no, the only change is that Talisman is now abetting this horrendous situation and contributing to its escalation.

It can be said, therefore, that without very strong pressure on the NIF regime to move credibly towards peace by negotiating an agreement with the South on all the issues—including the development and distribution of its resources—Talisman's presence in Sudan as an exploiter of the oil on behalf of the government of Sudan alone in a civil war situation is—to say the least—not helpful.

There is at present no system of resource distribution in Sudan and whatever accrues to the government in Khartoum is used on its war programme. Development of such resources as Talisman is currently doing in a civil war situation without a political agreement between the parties to the war is a major disincentive to peace.

In fact, any kind of international development investment in Sudan while the war goes on is a hindrance to peace. That is why the earlier policy of most of the countries of the industrialised democracies of the West, including Canada—to suspend all development aid to Sudan until peace is attained in that country—was a very wise policy; and why the current tendency by these same industrialised democracies of Western Europe and North America, except the United States—to appease the NIF regime—is unfortunate.

The approach of the Western countries, which they call "constructive engagement", of dealing with the regime in Khartoum as if it were a normal government is unlikely to produce any positive results. The impression out there—especially for a regime that was internationally isolated by these same Western countries for years, which now finds these same countries have opened up to it because of the oil—is that Khartoum has had their way. The West has turned around and there is therefore no