

Prominent in the public consciousness of late have been condemnations of certain large energy development projects that seemingly benefit Canadian firms (including Crown corporations) while contributing to human rights deprivation in the recipient countries. The most notorious “human rights–negative” development contribution has been the Candu nuclear project in Romania. There is evidence that forced labour was used during construction, and suggestions have been made that Canadian officials were aware of this circumstance.⁽²⁴⁾

Canadian companies that benefit from “tied aid”, as well as exporters generally, are unlikely to favour directly linking trade policy with human rights considerations. Nonetheless, the issues raised by concerned observers are both serious and unresolved. Throughout its hearings, our Sub–Committee will provide an opportunity for reasoned and focused debate on the important but thus far tentative links between human rights concerns and Canada’s official trade facilitation mechanisms.

4. INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs) AND HUMAN RIGHTS

We recommend that Canada use its voice and vote at meetings of international financial institutions to protest systematic, gross and continuous violations of human rights. (*Independence and Internationalism*, p. 103)

The government would welcome a detailed examination of the issues involved by ... the Standing Committee on Human Rights. (*Canada’s International Relations*, p. 74)

Members of the non–governmental community in Canada, especially development non–governmental organizations (NGOs) and church coalitions, have long demanded that human rights factors be a consistent component in the deliberations of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the international regional development banks.⁽²⁵⁾ The standard response from these IFIs and from Canadian officials and ministers has been that importation of issues that were not “economic” was against the rules and unwelcome in the loan review process:

With regard to multilateral aid ... officers of international financial institutions ... can cite their articles of agreement to argue against any use of “non–economic” criteria in their lending practices.⁽²⁶⁾

In the Response to the Winegard Report, the government expressed a willingness to give human rights “due consideration” in the activities of IFIs. According to a witness who appeared before this Sub–Committee, there has not, in fact, been a shift in the traditional posture of the government, and to illustrate she quoted a letter from Canada’s Minister of Finance:

I believe that the introduction of human rights criteria would politicize the World Bank’s decision–making with negative consequences for its activities.⁽²⁷⁾