

## **CODES OF CONDUCT - ISSUES AND QUESTIONS**

*The Code of Conduct - Issues and Questions Working Paper was prepared by David Low, Mary Yee, Roxanne Baird and Dr. Josephine Smart of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calgary. The Paper was submitted on May 6, 1997.*

The globalization of the market place has stimulated the discussion of creating a comprehensive Code of Conduct also referred to as a Code of Ethics. Many Corporations already have developed their own regulations that define both moral and/or unacceptable behaviour. However, the dilemma for Canadian policy makers is whether Canada should develop a national Code of Conduct to give basic guidelines for international business. The purpose of this preliminary report is to examine some of the existing Codes of Ethics and to give readers a general idea of the salient issues regarding the creation and implementation of such a document.

### **What is a Code of Conduct?**

A Code of Conduct/Ethics has been defined in various ways. According to Steven Weller "Codes of Ethics are similar to laws in that both contain certain rules to guide future behaviour." It usually also encompasses the following ideas:

- 1) It is a document that often embodies the values and beliefs of a corporation (this corporation may be domestic or international) or country.
- 2) It often is an "aspirational code" where it may describe the intent of the business to follow existing environmental and labour laws.
- 3) It often describes what constitutes inappropriate or unacceptable business practice.

### **Evaluation of Existing Business codes**

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of some of the issues involved in developing a Code of Conduct, we have reviewed the following business codes from major American and Canadian corporations.

- 1) Lockheed Martin
- 2) General Electric
- 3) Nortel
- 4) Petro-Canada
- 5) Norcen
- 6) Ontario Hydro International
- 7) Royal Dutch Shell