

# Development trends: Where are we heading?



by Samantha Brennan

"Global interdependence is no longer talked about by philosophers and religious thinkers. Today it is a stark, irrevocable reality," said Keith Bezanson.

Bezanson, Vice President of the Bilateral Division of Canada's International Development Agency (CIDA) spoke January 13 at Dalhousie about some of the successes, and failures and trends in development aid to the third world.

The experiment in cooperation is still young, said Bezanson, adding that today we must look and learn from mistakes made in the past.

"You'll hear it ... and see it in the press that development aid does not work," said Bezanson. "We do not obtain the balanced picture that shows that aggregate successes outweigh the failures."

The irony is that both the successes and the failures of the thirty-five year development experiment have had the same result—increased global interdependence, said Bezanson.

Bezanson sees some alarming trends accompanying this global interdependence.

"At the very time when interdependence has increased to a level unparalleled, there are grave doubts about the political will required to hold the system together," said Bezanson.

He fears that the institutions designed to accommodate interdependence, like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, will be abandoned. The governments of both the United States and Great Britain have expressed opposition to these agencies.

Bezanson said that Canada's development policy differs from that of the United States.

Comparing the amount of aid by the U.S. and Canada, Bezanson said, "We are in no way a significant force, relative to the U.S."

"The Prime Minister has made it very clear that Canada is not particularly preoccupied with

what type of government a country has," said Bezanson.

Development policy could change though, if a change in government were to occur, he said.

CIDA is in no way independent of the government, said Bezanson, explaining that CIDA presents proposals to the ministers but it is they who decide on the broader policy framework.

"If they decided to have development cooperation with El Salvador, I'd have two choices," he said. "I can either do it because I've been instructed to or I could resign."

Bezanson, who has worked eleven years with CIDA and spent eight years in Africa, is a Nova Scotia native.

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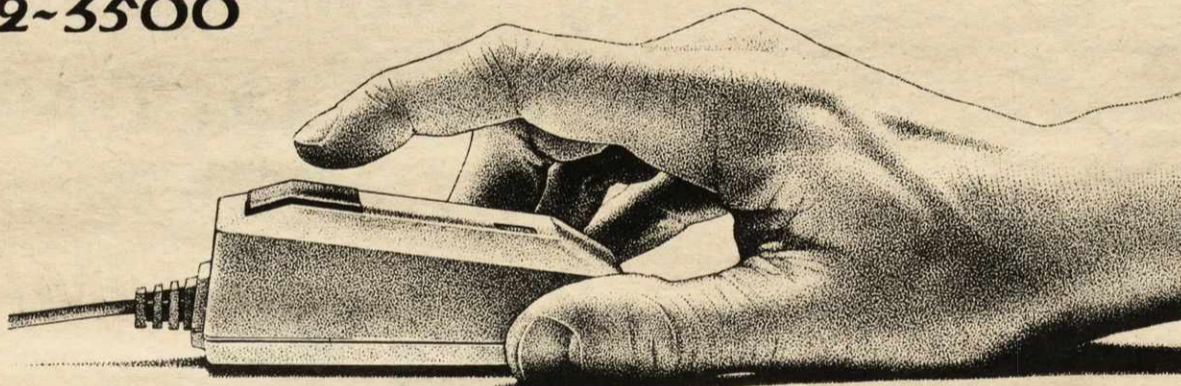
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This lecture was the third in a series on development issues sponsored by various study centres and institutes at Dalhousie.

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