

The CLC and the North-South



Prepared by the International Affairs Department of the Canadian Labour Congress

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) is the central trade union body in Canada. There are some 90 trade unions affiliated to it with a combined membership of 2.3 million.

The CLC has always been very active in international affairs and has taken positions on all major international issues. This involvement has been undertaken through its membership in various multilateral trade union organizations, its bilateral contacts with the trade unions of other countries, and its involvement in the work of the International Labour Organization.

The CLC has taken a leading position, both internationally and domestically, in stressing the need for a new international economic order (NIEO). The prominence of the CLC was recognized by Willy Brandt when he set up the Independent Commission on International Development issues and appointed Joe Morris, at that time the President of the CLC, as a member. When the Brandt Commission made its report last year, the CLC was one of the first organizations to welcome it and urged that its conclusions be put into practice.

The basic premise of Canadian trade union policy towards the NIEO is that it must not be geared to improving the life styles of corporate or government elites, in global corporations or developing countries, rather it must bring about full employment, rising real living standards, and a fair distribution of income and wealth both within and between nations. If a brief statement of this goal had to be offered, it would be Brandt's "Peace, Jobs and Justice", or "Economic security and social justice for all". These words are taken from the first manifesto of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Though the aims of the ICFTU are international, they clearly have their origins in the national experiences, the struggles for economic security and social justice, of the affiliated national trade union centres. The nature of the commitment, for such it is, of free trade unionism to the NIEO cannot be understood if this national dimension is lost sight of.

The new global distribution of wealth, among and within nations, which is clearly called for, will require many changes of institutions and behaviour. There will have to be reform of the world's trade arrangements, especially in commodities where compensator financing and assured supplies are necessary. Multi-

lateral trade negotiations should be used to bring an end to the progression of duties by degree of processing, to encourage the growth of manufacturing industry in the Third World, which will in turn require a fund to provide adjustment assistance when participating developed countries make necessary and liberating changes in their own industrial structures. The GATT treaty should oblige governments to protect workers interests, in countries such as Canada by anticipatory adjustments, and in developing countries by the rigorous observance of fair labour standards.

Monetary system

Reforms of the international monetary system should establish a link between drawing rights and development assistance, strictly manage capital flows instituted by multinational corporations, and effectively recycle petro-dollars. Real resources must be transferred to finance development, with the assistance target of 0.7 percent of the GNP being surpassed by Canada. Debt-rescheduling should not be unrelated to the nature of political systems. Transfers of technology, freed from packaging and as appropriate as possible, should be facilitated. The aim of technology importation being industrialization, this should provide useful employment and not simply increase urbanization problems. It has to be made relevant to the needs of the rural poor.

A code of conduct has to bind legally the multinational corporations, for which there remain few alternatives as vehicles for technology and resource transfer. Development priorities have to be oriented to the needs of people both with respect to material benefits and the application of labour standards, and here guidelines should be sought from ILO and especially from the conclusions of the World Employment Conference.

Just as the ILO provides for trade union representation, so should the United Nations, where such representation is quite inadequate, especially as the support of trade unions is critical to the implementation of any new international economic order. The CLC does not see the NIEO as some international treaty. It has to be a series of undertakings, obligations, relationships, and opportunities, originating in different places and impacting in different ways.

There are some demands of pressing concern to trade unions which have not yet been taken up by