

The style of development in the North is highly inefficient and polluting. As 80% of the world's natural resources is currently being used to support 20% of its population, it is clear that a continuation of current lifestyles in the North and the further exportation of its economic systems to the South is a prescription for disaster. It is the ecological crisis implicit in these figures that most clearly shows the worldwide connections among the problems of debt, poverty and environmental degradation. Poverty has proven to be at the heart of the ecological problem, and new approaches are needed to structurally address the root causes of the former and generate a sustainable development process in environmental, social and economic terms.⁽³⁹⁾

We hear the concerns of NGOs that much of the debt-driven economic adjustment which is taking place is in fact unsustainable, and their consequent frustration at being asked to help treat the symptoms of a deepening crisis while its causes go largely unaddressed. This is not a model which promotes public participation and political accountability. Instead, it returns voluntary agencies to the role of relief and charity workers. The brief of the churches' taskforce described the result:

For a century, church missions provided health care and basic education in many parts of Africa. With independence, African governments appropriately took over these functions. Fifteen years later, after the debt crisis and structural adjustment, development agencies in Canada (including the churches) are receiving increasing requests from their partners in these countries to provide aid (medicines, school supplies, food supplements) and Canadian personnel to replace services and jobs which had been provided by their governments.

In the churches' view, this is a deplorable step back towards a former era of charity on the one hand and dependence and loss of sovereignty on the other. As such, it is a very sorry outcome for two decades of development.

The Sub-Committee reaffirms its position that dealing with the unfinished business of international debt is a political responsibility shared by the developed and the developing world. It is, moreover, a matter of enlightened mutual interests and public justice not charity, which calls for actions that are democratic, human-centred, and in harmony with the environment. We urge the government to do more to communicate the issues raised by the debt crisis to Canadians, and to engage their support for constructive Canadian policies. The government should consider appointing several members of the public at large to the advisory task force we recommended be created to advance such policies and to monitor their implementation.

(39) "Position Paper," October 1989, p. 3.