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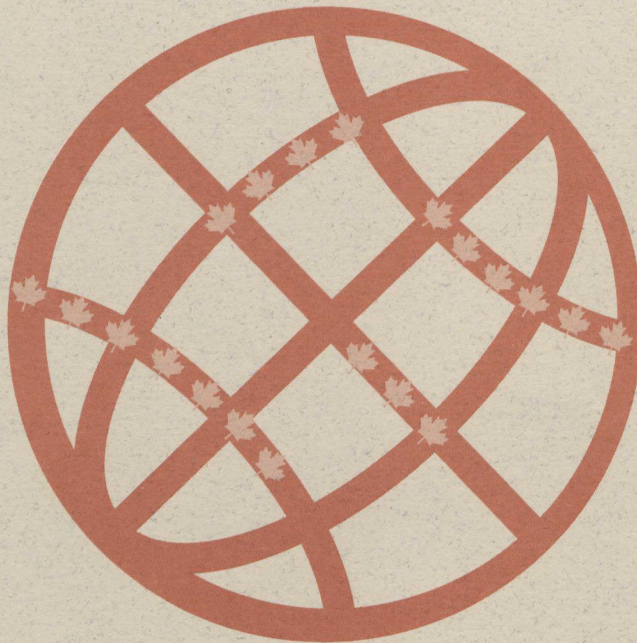
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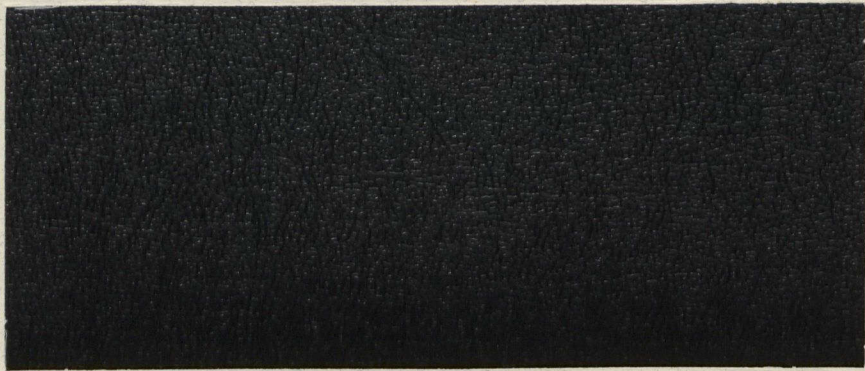


Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

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**YOUTH CONFERENCE X
INTERNATIONAL TRADE: POLICY AND ETHICS
November 14-15, 1997
Final Report**





Summary of Activities

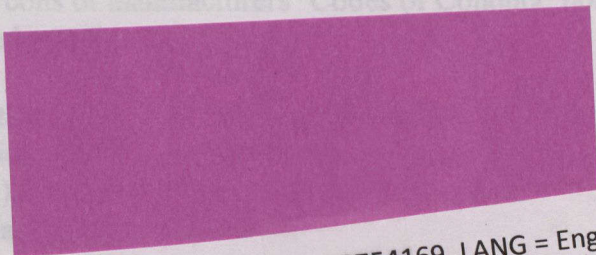
Some of the foreign trade policy issues which have raised ethical questions in recent media reports are of deep concern to young Canadians trying to form their political and national identities. These include the investment in and out-sourcing of labour to countries where human rights are abused and protective labour laws are marginal, the general loss of employment southward, and exports of products and technologies such as pesticides and nuclear reactors which are domestically regulated to countries where environmental regulations and review are weak. Conference participants spent two days considering some of these issues, and looking at ways to control abuses. If "We're not to blame, it's the system" is true, how do you change the system? Their suggestions for policy are included below.

After a welcome from a Coast Guard College Officer followed by an introduction of participants, Dr Brian Tennyson, Director of the CIS and history professor at the University College of Cape Breton, gave the keynote address on ethics and began to speak of ethics as applied to international trade. He was followed by a presentation by the Yukon Justice Institute, who pointed out that the Yukon is a land where the land cannot be owned. The final speaker was receiving who...

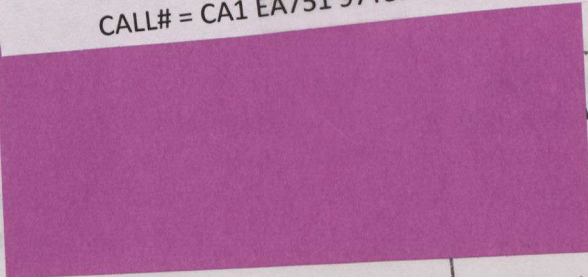
**YOUTH CONFERENCE X
INTERNATIONAL TRADE: POLICY AND ETHICS
November 14-15, 1997
Final Report**

Bob Thomson, from Fair TradeMark Canada, began the afternoon by encouraging everyone to look at labels and tell where their neighbour's clothing was made. Then, using overheads, he spoke about dependence on imported clothing and other goods, many of which are made by low-paid workers and even children, and asked how often we look at the "labour behind the label." He pointed out that Michael Jordan earns \$20 million per year (\$55,000/day) for endorsing Nike products which earn Indonesian workers \$2.60 a day. At home, he pointed out, Northern Reflections clothing, owned by Woolworths, is made by women at home or in small contract shops who earn an average of \$4.50/hour, or 65% of the Ontario minimum wage. He also discussed the pros and cons of manufacturers' Codes of Conduct, noting that some consumer...

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Summary of Activities

Some of the foreign trade policy issues which have raised ethical questions in recent media reports are of deep concern to young Canadians trying to form their political and national identities. These include the investment in and out-sourcing of labour to countries where human rights are abused and protective labour laws are marginal, the general loss of employment southward, and exports of products and technologies such as pesticides and nuclear reactors which are domestically regulated to countries where environmental regulations and review are weak. Conference participants spent two days considering some of these issues, and looking at ways to control abuses. If "We're not to blame, it's the system" is true, how do you change the system? Their suggestions for policy are included below.

After a welcome from a Coast Guard College Officer followed by an introduction of participants, Dr Brian Tennyson, Director of the CIS and history professor at the University College of Cape Breton, gave the history of local trading patterns and began to speak of ethics as applied to international trade. He was followed by Anthony Morris from the Mi'kmaq Justice Institute, who posed the question of ethics around twenty dollars worth of beads for Manhattan Island: who was deceiving whom, given the aboriginal belief that land cannot be owned.

Bob Thomson, from Fair TradeMark Canada, began the afternoon by encouraging everyone to look at labels and tell where their neighbour's clothing was made. Then, using overheads, he spoke about dependence on imported clothing and other goods, many of which are made by low-paid workers and even children, and asked how often we look at the "labour behind the label." He pointed out that Michael Jordan earns \$20 million per year (\$55,000/day) for endorsing Nike products which earn Indonesian workers \$2.60 a day. At home, he pointed out, Northern Reflections clothing, owned by Woolworths, is made by women at home or in small contract shops who earn an average of \$4.50/hour, or 65% of the Ontario minimum wage. He also explained the pros and cons of manufacturers' Codes of Conduct, noting that some consumer actions can cause more harm than good.

Bob explained that it is possible to monitor working conditions and to track products made under fair conditions using consumer labels. He described the two main characteristics of Codes of Conduct as 1) criteria or standards and 2) how standards are monitored and introduced. Fair TradeMark Canada, the Canadian affiliate of Fairtrade Labelling Organization International, which monitors and certifies fairly traded coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, honey and bananas. He concluded his presentation by defining the conditions of fair trade and fair trade monitoring.

The second morning began with the film, *Isle of Flowers*, giving a startling and thought-provoking fourteen minutes of human trade history. Coady International Institute students and staff presented Philippine, Dominican, and Kenyan perspectives. They spoke about the fishing industry in the Philippines, on being cut off from resources when land is bought up by foreign interests, and about the banana industry in Dominica and the impossibility of a level playing ground in the international market.

Results

Afternoon brainstorming, small group discussions and prioritizing through “dot-mocracy” (each participant has three dots to place in front of the suggestions s/he feels are most important) set options for Canadians to use to encourage fair trade. The following is a list of seventeen action suggestions they wish reported to the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development as the results of their discussion. These suggestions are passed on as policy options from a group of Cape Breton youth concerned about the effects of global trade practices on their lives and on the lives of their peers in other parts of the world.

Actions

Cape Breton Youth Conference Participants created an action list for Canadians to use to encourage fair trade. The top four suggestions were:

1. Educate the public concerning unethical labour practices in various companies.
2. Ask for fair-traded products when shopping.
3. Support Fair TradeMark labeling of products.
4. Peer Awareness. (Some excellent suggestions were made here such as “fair-trade fashion shows”).

Some of the other suggestions that were made were:

- tell investors what’s going on.
- pressure multi-nationals.
- start/support co-ops.
- encourage changes in advertising ethics.
- promote global minimum wage standard.
- list “good” companies on the www.
- ask governments to use fair traded products (eg. coffee in offices) to support ethical trading.
- encourage governments to be more self sufficient.
- boycott products and companies with unfair practices after thorough research.
- compile an international list of “unfair” companies.
- educate people about co-ops.
- buycotts!
- re-educate exploited workers for better jobs.

Evaluation

Conference participants and presenters agreed that the conference accomplished its goal of allowing a mixed group of young people to examine and exchange ideas about the ethics of international trade.

Initially, the conference was planned to be a three-day event that would include more actual policy work by the participants. Budget constraints made it necessary to cut the time frame, which gave less opportunity for policy development and eliminated such things as a conference newsletter. Even so, participant evaluations praised the conference structure and presentations, while presenters and facilitators praised the thoughtful analysis and contributions of the participants.

Suggested improvements were that there should be more exercises and group work and that the conference should be longer. Requests were made for a future conference on other aspects of foreign policy, perhaps including a facilitator/presenter from the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development.

“The speakers and facilitators for this conference were wonderful. They made it a discussion, not a lecture.”

“The participants from the Coady Institute were an added bonus. Coming from them, the issues seem real, and they know first hand what they are talking about.”

“I hope that I can take the knowledge that I have now back to my community and inform them on this very important issue.”

“I think Bob Thomson’s ideas and the fact that there is proof that something can be done will encourage us to get our foot in there and make a difference!”

Participant List

Maureen Barrington, 4 Lois Place, Sydney, NS, B1P 6M8 567-1275

Jade Bennett, 3 Norwood Street, Glace Bay, NS, B1A 3M4 849-6015

Justin Denny, 88B Crane Cave Road, Eskasoni, NS, B0A 1J0 379-2773

Tara George, 262 Cherry Street, Sydney, NS, B1P 3T7 564-8315

Mary (Mag) Gould, Eskasoni, NS, B0A 1J0 379-2410

Beth Graham, RR #2, Judique, NS, B0E 1P0 787-2774

Shannon Grant, 76 Schaller Drive, PO Box 82, RR #2, Sydney, NS, B1P 6G9 562-3858

Melinda Herney, 5003 Shore Road, Eskasoni, NS, B0A 1J0 379-2065

Lynn Hines, 2 Cedar Ct, Tamarac, PO Box 512, Port Hawkesbury, NS, B0E 1V0 625-2804

Ursella Johnson, Shore Road, Eskasoni, NS, B0A 1J0 379-2568

Jillian MacArthur, PO Box 58, Judique, NS, B0E 1P0 787-2658

Kalvin MacDonnell, Banks Road, Inverness, NS, 258-2021

Jennifer MacDonald, 648 Granville Street, PO Box 472, Port Hawkesbury, NS, B0E 2V0 625-0888

Kirk MacDonald, 29 Harrington Street, Glace Bay, NS, B1A 3R6 849-1324

Megan MacInnis, RR #1, Port Hood, NS, B0E 2W0 945-2842

Jenny MacIsaac, PO Box 105, Judique, NS, B0E 1P0 787-2239

Amanda MacNeil, 20 Phillip Street, Sydney River, NS, B1S 1M9 564-0471

Megan MacPhail, Belle Cote, NS, B0E 1C0 235-2392

Fenn Martin, Port Hood, NS, B0E 2W0 787-2753

Mona Morris, 4634 Shore Road, Eskasoni, NS, B0A 1J0 379-2540

Roderick Morris, RR #1, Port Hood, NS, B0E 2W0 787-3284

Denise Morrison, PO Box 87, Dingwall, NS, B0C 1G0 383-2850

Heidi Morrison, General Delivery, Dingwall, NS, B0C 1G0 383-2648

Jessie Palmer, RR #2, Judique, NS, B0E 1P0 787-2432

Amy Parker, PO Box 103, Ingonish, NS, B0C 1K0 285-2562

Naika Ross, Margaree Valley, NS, B0E 2C0 248-2539

Calvin V. Stevens, Eskasoni, NS, 379-2778

David White, 52 Topshee Drive, Sydney, NS, B1S 2L2 567-2064

Facilitators/Presenters

Daisybelle Cabal, Coady International Institute, St Francis Xavier University, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5

Elizabeth Cremo, Eskasoni First Nation 379-2870

Gordon Cunningham, Coady International Institute, St Francis Xavier University, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5 867-3237

Sylvester Defoe, Coady International Institute, St Francis Xavier University, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5

Gail Holdner, Baddeck, NS, B0E 1B0 295-2640

Nowell Johnson, Wagmatcook First Nation, Baddeck, NS, B0E 1B0

Bernard Leiyian, Coady International Institute, St Francis Xavier University, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5

Anthony Morris, Mi'kmaq Justice Institute, Membertou First Nation, Sydney, NS, 539-2740

Ruth M. Schneider, Centre for International Studies, RR #4, Baddeck, NS, B0E 1B0 929-2063

Pepe Tanchuling, Coady International Institute, St Francis Xavier University, PO Box 5000, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5

Brian Tennyson, Centre for International Studies, UCCB, Sydney, NS, 563-1286

Bob Thomson, Executive Director, Fair TradeMark Canada, Ottawa, Ontario 613-563-3351

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