

COOPER INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES REPORT 2009



With the support of generous donors, Cooper Institute has responded to many community needs

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Major Programs, Support Work, and Issues

- ◆ PEI Working Group for a Livable Income
- ◆ Domestic Fair Trade for Food
- ◆ PEI Food Security Network
- ◆ PEI Public Transit Coalition
- ◆ Issues Workshops and Presentations
- ◆ Organizational Development and Support
- ◆ Window on the South
- ◆ Response to Requests for Resources
- ◆ Thanks, Good Health, Congratulations
- ◆ Funding

PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

The PEI Working Group for a Livable Income is now six-plus years old. It grew out of Cooper Institute's community workshops on Minimum Wage in 2002. The coalition of which Cooper Institute remains one of the co-ordinating organizations is made up of ten other community-based organizations: ALERT; PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women; PEI Federation of Labour; PEI People First; Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin (SSTA); Women's Network PEI; Actions Femmes de l'I.-P.-É.; the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance; PEI Council of People with Disabilities; and Saint Vincent de Paul Society. As well there are a number of individual members.

In 2009, the Working Group carried out its goal of community education through writings in the media and participating with poverty solutions groups.

Education through media exposure involved letters-to-the-editor and opinion pieces. These were printed in The Guardian, Journal Pioneer, and La Voix Acadienne. They included commentaries on: lessons learned from the "Turkey Drive" and the inadequacy of a minimum wage standard, given that livable income is a human rights issue. Also CBC interviewed a member about minimum wage, with the Working

Group person taking the opportunity to comment on what is needed for poverty reduction strategy.

A number of Working Group members took part in two Poverty Bites sessions on *Ways to Eradicate Economic Poverty in PEI*. Other members attended a workshop with UPEI MBA students. Representatives met with the Executive Director of Canada without Poverty, agreeing to sign on to the National Campaign, Dignity for All. One of the members participated in the UN Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights, bringing to the forum the issues of adequate standard of living, disability supports and affordable housing as human rights concerns.

In an attempt to continue a dialogue with public policy makers, the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income made written presentations and submissions to various elected officials. A letter to the Carolyn Bertram, Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour outlined the many interventions over the years concerning Employment Standards. The Working Group presented the need to structure the new act to protect the rights and livelihood of non-unionized workers. The Minister responded warmly. However, many of the key recommendations were not central to the legislative deliberations. The PEI Government Caucus invited the Working Group to make a submission. This brief, through comprehensive and offering solutions, did not appear to make an impression on the Caucus. The Working Group's broader issue of how government chooses to work with community-based livable income groups seemed to have been misunderstood. Later in the year, the Working Groups made a similar presentation to the Official Opposition Caucus, which showed some interest in livable income as a solution to the widespread poverty in PEI. At no time was there indication that any of the public officials had deep concern about the lack of a coherent Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Island.

The PEI Working Group for a Livable Income is encouraged by a change in language in the community. "Livable Income" and "Social Justice and Charity" have become ordinary terms, representing a change in attitude and analysis.

Domestic Fair Trade for Food

The National Farmers Union (NFU) and Cooper Institute are working together on a project to design a sample plan for domestic fair trade system for farm products. The work is being done in the form of consultations with 22 people from a wide range of food interests: conventional and organic productions, retailing, farmers markets, restaurant food preparation, food security, community health, and home food use. The same participants are involved in five evening sessions and one all-day forum. The consultations refer to research carried out the previous year into domestic fair trade in North America which was supplemented by two Island community workshops. The consultations concentrated on:

- ◆ the essential elements of a domestic fair trade system
- ◆ domestic fair trade processes such as price-setting and negotiation, certification and labelling
- ◆ marketing structures appropriate for domestic fair trade.

Participants in the domestic fair trade consultations are involved in crafting a model mission statement, goal, objectives and work plan. These can be used as a guide by the NFU and other like-minded organizations aiming to implement aspects of a system of domestic fair trade in farm products.

Cooper Institute and the NFU are interested in domestic fair trade for several reasons. Most importantly, because it is a means to ensure that farmers receive fair compensations for the food that they produce, as well, it provides producers, buyers and eaters a transparent method of establishing together the essentials of fair trade. This includes environmental and work-place standards. Domestic fair trade is designed to provide people with healthy, affordable, locally produced food and to support rural community development.

The Adapt Council of PEI provides partial funding to the National Farmers Union for this project. The NFU has contracted Cooper Institute to design and implement process and content to fulfill the project goals.

PEI Public Transportation Coalition

Although the P.E.I. Public Transit Coalition did not hold any major events in 2009, its members continued to meet on a regular basis, and took several opportunities to provide input into public policy. Cooper Institute is one of the members including the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Eco-PEI. The Coalition communicated with and met with representatives of the City of Charlottetown on several occasions about the

accessibility of the bus system, and with provincial representatives about options for an Island-wide public transit system. In December, with the help of fourteen Canada World Youth participants, the Coalition conducted a survey of riders of the Charlottetown bus system. The results will be used in future to guide our efforts to lobby for a system that meets the needs of all residents.

PEI Food Security Network

The Food Security Network had a very active and successful first year in 2009, thanks to the coordination of host organization Women's Network PEI, the support of the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the commitment of the Network's member organizations. Cooper Institute continued to play a key role on the Coordinating Committee and in the Access to Food and the Production and Distribution Working Groups (the Network structure depends on three working groups; the third is concerned with Food Costing).

The year started with three excellent public workshops. The first took place in February. "Sowing the Seeds" attracted over 75 people and raised issues of food security from various perspectives - farmers, fishers, livable income advocates, front-line workers - and provided an opportunity for participants to learn more about the crisis in agriculture and fisheries, as well as the challenges citizens face in accessing healthy, affordable food. A second workshop was held in March, and focussed on the impact on food security of new directions for PEI agriculture as presented in the January 2009 document, *Growing the Island Way: The Next Chapter for the Agriculture and Agri-Food*. A third workshop, also in March, featured two presenters, guests of the National Farmers Union, Ubali Guerrero and Celerino Tlacotempa, both of whom are farmers involved in the farm/peasant movement and food sovereignty work in Mexico.

In the fall, Cooper Institute took on the responsibility of hosting the Food Security Network. Since then there has been one general meeting (December 1st) at which Reg Phelan spoke about fair trade in the Windward Islands, and Manuel Munoz Millalongo, advisor to the Williche Council of Chiefs, the tribal council on the small Island of Chiloe in the South of Chile spoke about food security in the context of rapid expansion of aquaculture in that region.

For more information about the Food Security Network, check out our website: <http://peifoodsecurity.wordpress.com>



Byron Sawatzky participating in a food security workshop March 24.

International Women's Day 2009

Once again Cooper Institute had the pleasure of working with the International Women's Day Committee (Women's Network P.E.I., the Advisory Council on the status of Women, CUSO-VSO, P.E.I. Federation of Labour, the InterMinisterial Women's Secretariat and P.E.I. Rape and Sexual Assault Centre) to organization and celebration on March 8th. In 2009 the committee paid tribute to women in arts by inviting a truly wonderful group of women to share in the celebration. Sylvie Toupin, Julia Sauvé, Vian Emery, Jane Ledwell, DonnaLee Downe, Teresa Doyle and Jodee Samuelson took part in a panel discussion that was engaging, reflective and fun. In September, as preparations were being made for IWD 2010, Canada World Youth participants Cotelie MacKintosh and Yesira Aloalo Alhassan joined the committee.

During their stay in Charlottetown, Cotelie and Yesira, who worked out of the Cooper Institute office, prepared an excellent guide to International Women's Day for students, which they presented in two schools

Issues Workshops and Presentations

Cooper Institute organized or participated in the following workshops on issues that affect Island groups and/or communities. These include:

- ◆ participation in presentation on *food sovereignty* by **Frances Moore Lappe**
- ◆ participation in the **Federal Budget Forum**
- ◆ consultation with the **National Farmers Union** participation in District and Nation Conventions and the national cattle industry research presentation
- ◆ workshop on the *interdependency of faith and social justice* with the **Lay order of St. Francis** and with a **group of Ignatian Leaders**
- ◆ participation in events of the **Parkinsons Society**. One member of the Collective is a primary organizer
- ◆ participation in developing **Atlantic Summer Institute** curriculum and preparation of key-note address

- ◆ participation in the *Adapt Council AGM presentation* by **Wayne Roberts** of the Toronto Food Council
- ◆ workshops for **Voluntary Resource Centre** involvement in the *Atlantic Charities Learning Exchange project re: reporting to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)*: small and rural charities problems in reproting and recruiting peer mentors in the charitable sector
- ◆ presentation to the Allan Thomas Fellowship of the Carol Foundation
- ◆ participation in academic interview on **Climate Change**
- ◆ participation in the **UN Universal Review on Human Rights**, to bring PEI positions on the right to adequate standard of living, disability support, affordable housing, institutionalization, and adequate support for youth 16-18 years old
- ◆ document writing and editing, poster production and research feed-back with **individual community leaders and students**

Organizational Development and Support

Over the past year Cooper Institute staff/Collective provided organizational skills and/or support to the following groups:

Société St. Thomas d'Aquin - participation in Annual General Meeting

Weekly Island Peace Silent Vigil - various members participating

Growing Circle - participation in the AGM

Family Reunification/Immigration - assisting in translation and transportation Salvadoran newcomer immigrant families and moral support for an Uzbeki women refugee in Japan

Dandelion Festival Evaluation - preparation of adult's and children's evaluation forms and presentation of results to the organizing committee

Inclusion and Empowerment in the Social Economy - Participation in meetings

Wheatly River Improvement Group - organizational support and assisting with programs

PEI People First - on-going organizing events with people with intellectual challenges; presentation on livable income at annual conference

PEI Watershed Alliance - organizational support and preparation of by-laws

Window on the South

Cooper Institute collaborates with various organizations in activities which bring the voice of People from the South to the PEI/Canadian consciousness and vice versa.

Atlantic Council for International Cooperation - Participation in PEI members' educational and promotional events and participating on the Board membership committee.

Friends of Mohamed - Helping to organize and carry out an \$80,000 campaign to purchase and maintain myoelectric hands for Mohamed Mara, one of the many victims of the diamond-trade civil war in Sierra Leone.

Latin American Mission Program - Collaborating in the organizing of the Daniel O'Hanley Memorial Lecture; designing the Lenten Mission Education Program; assisting in the orientation and debriefing session for the DR 2009 Faith and Justice Program for Youth.

Canada World Youth - Dedicating many hours to providing an organized, monitored, and fulfilling work placement for two youth participants from Ghana and Canada.



Thanks, Good Health, and Congratulations

Colette Arsenault, because of other commitments, resigned from the Collective though she remains close in many shared goals and activities. Merci, Colette. Marie Hendricken has recovered from her quadruple heart by-pass. Continued good health Marie. Leah and Matthew MacLeod are expecting their second baby. Safe and healthy delivery, Leah and Matt. Andrew MacDonald celebrated fifty years in the ordained priesthood. He is now living at Geneva Villa. Congratulations Andrew. Wishing you many more years of joy. Adam MacIsaac participated in various international conferences on climate change, Thailand, Barcelona and the big one in Copenhagen, video recording many key events. All the people who know you are proud of you, Adam.

Cooper Institute's 25th Anniversary

On May 29, 2009 Cooper Institute Collective celebrated twenty five years working with and learning from the community. Friends and associates dropped in at Timothy's World Coffee. There were displays of issues and highlights in Cooper Institute's first quarter century, including a listing of over the 100 organizations and groups with which the Institute has worked. Thanks to our friends and supporters.



Cooper Institute members and friends celebrate 25 years.

Funding for the Work of Cooper Institute

In 2009, as in most years, Cooper Institute's work in and with the community is funded mainly from private sources. This includes: project funding from foundations; income generation, which includes fee for services, arranged with organizations, depending on their ability to pay; and **individual donations**.

Cooper Institute invites more interested people to donate. This can be done through **pre-authorized monthly donations, an annual contribution, and/or a bequest in a Last Will and Testament**. Cooper Institute is a charitable organization. (#10114 4541 RR0001)



Back Row: Eddie Cormier; Irene Burge; Colette Arsenault; Reg Phelan; Maureen Larkin; Ann Wheatley; Susan Fitzpatrick
Front Row: Joe Byrne; Leah MacLeod; Marie Burge; Marie Hendricken; Andrew Macdonald; Irene Doyle; Adam MacIsaac

Canada's Actions In Copenhagen Allows For Increasing Climate Chaos

The whole world watched while the leaders of 193 countries met in Copenhagen, Denmark in December, 2009 to negotiate a new deal for controlling carbon dioxide (Co2) emissions. The December United Nations Climate Change Summit was the culmination of two previous summits in Bali (2007) and Pozan (2008) with two full years of negotiations to create a consensus-based agreement on how UN members states would address Co2 emission with the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expiring in 2012.

The Canadian government had faced much criticism heading into the summit due to their weak commitment to reduce carbon emissions (3% of 1990 levels by the year 2020) while other countries such as Norway had announced ambitious targets of 40% reductions by the year 2020. Canada's lack of commitment to meet the legally binding targets agreed upon in the Kyoto Protocol combined with the expansion of Oil Sands projects in Alberta were enough to give the country the title of "Dirty Old Man Of The Climate Talks" in one UK newspaper.

Civil society involvement was very visible, one example of which was the march of 1000,000 people through the streets of Copenhagen to the conference centre with the participants calling for climate justice through a **fair, ambitious, and legally binding** outcome in Copenhagen. Throughout the summit Canada addressed the Kyoto Protocol negotiation tract stating that they did not support the Kyoto Protocol while many other member states had made strong statements of support to keep and to extend the protocol. The Canadian statement was a **flat out rejection of many of the key principles of the Kyoto Protocol**.

The second week of the negotiations started with limiting the access of civil society to inside the conference centre. The implementation of a secondary badge system reduced the observer involvement greatly. As access to the summit tightened, the number of actions against Canada's position increased Canadian youth delegates silently marching through the centre hand in hand with the message of **Canada Lead, Follow or Go Home**. The second youth action that day took place after an official Canadian government press briefing. The youth called for much more action from the current government.

The largest and most effective action in exposing the government's position was the release of multiple false press releases stating that Canada had done a 180 degree turn with announcing that the country would be changing its reduction targets to 40% of 1990 levels by the year 2020 which would be in line with what the scientific community is calling for to limit climate chaos. As well, the bogus news releases indicated that Canada would increase their contribution to finance the adaptation and mitigation efforts for developing countries to the tune of \$13 billion dollars. After the false releases were highly reported in many media outlets, the Canadian government delegation had to make the announcement that they had not changed from the 3% reduction target which they had been showcasing to Canadian citizens as ambitious reductions. By the time this story had hit the national news across Canada there were additional questions to be answered. They were mostly about a leaked document prepared by Environment Minister Prentice for the federal cabinet which revealed a plan to have emission reduction targets for the year 2020 **three times lower** than in the previous federal proposal. This document demonstrated that the government had no intention of meeting even the weak reduction targets which were the basis of their negotiations in Copenhagen.

The final document entitled the *Copenhagen Accord*, when presented at a press conference by Barack Obama on behalf of the United States, sparked an instant response of outrage from civil society groups who mobilized outside of the conference centre to denounce the proposed document. Canada was one of the first countries to express interest in signing the Accord even though it will allow for a rise in temperature of 2c degrees (ensuring that Small Island States will be washed away as sea levels rise). The parties to the Accord indicated by their signing that they would keep their countries within the agreed-upon 2 degree temperature rise. However, the signatories cannot be held responsible for non-compliance. The Accord has no legally binding mechanism to ensure that countries measure up to the voluntary emission reduction targets

Canadian Mining: Intrusion, Violence, Intimidation, and Death El Salvador and Other Central American Countries

Three people were murdered in the small, northern community of Cabanas, El Salvador, from summer, 2009 to the end of the year. All three were community leaders, active in the opposition to a proposed mining project. The project is the El Dorado mine, and the company **Pacific Rim**, a Vancouver-based extraction company and subsidiary of **Goldcorp**, one of the largest mining companies in the world. The victims were: Marcelo Rivera killed on June 27 - tortured and thrown down a well; Ramiro Rivera shot to death on December 20, even though he had been under 24-hour police protection since being shot at eight times in August. Dora "Alicia" Sorto Recinos, pregnant with her second child, was killed on December 26, on her way home from doing laundry. Her two-year-old child received a bullet in the leg.

Pacific Rim has met with fierce community-based resistance in Cabanas. This community stance has been surprisingly and inspiringly effective. Last year, Salvadoran government denied the mining company permission to move forward with the mine on the grounds that their environmental impact study was inadequate - a decision heavily influenced by the anti-mining activity in the community. In response, Pacific Rim launched a lawsuit against the Salvadoran government, suing them for \$77 million under the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). As the Salvadoran government held firm, violence and intimidation escalated in Cabanas, as evidence in the violent deaths which occurred.

The community resistance growing in places like Cabanas is well-warranted. All over the world, including Central America, there is irrefutable evidence that communities have been destroyed by mining projects. The stories are typical: mining companies like **Pacific Rim** arrive with promises of jobs and prosperity for the community. However, the jobs are few, lasting a short time, and mainly designed for highly skilled workers from other parts of the world. Any prosperity generated remains generally with the company, benefiting higher-up officials. When companies meet their goals, they leave the community with environmental devastation, illness, dead livestock, ruined cropland, and pollutants that stay in the air, water and soil for years after they have gone.

The corporate greed-motivated killing and intimidation happening in Cabanas, El Salvador is not an uncommon occurrence in Central America. In September, 2009, Guatemala, two community leaders were killed and dozens wounded when private security guards opened fire first on citizens who had refused to leave their land, and then on the following day on a bus carrying indigenous leaders and educators to the site of the mine.

The security guards were working for a subsidiary of the Canadian nickel mining company **Hudbay Mineral** in the community of Las Nubes. In Honduras, the residents near the San Martin mine have faced intimidation before and after **Goldcorp's** opening the San Martin mine in 2000. The Honduran struggle to fight back against the company is documented in the film "All that glitters is not gold", produced in 2008 by the human rights group, Rights Action.

Communities attractive to mining companies are frequently among the poorest rural areas in countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras where there is lack of adequate security and support for the residents. Although the timing and circumstances surrounding the assassinations and intimidation is a frightening trend, the courage and effectiveness of community-based resistance to mining projects is inspiring. The bravest and most active resisters are found especially in regions where political leaders have consistently overlooked the citizens and have stood in favour of transnational companies. The battle for the rights of these communities is heavily stacked in favour of big mining. The resistance occurs in a situation governed by a system of laws and agreements (for example, CAFTA) that allows countries like the United States and Canada to have more control over Central American lands, than do the national governments and citizenry.

Members of the international community have a responsibility to stand with salvadorans and other Central Americans and to speak out about this situation of great injustice. This responsibility has an extra dimension for Canadians. **Pacific Rim** is a Canadian company, based in Vancouver, B.C. and Canadians are tied to its activities through tax dollars and investments - for example, the Canadian Pension Plan is invested in **Goldcorp**. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, the mainstream media does a poor job of making these events and issues known to the rest of the world. Until that changes, we must ensure that the lives, work, and ideas of people like Marcelo Rivera, Ramiro Rivera, and Dora "Alicia" Sorto Recinos are not forgotten by the international community

For more information: www.upsidedownworld.org and www.rightsaction.org