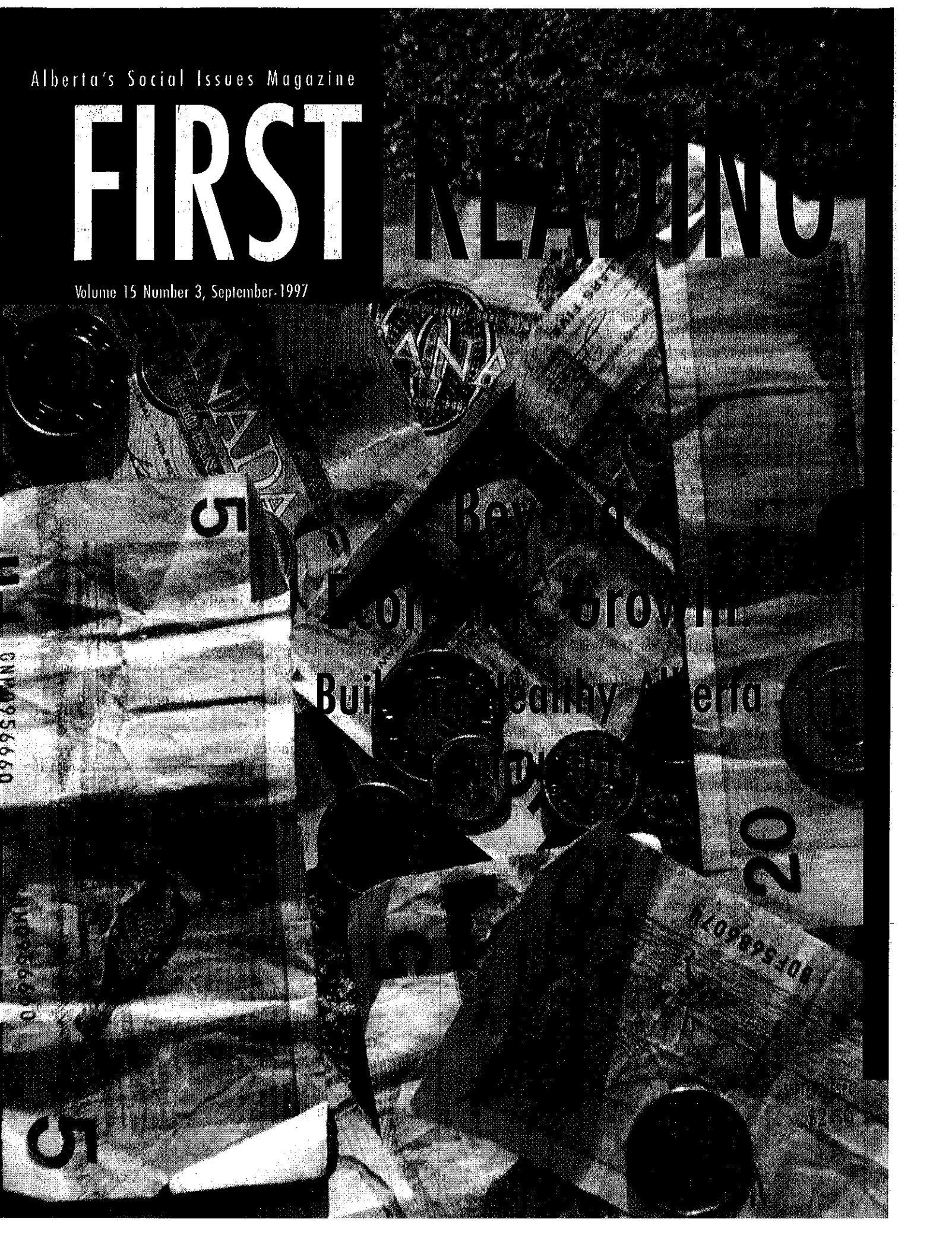


Alberta's Social Issues Magazine

FIRST READING

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Beyond
Economic Growth
Building a Healthy Alberta

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Edmonton
SOCIAL PLANNING
council

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The Edmonton Social Planning Council and Citizens for Public Justice present this issue of *First Reading* as a compendium of ideas for positioning quality of life as the central guiding principle in our provincial economy. This issue was undertaken in the weeks leading up to the Alberta Growth Summit (September 29 and 30). The summit's express purpose is to "aim at building consensus among all sectors of Alberta's economy for determining how the province should respond to the pressures associated with growth." They have selected delegates to address various issues pertaining to accelerating and directing existing growth as measured by Gross Domestic Product GDP. The summit does not plan to address alternatives to growth.

What many thoughtful observers are asking is whether conventional economic growth is producing increasingly less benefit and more problems.

- Do we need more material goods or more cooperation and cohesion among people, including opportunities for the marginalized?
- Is GDP growth and its stressful pressures improving or decreasing our quality of life?
- Does modern growth provide more permanent and meaningful jobs or is it forcing more and more people into multiple part-time jobs?
- Is community life in its diversity enhanced by modern growth or is global profit-seeking forcing a uniform mould on us, with giant corporations the sole arbiters of success?
- Should growth be given a new meaning?

The Social Planning Council and Citizens for Public Justice consulted many people for their ideas and contributions and the result was a plan to hold the **Beyond Economic Growth: Building Healthy Alberta Communities** conference (September 18 and 19, 1997) just prior to the provincial summit. The conference was designed to provide a platform from which a powerful signal could be sent to the government's summit. Our aim was to examine what the government fails to address: relevant economics for sustainable livelihood and ecological integrity.

This issue of *First Reading* is a summary of the presentations for **Beyond Economic Growth**. Inside you will find articles from Robert Theobald, Linda McQuaig, Kevin Taft, Mel Hurtig and Jan Reimer, just to name a few. The one central thread is that the time has come to exercise democracy and make our voices heard by government. Our democracy is in need of clear direction at a decisive moment.

Achieving a High Quality of Life

-21st Century Choices

by Robert Theobald

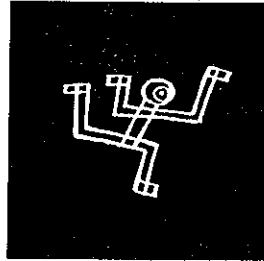
There are two profoundly different visions of a viable and desirable future being put forward at the current time. One of them, the capitalist model, has captured almost all the communication gatekeepers. This is the diet we get force-fed through all the media.

Peter Schwartz wrote about this model in the July issue of *Wired Magazine*. He espouses the extreme version of this model arguing that there is no reason why we should not see a boom continuing for the next 25 years into the 2020s. He points out that our technological skills are rising so rapidly that we are potentially able to imagine a culture of far higher living standards throughout the world.

Peter Schwartz provides a major service in this article. He reminds us that the impact of computers and technology has only begun to be felt. The power of computers continues to double every 18 months. The direct and indirect consequences are far larger than we can even begin to imagine. The impact of continuous doubling has always been underestimated and it is still being almost completely ignored.

Unlike many people who aim to grasp the challenges we face in the future, I am only too well aware of the inevitable impact of technological change which is dissolving all of the conditions and certainties which have existed in the past. I agree that it promises to increase our capacity to produce and our capacity to destroy. Unlike Schwartz, however, I am convinced that the probable future will be disastrous unless we can break out of our current cultural trance.

Why is this so? Let's start with the issue of war. For millennia, human beings have settled conflicts by violence. At the end of the 20th century, wars involved the total mobilization of societies to fight against each other. The development of weapons of mass destruction has ended



the possibility of all-out war. We have instead moved to new areas of conflict.

As a result of this change, it has often been argued that humanity is already engaged in World War III but that the battlefield is now economic rather than military. Today's euphoric rhetoric successfully hides negative realities. We argue that everybody will gain from our strategies of maximum economic

growth and international competitiveness. We ignore the inconvenient evidence which shows that this is not true.

Almost all the rich countries are showing signs of stress, either high unemployment or increasing inequality or both. An extraordinary series of articles in *The Globe and Mail* in the spring of 1996 challenged many current myths. The most remarkable piece, to my mind, was one which showed the different experiences of three generations in one family. The parents had a radically easier time than the grandparents. But the children, who were mainly in their 20s, were once again struggling as their grandparents had. They saw their prospects getting worse, not better.

Worries exist throughout the developed world: there was a period of euphoric prosperity in the '50s and '60s but this has now ended. The picture is equally bleak as one examines the experiences of the developing areas of the world. United Nations (UN) figures show that in 70 countries, citizens are on average poorer than they were in 1980. In 43 countries, they are poorer than they were in 1970. To make things worse, the amount of support going to poor countries has decreased despite commitments made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992.

According to Victor Keegan, writing in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, the richest 20 per cent of the world's population increased their share of total global wealth from 70 to 85 per cent, while the poorest lost

ground moving down from 2.3 to 1.4 per cent. The wealth of Bill Gates—the richest man in the world with \$30 billion (U.S.), founder of Microsoft, the world's premier software company—is greater by itself than that of half a dozen poor countries according to Keegan.

I could take this whole article to demonstrate that there is no prospect of reversal of these trends so long as we keep our current priorities. But, realistically, if you have not already been convinced by the evidence, my arguments are not going to change your mind. So I am going to assume for the rest of this piece that there is indeed an ongoing trend toward higher unemployment and inequality and that it is irreversible within American patterns of thinking which are increasingly being adopted by elites in the rest of the world.

If this is indeed correct, then there are certain conclusions which I believe cannot be challenged:

1. As an economist, I am deeply concerned about the ability to maintain long-run economic stability with rising unemployment and inequality. At the current time, it is still the booming U.S. economy which is the prime engine of world dynamics. If it should falter, the consequences could be severe. The widespread complacency among U.S. economists, politicians and commentators adds to my discomfort.
2. This increase in inequality is leading to social tension, as are the unemployment rates in many parts of the world. It is anybody's guess when the problems will get out of control. We have enough examples of how countries can disintegrate to be severely worried.
3. Preventing breakdowns will demand more effective decision-making. The difficulty here is that the required change is at a level which is only now being introduced in political and non-profit circles although some firms have already fully grasped the challenge. Policies have to be flexible if they are to work in the rapids of change.
4. If the economic, social and decision-making challenges don't get us, the ecological one will. Our system requires maximum economic growth forever. This is, of course, impossible. There is already evidence of severe problems: for example, in the rapidly growing claims for weather damage. There are also parts of the world where water and land crises are already emerging. Evidence of the impact of chemicals

on immune systems are cropping up in a growing number of areas. While massive breakdowns are still decades into the future we shall need large amounts of time to change directions.

There are two ways to look at my conclusions. One is to see "the end of the world:" to despair because we need rapid and fundamental change. The other is to recognize that we now have the opportunity to do what we should have done long ago. We can choose new goals which will provide a higher quality of life for human beings. These can be stated as ecological integrity, effective decision-making and social cohesion based on social justice.

If we adopt this second course we have to recognize that there are two distinct challenges. The first is to demonstrate that capitalism, as currently defined, is as obsolete as communism. Then we must imagine the social order which will work in the 21st century. It will be profoundly different from the past because the new sciences of chaos and complexity have shown us that Newtonian objective, cause and effect thinking only covered mechanical, closed systems.

Recognizing our opportunities opens up the potential of extraordinary new levels of energy. It challenges us to think about the missions we want to accomplish, the realities in which we are living, the collaborative structures we could build together and the action steps which are now feasible. From my perspective, the readiness for all this activity already exists. Why then does it not develop to a level which would change Albertan and Canadian dynamics?

We are failing at two critical levels. First, we have not yet developed real, credible alternatives to the maximum growth emphasis. The **Beyond Economic Growth** conference takes place at a time when the province has a surplus and Albertans have declared in a poll that they are far more committed to social priorities than has been reflected in recent government policy. Judith Maxwell (Canadian Policy Research Network, Ottawa) is being proved right once again when she argues that Canadians have not given up on social justice but only on past policies which have failed to achieve it.

If we are to break through to new strategies, we must admit that past "liberal" strategies have failed. Achieving a high quality of life will require a coalition of open-minded

Continued on page 24—Quality of Life

Beyond Deficit Hysteria:

Reviving the Notion of the Common Good

by Linda McQuaig

After dominating the national agenda for more than a decade, the federal deficit is rapidly disappearing. Under Finance Minister Paul Martin, Canada set the most extreme deficit-reduction targets of any of the G7 countries, and has even exceeded those targets. The deficit is expected to disappear next year, and Bay Street analysts are now predicting massive budget surpluses in the not-so-distant future. Of course, most provincial deficits have already disappeared or are soon to disappear.

What has not been fully appreciated is how dramatically this changes the political landscape. For years, federal and provincial governments have told us that there is no alternative; the deficit has forced them to slash popular programs.

And the cuts have been enormous. When the cuts already announced by Paul Martin are fully phased in, we will have the lowest level of government spending in Canada in 50 years. If a return to the good old '40s and '50s doesn't sound that bad, it's worth remembering that we didn't have medicare back then and that there wasn't much in the way of public pensions, unemployment insurance or welfare.

And yet now, with our public finances improving, there has been surprisingly little talk about the possibility of restoring government programs. Instead, there has been a great deal of pressure—led by Reform and Conservative parties and *The Globe and Mail*—for governments to start handing over the future surpluses in the form of tax cuts.

They argue that tax cuts would create jobs—which is true. What they don't point out, however, is that restoring spending on government programs would also create jobs. If anything, government spending is a more reliable form of job creation, because we can control how the money is spent and make sure it stays in the country.

But the real issue is not which method will create more jobs, but what kind of society we want to live in. By cutting taxes, we limit the ability of governments to provide broad-based programs that benefit everyone, as well as offering additional benefits to those at the lower end. Some high-income Canadians consider these programs too costly; they figure they would be better off paying

lower taxes and paying privately for services for themselves and their families.

Overall, the rich would benefit most from tax cuts, while the middle and low income groups would benefit most from restored government programs. So if government opts for tax cuts rather than restoring government programs, it would be redistributing resources from the poor and middle class to the rich, and thereby creating far less viable communities.

This is not the package that was originally sold to us. Canadians resisted giving up programs they valued, but were eventually convinced that the deficit left us no alternative.

Now, with the dramatic improvement in public finances, politicians can no longer argue that we don't have an alternative. If we can afford tax cuts, we can afford increased public spending.

The real choice before us is the level of equality we want in our society. Do we want to live in an egalitarian society, with strong social programs for everyone? Or do we want to live in a society where access to high-quality services depends on how rich you are?

As a journalist, Linda McQuaig has covered a wide range of subjects, from the revolution in Iran to the financial dealings of Canada's establishment. She has worked for The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, Maclean's Magazine and CBC Radio. In 1991, she was awarded the Atkinson Fellowship for Journalism in Public Policy to study the social welfare systems in Europe and North America. That research became the foundation for her 1993 bestseller, The Wealthy Banker's Wife: The Assault on Equality in Canada. She is also author of Behind Closed Doors: How the Rich Won Control of Canada's Tax System and The Quick and the Dead: Brian Mulroney, Big Business and the Seduction of Canada. Her most recent book, Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths, spent 49 weeks on The Globe and Mail's national bestseller list.

Our Sectors in Summary

During the **Beyond Economic Growth: Building Healthy Alberta Communities** conference, September 18 and 19, 1997, 16 presenters were asked to address four sectors which we termed as: the value of work; corporate citizenship; community economic development and community well-being. Speakers in each area were asked to consider the following questions for their presentations:

Value of Work



How can governments assist and enable people to become less dependent on traditional employment?

How can governments ensure that employment is meaningful and interconnected with all levels of workers' existence?

Corporate Citizenship



How can governments ensure that corporations meet their responsibilities to ensure quality of life for all their stakeholders (workers, clients, communities)?

How can business and industry become a catalyst for sustaining livelihoods, social justice and cohesion and simultaneously protect the environment?

Community Economic Development



How can the government ensure that local economies are more self-reliant and less dependent on the national and international economies and therefore less vulnerable to decisions outside their control?

Essentials for Community Well-Being



What is the government's role in promoting community well-being and ensuring minimum standards of living?

What are the "appropriate" roles of other sectors of society (schools, churches, labour unions, etc.) in promoting community well-being and ensuring minimum standards of living?

The articles that follow are the summaries of the presentations by our 16 speakers. We have organized them according to sector and you will see a corresponding icon which will symbolize each of the four sectors. Recommendations developed in the four sectors are intended for submission to the Alberta Growth Summit (September 29, 30, 1997). For more information on the list of recommendations drawn as a result of the **Beyond Economic Growth** conference you can call the Edmonton Social Planning Council at 423-2031.

Mark your calendar!

Globalization, Corporatism and Democracy: Alberta and Canada —November 6-8, 1997, Edmonton

Globalization, Corporatism and Democracy is a conference being sponsored by the Parkland Institute November 6-8, 1997 at the University of Alberta. The conference will feature John Ralston Saul, world-renowned author of *Voltaire's Bastards*, *The Doubter's Companion* and *The Unconscious Civilization*.

Sessions will include: Mass Media and Democracy; Education in Alberta, Health and Social Policy; Globalization and Indigenous Peoples; Women and Minorities; the Multilateral Agreement on Investment—A threat to Democracy?; Politics in the Age of Globalization; Work, Welfare and Economic Policy; and Globalization and the Rural Community.

For more information you can contact the conference organizers (Buksa Associates Inc.) at 436-0983.



Poverty in Edmonton:

Are Alberta's Growth Strategies Alleviating Poverty?

Introduction

Economic growth is on the minds of many as the Alberta Growth Summit approaches. However, a different kind of growth is under way which is not receiving the attention it deserves. Despite evidence that labour force participation is increasing, poverty is intensifying.

Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) is determined by adding 20 per cent to the average percentage of gross family income spent on the basics of food, shelter and clothing. It is not officially a measure of poverty, but instead defines a set of income cut-offs below which individuals and families are considered to be living on a low income. It is adjusted for size of household and size of population centre.

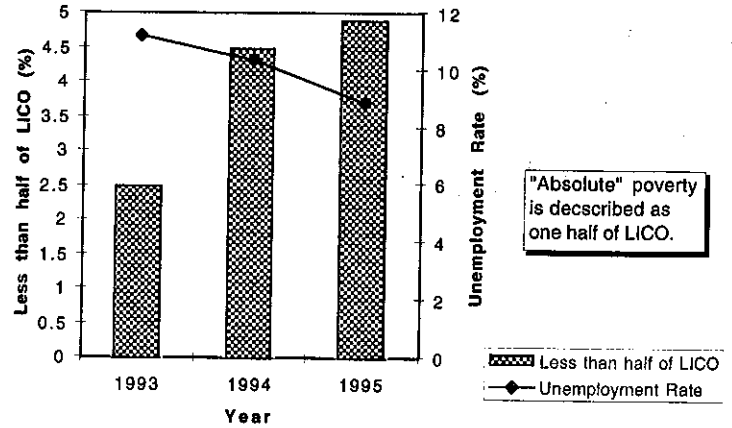
Critics charge that LICO is *not* a measure of poverty and that real poverty—that is, a state of material hardship or "absolute" poverty—is very rare or even non-existent in Alberta.

Poverty in Edmonton

In Edmonton, the percentage of families living below LICO has fluctuated between 17 and 19 per cent for the past three years. While this statistic by itself does not reveal a large increase, further analysis into families living below LICO suggests that absolute poverty is a growing fact in Alberta and that Edmonton's poor are becoming poorer.

Information on poverty growth can be attained by dividing the group of families living below LICO into quartiles. The four groups represent families with different levels of income below LICO. For example, if the LICO for a family of four in a city the size of Edmonton is \$30,000, then one quartile grouping would represent the number of families earning between \$22,500 to \$30,000. The top two quartiles would represent the families earning between \$15,000 and \$30,000. The bottom two quartiles would represent those families earning below \$15,000.

For the purposes of this analysis, absolute poverty is defined as the condition of those living at less than one half of LICO. This correlates to even the most stringent poverty lines.



In 1993, approximately 5,000 families in Edmonton were subsisting on income levels less than half of the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off. By 1995, this figure rose to over 12,000 families. The total number of families below LICO remained relatively the same.

Employment and Poverty

Within the past three years two other important statistics emerged. City unemployment levels had dropped from 11.2 per cent in 1993 to 8.9 per cent in 1995. Also, government expenditures on social assistance dropped from approximately \$834 million in 1993/94 to \$580 million in 1995/96. The decrease in social spending and the increase in employment levels would appear to indicate that poverty was decreasing. However, the exact opposite was true. Increased levels of employment are failing to have any significant impact on the numbers of people living in desperate poverty. Decreased social spending is resulting in a drastic increase in the number of people living in "absolute" poverty.

The Alberta Growth Summit provides an opportunity to assess which strategies have been effective and which have not. Alberta's anti-poverty strategies are clearly ineffective as there is no evidence that economic growth by itself is addressing the issue of poverty in Edmonton.

Brian Bechtel is the Executive Director of the Edmonton Social Planning Council and Nicole Martel is a Project Assistant at the Council.

Your Children's Careers:

Good Jobs or Bad Jobs?



by Harvey Krahn

The Alberta economy is once again expanding. Unemployment rates have dropped and consumer confidence is up. However, we need to look carefully at the quality of the new jobs that have emerged and at who is getting the better jobs. What we observe is a significant increase in non-standard work. Part-time jobs are problematic for non-students trying to support themselves, since most part-time work is low-paying and offers very few fringe benefits. Some temporary jobs pay reasonably well but, again, benefits are not part of the employment contract. And the employment insecurity generated by a series of contractual positions can be very troubling.

Young workers are heavily over-represented in part-time and temporary jobs. Even among university graduates who have left the education system, we find a sizable minority stuck in temporary positions several years after graduating. Consequently, compared to a decade ago, the incomes of young workers have dropped dramatically while the incomes of older workers merely stagnated.

Political and business leaders remain committed to the belief that "the market knows best" and that any intervention will only make the Alberta economy less competitive. If we accept this position, we must also accept the possibility that today's youth will enjoy less financially rewarding and secure careers than did their parents. The labour market restructuring of the past decades has dealt today's youth a poor hand. If only they had planned better, arranging to be born a decade or two earlier.

But we need to remind ourselves that it was not "the market" that cut jobs and turned permanent positions into temporary jobs. Instead, real people made decisions about re-engineering and right-sizing work organizations that, in turn, affected the career opportunities of their children (or, at least, their children's generation).

What can we do to reduce inter-generational employment inequity? Employers need to re-consider their fondness for the short-term benefits of part-time and temporary employment contracts. The government should examine labour standards that allow employers to treat part-time and temporary workers as second-class employees. It can also rethink its labour relations stance, asking whether unions might have a larger role to play in looking after the rights of Alberta workers. Unions and professional associations can examine the inter-generational implications of their organizational goals and strategies. Government and post-secondary educational institutions need to look at rising tuition to see how much it is deterring less-advantaged youth from acquiring the education needed for entry into satisfying careers.

These are only a few general suggestions. There is clearly room for more public discussion about how we might balance the employment needs and ambitions of different generations of Albertans. Trusting the "free hand of the market" to look after it is unlikely to be a satisfactory solution since the same hand was involved in creating the current situation.

Harvey Krahn is a professor of sociology at the University of Alberta. His research and teaching interests are in the areas of the sociology of work, social inequality, public policy and public opinion. He currently serves as a volunteer with the United Way and the City of Edmonton's Community and Family Services Advisory Committee (CAFSAC).



Women and Economic Justice

by Anne McGrath

In an increasingly hostile and isolating social, economic and political environment, the situation for women has changed in some critical ways. Around the world women have discovered that the effects of economic restructuring have meant more paid and underpaid work, less public support and increased vulnerability to violence. A United Nations (UN) report to the recent World Conference on Women in Beijing stated that on every continent women work longer hours, earn less money and are more likely to live in poverty than men. When we talk about the poorest of the poor we almost always mean women. Poor men have even poorer wives and children who earn less, own less and control less. The UN Report on "The Global Feminization of Poverty" estimated that at least 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty are women and girls. Some 50,000 people—mostly women and children—die every day because of malnutrition, poor shelter, polluted water and bad sanitation.

There is no doubt that government policies of debt and deficit reduction, liberalized trade, and structural adjustment policies place the heaviest burden on women. In the preparations for the Beijing conference, former National Action Council on the Status of Women (NAC) President Sunera Thobani said, "The feminization of poverty is a worldwide trend. The poverty of women in developing countries is increasingly acute. At the same time, growing numbers of women in industrialized countries are living in poverty. As we head to Beijing, NAC will be seeking concrete actions by governments and international agencies. We want them to reject economic policies which exacerbate the inequality of women. We want commitments that will give women worldwide irreversible progress towards equality." Women in attendance at the Beijing events identified two major forces affecting the conditions of women's lives: the globalization of free market economic policies and the rise of conservatism. Human rights consultant Shelagh Day says that women participants did not accept current economic policies and do not believe that there is no alternative to them.

Canadian and Albertan economic policies which focus on debt and deficit elimination, reductions in public service, decreased support for health, education and social services and a frenzy of privatization have had a harsh impact in women and children. Government and business leaders speak euphemistically about the community and families taking on the responsibility of delivering social programs in health, education and preventive social services. Exactly who in the family do they think will do this unpaid work? Activities are shifted from the public sector to the household/community sector as though what happens in that sector, being unwaged, carries no cost. In the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee's analysis of the impact of Alberta's budget cuts on women, Sylvia Hawkins writes, "It is glaringly obvious that women are suffering the consequences of government cuts and restructuring. On the one hand, the most marginalized women in our society—those trying to escape poverty and violence—have an almost insurmountable task before them. On the other hand, there are those women who have jobs helping women in need, who are expected to do more with less and less. In addition, as services are eliminated or privatized, women have less choices, but are expected to pick up the slack in caring for families and communities."

In the face of overwhelming attacks on our economic and social security, women's resistance has also been growing. Gender equality cannot be pushed off the global agenda. Worldwide, women are opposing and resisting economic policies that create inequality and poverty and proposing creative and workable alternatives that value women's work.

Anne McGrath is a Canadian Programmer for OXFAM Canada, an international development organization. Anne has been active for over 20 years in paid, unpaid and underpaid work in the women's movement, including a term as Vice-President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). She is an outspoken advocate for justice, equality and human rights.

Rediscovering Good Work



by Elwil Beukes

What we have most deeply lost is the meaning of what is specific or peculiar to the economic dimension of our lives. Instead of its original and enduring meaning as “creating and sustaining livelihood” we have swapped it for “exchange for money profit.” What happened here is the inversion of ends and means.

Why? Western thinking since the 18th century on how to order society and deal with power and poverty has posed an answer that has come to haunt us. Adam Smith alerted us to the surprising and benign effect of freely operating markets. It would deliver two remarkable things: coordinating massive human energies and countless decisions without external authority and ever-increasing material bounty or unending economic growth. The logic of basing decisions on cost-calculating choice would enhance both freedom and wealth.

How did it go wrong? The success and dynamic change which markets have brought about, made us extend the logic which governs the way we create and distribute material privilege to much larger fields. These included political and cultural practices. The old bugbear of external power and authority over people’s lives seemed to be overcome so well by free choice that the interplay of property rights was extended to almost all spheres of society. Structuring the rules and rights of market relations seemed (except for a few decades after the Great Depression) the only necessity to ensure freedom and the good life for all.

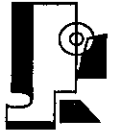
Where did it fail us? Most decisively, the undue extension of market thinking has not solved the issue of power and its unequal distribution and use. It has only masked domination. Today the domination of financial power has destroyed (and continues to destroy) the livelihood of many, it has distorted human life into possessive individualism, it is steadily undermining democracy and it is rapidly depleting the carrying capacity of the natural environment.

What has this done to work? Any community constitutes itself by answering the questions: who gets what kind of work?; who owns the tools, means and product of work?; and how are decisions on these matters made? The way a community understands, distributes and controls work decides who will have access to livelihood and how members of society and its constituent institutions will relate to each other.

Our view of work and its role will only mend if we reaffirm that work is not simply a commodity. Its meaning cannot be defined by the needs of workplace efficiency or the maximizing of money profit and it cannot be appropriately distributed according to market rules only. Alas, we have tried to do exactly this. The effects are devastating. Not only do we experience “jobless growth,” but also the destruction of communities and accompanying “social problems.” Material inequalities are increasing again—even child poverty in a country as rich as Canada. Furthermore, we have lost the non-ideological motivation to work well because jobs are either artificial or force us to embrace motivations counter to the common good.

Rediscovering good work will demand (i) not using market logic where it does not apply; (ii) recognizing the gross distortions in power from pursuing financial profits; (iii) understanding the abdication of political power in government to unaccountable and undemocratic financial power exercised by giant corporations; (iv) starting the U-turn away from blindly pursuing money profit back to sustaining our livelihood—economics as if people matter.

Elwil Beukes teaches economics at The King’s University College in Edmonton.



The Public and the Private

by Janine Brodie

During the past decade, Albertans, indeed citizens of all industrialized countries, have witnessed a profound change in governing practices and in the delivery of public services. The post-war consensus about the necessity for governments to regulate corporations and the economy, to provide for social needs and to plan development has been swept away by what are claimed to be the realities of the new global economy. Globalization is rapidly becoming one of the most over-used and least understood words in the English language. Regardless of whether we understand it in terms of trade interdependence, the collapse of national and regional trading barriers, global production, capital mobility or some combination of these, it is clear that globalization presents new challenges to governments and to citizens.

Ian Clarke, a Canadian and former executive director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), describes these challenges as being: 1) competitive pressures which force governments to reduce taxes and overall spending; 2) financial pressures to balance budgets; 3) intellectual pressures to conform to current thinking, largely advanced by financial institutions and business-sponsored think-tanks, about appropriate economic and social policies in a global economy; and 4) institutional pressures from foreign governments and international agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank to transform local environments to fit their model of economic growth. Interestingly, Mr. Clarke does not suggest that our governments are or should be constrained by democratic or ethical constraints, although clearly these latter constraints are at the heart of Canadian values and our system of governance.

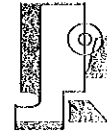
The combination of these four pressures has resulted in what can only be called a new philosophy of public management—one which minimizes both the size and steering role of the public sector and the capacity of citizens to shape their lives and futures through democratic practices and accountability. Increasingly, governments see themselves as market players rather than as purveyors of public goods or the instrument of the people. They are rejecting the idea that the provision of certain goods and services defies the logic of the market—this even though over the course of Canadian history the public sector originated from any number of harsh lessons

about the inadequacy of stark market solutions to meet the needs and the values of Canadian citizens. The public sector was founded on a collective understanding that certain goods such as public education and health care should be available to everyone and that this was a collective investment in the future while other things were simply too important to leave either to the profit-motives of corporations or to the ever present possibility of market failure. Here we can list such things as environmental protection, labour and product standards, policing and defense, transportation and communication, child welfare, national cultural heritage, etc. These days, however, our governments feel obliged to measure their successes by their capacity to put a price on things and to shift public goods, services and assets onto the market, thereby creating vast new possibilities for private profit and, increasingly, for transnational corporations to expand into every pocket of the globe.

The new philosophy of public management, to which I have eluded, rests on four fundamental pillars—privatization, decentralization and off-loading on the family and on the individual. These ideas comprise what Clark refers to as the intellectual and international pressures which globalization presents to all governments. Although we are told that “there is no alternative” for Canadians to adjust to these four tenets, we must remind ourselves and our governments that these tenets are not cast in stone but, instead, experiments of governance in the new global economy—experiments which create winners and losers and whose medium and long-term effects are unknown. In fact, the very international agencies which have pushed these so-called “solutions” are now reconsidering their impacts in the face of more than two decades of global restructuring. International studies now show that the winners in the new global economy were not, as predicted by the IMF and others, those that followed an unabashed market-driven strategy but, instead, countries that developed their own “home-grown” solutions, involving investment in infrastructure, people and selected industries. At the World Economic Forum, which drew together the world’s top corporate and political leaders, in Davos, Switzerland this year, it was widely acknowledged that our current preoccupation with

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Corporate Citizenship and the Role of Government in Alberta



by Kevin Taft

How can governments ensure that corporations meet their responsibilities to ensure quality of life for workers, clients and communities? The fundamental responsibility of a corporation is to do its shareholders' biddings. This is the "shareholder imperative," and with a for-profit corporation, the basic responsibility is to make a profit. Any responsibilities that for-profit corporations have to workers, clients and the community are in addition to the primary one of earning profit for shareholders.

But the situation quickly gets more complicated. Just as individuals acquire responsibilities as they go through life, so do corporations. When an employee is hired, the corporation takes on some responsibilities; when a contract is signed there are responsibilities; living within the laws of the land entails responsibilities; and so on. Most corporations accept these willingly and fulfil them dutifully. Nonetheless, making a profit is, finally, the reason most corporations exist.

Governments need a range of strategies in working with corporations. First, there must be a realistic, non-ideological assessment of the nature of the marketplace in which corporations act. If the marketplace is not reasonably balanced between buyer and seller, then it may be that for-profit corporations should not be allowed to function at all. This is the case, for example, with justice and health care. In these situations, getting rid of the marketplace mechanisms actually leads to more efficient operation.

Second, governments must regulate. Sensible, far-sighted regulations benefit both the public and corporations by providing clear rules and predictable futures. Once regulations are established, they must be enforced. Do we have sufficient staff in the Environment Department to police environmental regulations? Is it right to turn over the implementation and inspection of safety regulations to the very corporations that are being regulated, as seems to be the case with school bus inspectors working for the operators of the school buses they are inspecting?

Regulations are vital but not sufficient. They are sometimes arbitrary and can get in the way of good sense. There are some intangibles that are just as important as regulations in getting corporations to contribute to the

public good. For example, if government leaders themselves have strong ethics, they set standards by which others, including corporations, will judge themselves and their colleagues. A government that makes it clear that the welfare of workers, communities, and the environment are top priority will attract corporate citizens who think the same way. Governments can add punch to this by the programs they operate and the standards they set in government practices.

We must accept that the relationship between good government and for-profit corporations has some natural and healthy friction. I do not mean by this that government and corporations should always be fighting. But governments must recognize that their reason for existence is to advance the public good, that the reason businesses exist is to make private profit, and that these are sometimes in conflict. This demands that the government be prepared to sometimes discipline corporations.

Is the Alberta government up to task? It doesn't seem so. There are a host of examples that tell me the balance between the corporate and public interest in Alberta is seriously off kilter. Indeed, the public is much more likely to be disciplined by this government than are corporations. It is a cliché to speak of the ship of state, but it remains an apt analogy. A government must be prepared to discipline corporations to maintain the public interest, just as a captain must maintain discipline in the crew for the long-term success of the ship. In Alberta, I am afraid that years ago, the corporate crew took over the captain's seat.

*Kevin Taft is author of the Canadian best-selling book, *Shredding the Public Interest*, which critically examines the nature of the Klein revolution in Alberta. Kevin grew up in Alberta. He served 10 years on two cabinet-appointed committees in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then he has worked as a policy analyst, research coordinator, and manager with the provincial government and other organizations and has conducted many research projects as a private consultant. He has bachelor's and masters degrees from the University of Alberta and is currently completing a PhD at the University of Warwick Faculty of Business, Britain's highest-ranked business school.*



Corporate Citizenship: Towards a Caring Society

by Gerald Vandezande

Canadian citizenship involves the legal privilege of exercising certain human rights and responsibilities and pursuing certain fundamental freedoms and obligations. So does corporate citizenship.

Our governments have the constitutional right and political duty to hold all citizens—including our corporations, educational institutions, labour organizations and media empires—publicly accountable for the effects of their various policies and practices on the common good and on the public interest of our communities and country.

Canada's economic health, social cohesion and national well-being require such public accountability. They require that our governments consistently demonstrate an active commitment to the development, implementation and enforcement of equitable laws, policies and regulations that promote public justice for all citizens, communities, institutions and organizations living and operating in our country.

As CPJ's Guidelines for Christian Political Service states, "public justice requires government to use power in an equitable way. Governments must be aware of the different needs of diverse people, communities and organizations and balance and promote their public claims, so that each may have the freedom to fulfil their God-given calling and responsibilities without oppression either from the authorities or from one another."

Corporations are thus directly responsible for the use they make of their assets and the power that is entrusted to them by Canadian law. But, like all of us, corporations must then also be challenged to become more responsible agents of socio-economic justice and more caring stewards of the environment. They have the duty to develop a mutually-responsible and supportive society in which all people, including the poor and powerless, can truly live with human dignity and actually experience genuine respect.

In other words, corporations are publicly accountable not only for the financial return on investment, but also for the way in which that return is achieved and distributed. Corporations are directly responsible for every aspect of

their activities, including their impact on the environment, their employees, shareholders, suppliers and customers, as well as on the economic, educational, political and social life of the community, province and nation in which they operate.

Public accountability involves institutional integrity and requires public scrutiny. They include true transparency of decision-making and effective enforceability of policies and standards, in harmony with the bottom-line principles of fairness, justice, equity that should shape a responsible society and a participatory democracy. Public accountability enhances corporate credibility and socio-economic stability.

Corporate citizenship should thus focus on integrated socio-economic development. Integrated socio-economic development views efficiency, productivity and profitability in the context of environmental, fiscal, and social stewardship. Such development demonstrates authentic concern for all the stakeholders, including the fragile creation and the human needs and rights of present and future generations.

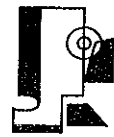
Equitable economic growth could be described as the responsible, sustainable development of human gifts and natural resources that would meet legitimate human needs and contribute to the environmental and socio-economic well-being of all people. The modern pursuit of unrestricted growth in the Gross National Product (limitless material expansion) in our already wealthy society is unsustainable and often causes chronic poverty, structural unemployment and environmental deterioration.

Our governments' central task includes constantly challenging all of us—our corporations, trade unions, media, schools and all other citizens—to use the exercise of our respective economic, educational, environmental, political and social rights and responsibilities to affirm human dignity, build community and practice solidarity in all of our aims and activities.

Our common human calling and corporate citizenship responsibility, including our institutional and

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Economic Development As If People Really Mattered



by Dave Hubert

There are many ways to approach economic development. What if it were approached from the perspective of maximizing job creation within the context of generating corporate profits rather than maximizing profits within a context that might also create some jobs?



Prevailing models of economic development, based on trickle down economics, concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands while leaving more and more people in low paying, marginal jobs and leaving many on the unemployment rolls. In this context, is it appropriate to ask if Alberta has a policy of welfare for the rich and free enterprise for the poor? There are economic alternatives that will address the high unemployment rates if a full employment strategy is given a high priority rather than lip service.

High levels of employment and generating profits and good jobs are not mutually incompatible. In one Northern Alberta community, a local company helped reduce the welfare caseload from 60 to eight. This was done in the face of government indifference if not outright opposition.

This case, and others, demonstrates the need for integrating social and economic development efforts and of the need for full cost accounting of economic development initiatives.

Dave Hubert is the director of Christian Peacemakers International and the former-director of the Mennonite Central Committee. He has 15 years of economic development experience, including two terms on the Board of Economic Development Edmonton.

Caring Society—Continued from page 14

organizational duty, is to help develop and sustain a caring and sharing view and way of life. Such a way of life reflects core values and life-choices which are rooted in our communal, daily pursuit of socio-economic justice and environmental stewardship by all, and for all. Responsible corporate citizenship can clearly contribute to a quality of life and healthy communities.

The question is: will the corporations take up the challenge? And will we and our government insist that they do?

Gerald Vandezande is the national Public Affairs Director of Citizens for Public Justice. CPJ is an ecumenical, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that promotes public policies based on stewardship, justice and respect for all people.



What Communities Can Do to Create Sustainable Enterprises

by Cathy Vereyken

In a "good" and "just" society, everyone ought to have enough food, shelter, clothes, etc. to live a "good" life. We also believe that it is better to provide for our own needs than to rely on public money such as social assistance.

Self-sustaining business ventures enhance the well-being of the individual both in material gains, but also through the joy associated with the products of work. Self-sustaining ventures also provide an opportunity to connect with community resources in a partnership with mutual benefits.

The WECAN Co-op for Community and Economic Development has created ventures which allow families and individuals to add to their income. However, this would not be possible if not for the unique relationships with the community. For example, the large community garden in North East Edmonton offers 70 members the opportunity to grow their own produce. This is possible because we have a five-year lease on the land for a nominal fee. We are also extremely fortunate that the staff of the Crop Diversification Centre cultivate the land and provide the water and the seed potatoes. This partnership makes the difference in the garden's success. In return, the gardeners gather produce for the Food Bank twice a year.

The WECAN Food Co-op is another example of the marvelous support from the community and especially the churches who offer their church halls for the depots, as well as the many volunteers in their community who function as depot co-ordinators.

The WECAN Woolcrafters will be the guests of the Northlands Farm Fair in November to display their knitted products in co-operation with the various wool producers in Alberta.

On a much larger scale, Paper Chase Recycling (a C.E.D.A.—Creative Employment Development Association project) received the support of the entire business community through their office paper recycling project. This partnership is continuing with our new wood recycling project called "Wood Again." We are extremely fortunate to receive a steady supply of pine remnants from Mullen Wood, which allows us to create a variety of wood products. However, selling the products is always a challenge. Again, the community has offered a solution by offering free space in the Londonderry, Meadowlark, Capilano, Westmount and Heritage malls. This exposure will increase our sales dramatically. This partnership allows us to save valuable wood from the landfill, as well as offering employment and entrepreneur skills to young people.

The above examples are only a fraction of the potential that exists in the Edmonton community. To capture this potential, we need people and organizations who see alternate visions to the traditional service delivery model. We also need ideas for sustainable ventures since we are often handicapped by our own lack of imagination and business awareness. Of course we will always need start-up funding from governments and foundations to get the projects off the ground. It is my firm belief that opportunities exist and we must accept the challenge to create sustainable community enterprises.

Cathy Vereyken has a masters degree in social work and 17 years of experience in community work.

Community Economic Development: Putting People First



by Bob McKeon

We need to start by looking at our words. "Community" reminds us that as individuals we live in relationship to other people and that our individual health and well-being is very much related to the health and well-being of the communities we live within. In Alberta, we speak of economic growth. However, it is helpful to think back to the Greek origin of the word "economics" which refers to "management or stewardship of the household." Development is another important word. We need to ask to what extent an approach to economic development contributes to full human development.

Our Community Economic Development (CED) conversation is taking place in a context of a shrinking middle class and increasing inequality between rich and poor. It is also a context where government ideologies and financial cutbacks have weakened the physical and societal infrastructure that provides the backbone for healthy communities. In inner city Edmonton, we can see this erosion in the thousands that line up each month at neighbourhood food banks and the increasing number of those who now have no identifiable source of income whatsoever.

However, CED does not focus only on problems. Rather CED sees local people as knowledgeable and capable participants in their own economic life, and community needs as opportunities for community cooperative action. CED seeks to work from the bottom up rather than hoping for some benefits to trickle down from those at the top.

For prairie people this is not a new conversation. Think of an earlier generation which started credit unions in local church and union halls or of farmers who built their cooperative agricultural organizations. At the **Beyond Economic Growth** conference many local examples of CED initiatives such as large scale urban recycling operations to single parent food buying co-ops to members of lending circles starting their own enterprises with loans and support from a community loan fund were

illustrated. In my inner city neighbourhood, I can think of several community based initiatives including housing, community gardens, LETS community barter exchange, as well as job readiness and small business training.

However, the new social and political environment is posing serious obstacles to CED, especially in poor neighbourhoods. For example, the elimination of federal and provincial social housing dollars for new projects, together with the reduced income of area residents to pay for housing present a massive challenge for any CED housing initiative. While communities are exploring new styles of partnerships with both public and private sectors, new obstacles emerge. For example, we are familiar with charities that provide direct services for those in need on the one hand and privately owned profit-seeking businesses on the other hand. But what about organizations working towards social goals through economic enterprises and development—working with people to help themselves. A whole new generation of community financial institutions, community development corporations and community economic development initiatives are being born all across the continent. However, new conversations about appropriate legislation for these organizations and relationships with Revenue Canada are needed.

We have a lot to talk about that is very important to the economic health of our communities.

Bob McKeon is an instructor of social ethics at St. Joseph's College at the University of Alberta. He is also a participant in a variety of inner city and Edmonton-wide community economic development initiatives including the Edmonton Community Loan Fund.



What's an Economy for? Whose Economy Is It?

by Gordon Laxer

The Klein government cancelled the fall Legislature so it could have an economic summit on "growth." Which citizens are attending? Must you be rich or well connected with the Klein "team" to be at the Summit? What are elections for if the government bypasses the Legislature so it can have a discussion with a hand-picked audience?

Growth is the wrong question. Growth is a focus for the comfortable, the powerful and the rich. The minority who are doing very well want to continue with the system the way it is. The focus should be on human development, not growth. "Brazil is doing well but the people are not," remarked Emilio Medici, Brazilian President in the 1960s. Economic statistics for the country were improving, but the lot of the people was not. Most people are concerned about where their next job is or how secure their present employment is. Those too old or young to gain paid work, the disabled, the single mother wonder about the next support payment. Growth means little to them.

"Human development is the end—economic growth a means," states the United Nations' Human Development Report 1996. "So the purpose of growth is to enrich people's lives," the report continues, "but far too often it does not. . . . There is no automatic link between growth and human development. And even when the links are established, they may gradually be eroded" (p. 1).

What promotes human development according to the United Nations? Growth that: generates full employment and security of livelihoods; fosters peoples' freedom and empowerment; promotes social cohesion and cooperation; safeguards future human development.

What kind of economy does these things? Whose economy is it? Last January when Ralph Klein accused Kevin Taft, author of *Shredding the Public Interest*, of being a communist, he was reported as stating: "He can present his arguments, a left wing argument, and that is that everyone should have an equal salary no matter how hard they work. . . . it's communism" (*Edmonton Journal*, Feb. 1, 1997, A7). Klein implied that instead of people earning an equal income, they should be paid according to how hard they work. I agree, but is this how people are paid?

What about those who inherited their wealth and gain their income by doing nothing at all? The assets of the

world's 358 billionaires exceeds the combined annual incomes of countries with 45 per cent of the world's people. Is this an economy where people are rewarded for working hard? Brent Ballantyne, the CEO of Maple Leaf Foods earns 256 times as much as the average employee at Maple Leaf. Does anyone really believe he works 256 times as hard as they? The Alberta government should take up Ralph Klein's suggestion of paying people according to how hard they work.

The 1997 World Bank Report has called for the "reinvigoration of public institutions. An effective state is the cornerstone of successful economies; without it economic and social development is impossible." The World Bank's list of key tasks of government include investing in basic social services an infrastructure, providing a welfare safety net and protecting the environment. Can Alberta promote human development when it spends less per capita on health care than any other province, when it has the lowest minimum wage in the country, when its classrooms are increasingly crowded?

Now that Alberta has had three straight large budgetary surpluses, Alberta should lead the way in Canada and the world in rebuilding first class public services. Many useful jobs could be created in so doing.

The following problems need to be addressed: Alberta's economy is too narrowly based. There is little diversification. Youth unemployment is too high. There is persistent poverty. Many native land claims and demands for self-government have gone unheeded. Growing inequalities in wages and salaries need to be reversed. Women's contribution to paid and unpaid work needs recognition in real economic terms. The problem of absentee ownership by an irresponsible few must be addressed.

Imaginative policies that involve people making their own economy and society are needed. Growth and control by a small economic elite will not address Alberta's pressing needs for greater development of the potential of all its citizens.

Gordon Laxer is Director of the Parkland Institute and professor of political economy at the University of Alberta.

Attacking the Human Deficit



Can we build more self-reliant communities? Can Government make a difference? Only if the public wants it to. Or do elected politicians have the backbone to steer a course, not driven solely by the bottom line, but in attacking what I call the human deficit? With single-minded purpose, government and the public have bought into fighting the financial deficit. But in the attack, we have been mounting up other kinds of deficits—human deficits. There is a deficit in compassion, a deficit in education, a deficit in our commitment to a society of equal opportunities and certainly a deficit in creative thinking. All of these deficits affect people, their families and our quality of life. They affect each and every one of us because we are, after all, members of the same community. These unspoken deficits do not appear on the balance sheet but must be taken into account when talking about “re-investment.” Our desire to build a compassionate community has certainly gone into De-Klein over the last few years. What will it take to arrest these mounting deficits—to build a community that looks out for one another? What could and should government’s role be? How do we become more self-reliant in the face of globalization?

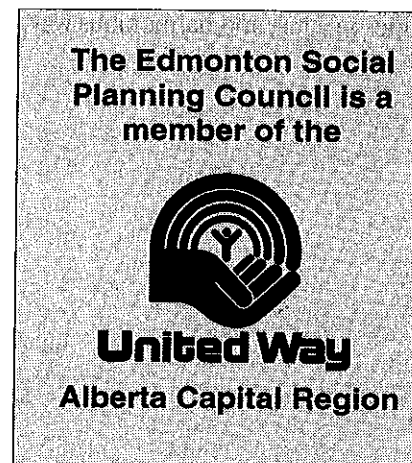
The present climate—its tone set through a largely right-wing media—is still very much anti-government. We in Alberta tend to think that trusting government to do anything would be misguided—in spite of the fact that we elected them. Premier Klein ran on such an agenda, stressing that the corporate sector can do it better. And with their increasing power, banks and major corporations, themselves larger than many provincial governments (indeed some national governments) are calling the shots for willing and not so willing governments. Wall Street came calling on Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow, for instance. We’ve seen companies set their own regulations when it comes to the thickness of liners at hazardous waste sites; shed their workers in the interests of their shareholders; report record profits. How, in this climate, can government respond? Not by copying the private sector, shedding its workers and listening only to the banks and corporate interests. Government needs to define its role clearly, be prepared to plan beyond the next election, and quit sloughing off environmental issues. Unfortunately, that is

not part of the public agenda any more than it is part of most corporate agendas in Alberta today.

There are many public policy areas that create employment and encourage well paying jobs. Environmental initiatives, Head Start programs, crime prevention through social development, investing in education (a vital piece of public infrastructure), historical preservation, strategic approaches to constructing a strong economy, building upon our health care system instead of dismantling it, are but some of the approaches. There are many specific examples of how this has been done. We just need to be prepared to look for them. Alberta has been known as a province of hardy pioneers. It is now time to pioneer these approaches with the same passion and vigour that was used to fight the financial deficit.

Jan Reimer was the first woman mayor of Edmonton (1989-1995). She served as a city councillor in Ward 2 for nine years before being elected mayor and is credited with initiating the Mayor’s Task Force on Safer Cities and being a strong advocate for protecting the environment and conserving natural resources in all areas of urban life. Jan has chaired the Red Shield Campaign for the Salvation Army, she has received a YWCA Women of Distinction Award and she sits on the Salvation Army Board of Directors. Jan now has her own consulting firm.

by Jan Reimer





Bringing the Economy Back Home:

Developing a Sustainable Relationship Between Economic and Social Life

by John Hiemstra

Endless economic growth is a neutral means of supporting a democratic society, many assume, because it frees every individual to pursue any good or service they want without limiting, at least in the long term, any other person's choices. This is an idealistic notion that fails to do justice to the social and cultural reality of Alberta. The dream of endless economic growth, in fact, may be dissolving our 'home.' This idealism is costly because it ends up distorting our societal structures, homogenizing our diverse communities, twisting our economic institutions, and ravaging the environment.

This idealism does damage to Alberta families, friendships, neighbourhoods, health care, social agencies, and our caring relationships. We will ask whether realism requires us instead to pursue 'social sustainability' and 'economic responsibility,' that is, economics done by people, for people, and with respect for the integrity of creation. How can our economy be brought back into our social and environmental home? The workshop explores the nature of societal structure and relationships and how might they relate in a healthy way to the economy?

The government will play an important role in bringing the economy home. Our thinking on government is currently trapped between the ideals of welfare state and night watchman state. We need to avoid both a planned and a market society and instead develop the third way of a "responsible society." This requires a new vision of how the state can integrate the diverse societal structures and plural communities in a just and harmonious way. This

must include a fair and equitable standard of living for all. Along with other social actors, government has its own distinct role to play in shifting Alberta away from the endless pursuit of economic growth to the realistic practice of social justice.

Albertans should work for an economy in which everyone feels at home.

John Hiemstra has done a variety of scholarly and popular presentations and publications on the role of government and diverse social institution in achieving mutual respect and social justice in a plural society. He is associate professor of political studies at the King's University College and a volunteer, formerly Alberta staff member, for Citizens for Public Justice. He serves on a variety of church-based social justice committees and is currently on the Social Action Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

According to Who?



Creating Holistic Solutions

by Shauna and Brad Seneca

Over the past many years the government has been talking about involving and empowering the “community” to find new and more effective approaches to promoting community well-being and ensuring minimum standards of living. Unfortunately the government has no understanding of who the whole community is and therefore makes decisions that do not empower or provide more effective solutions. The approach the government has taken does not consider the long term effect of these decisions and as a result most positive change is short-term. Finding solutions to community well-being is a long-term commitment and must be driven by the people and for the people.

Change in community well-being requires systems to support the holistic needs of the people of the community. The systems controlled by the government such as education, health and social services must be able to respond to a broad spectrum of needs and look towards long-term solutions. This requires a holistic approach which takes into consideration the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical needs of the community and of the individual. If we consider the direction of the school system we can clearly see that the government is working towards meeting the needs of a smaller and more select group of young people and is becoming less and less holistic in its approach. What are the implications of this in the future? If we as a society make statements like “youth are our future” what are we doing to support and promote the well-being of all youth?

Over the last couple of years the government has attempted to control a community process to enhance the well-being of children and families and has failed dismally. When the government asked the community what needed to change, government representatives were clearly told that the community knew the needs of the people and could do a better job of providing for the families of their communities. Instead of allowing the community to drive this process, the government has remained in control and they’ve made decisions which ignored community input—they’ve done what they wanted to do.

We work in the Aboriginal community and we need only look at the government’s approach to well-being in this community to learn what not to do. The government for at least the last 100 years has made decisions about what they thought was best for the community and as a result has almost destroyed a whole nation of people. Well-being in this community requires the systems to change how they do business, not to be less accountable or fiscally responsible but more flexible. This flexibility is not built into the system and as a result does not easily happen. We have created a number of holistic approaches to enhancing the well-being of the community and have focused on defining change to mean one person at a time.

If we are to become innovative and responsible in creating new economic practices in promoting well-being we must look at our history, understand our mistakes and be willing to work together.

Brad and Shauna Seneca are the founders and co-Executive Directors of the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, a non-profit, charitable organization that provides a number of services and programs to Aboriginal people. Shauna has worked in the social services field for the past 15 years and Brad for the past five years.



Creating a Thriving Community

by Susanna Koczkur

Is it possible to create a healthy community living without government investment or ongoing government funding? The question presents itself as many nonprofits and social activists struggle with cuts to funding and social policy reforms. Some feel creating other forms of support gives government what they want by letting them off the hook. Some feel the casualties created by the cuts are too great not to find an alternative way.

We can look to underdeveloped countries which receive little to no government support or even to other areas in our own country. Communities have experienced losses of their own resources or large conglomerates have pulled out of their area (i.e. fisheries, hospital closures, factory closures).

What is important to a thriving community? Housing: affordable and accessible; employment: permanent and sustaining pay rates; community resources and supports that are readily available and accessible. The residents can earn incomes in their community and spend their incomes in local housing, stores and services. Consider these three approaches.

1. Cooperatives and community work projects: the purpose in pursuing such projects is to create sustaining and permanent employment and incomes. It is necessary to identify the potential market need and where the skills can be found or created within the community. Cooperatives can work well when the entire community invests small amounts to begin a new initiative or business. There are many examples of cooperatives, such as Calgary Co-op Grocers. A second-hand store in Calgary, a restaurant in Edmonton and 'Work Projects' in Montreal all have been initiated by nonprofits to bring employment opportunities to specific groups or a community. Community work projects require an outside group to bring in the initial human resources and skills as well as necessary funding and supports to give the community the start to their own business or work project.
2. External capital investments—these may be made through grants, foundations, community-minded corporations or benevolent private partners. The primary difference between this form of giving and

that of a charity model lies in the purpose and formal partnership between the community and the investor. The purpose or goal must be the primary focus of any capital investment (signing a collaboration agreement is a way to protect the goal while the faces of those involved may change). The partnership may allow a corporation to become involved in a community but the management and long-term ownership belongs to the community. A non-interest bearing and friendly partnership loan can be designed if the community wants to protect the longevity of the business or project. Using a third party—i.e. a nonprofit—to support the project often gives the investor a source of comfort yet allows the depressed community to be revived with new money and employment.

3. Support networks—the most important part of a thriving community is its support system. Often those struggling with unemployment and subsequent poverty succeed against all odds, due to their ability to secure support from others or from consistent extended family. Likewise, a community with a strong church involvement can have additional supports for all community members. Churches and individuals alone cannot carry the entire burden of its members' needs. Communities with grassroot groups and services, self-help and support groups can create viable support services through "community share systems." These are essential if a community wants to thrive. The assumption is that if the "needed" community services are available and all members participate in their allocation then all members will thrive in the community. "The community meets the needs of its members." These programs include self help support groups, landscaping and home care co-ops, child care, thrift shops, toy libraries, community kitchens and self-governing tenancy (especially public housing).

As services are cut, communities will have to decide if they dig in and fight or fight and redevelop their depressed communities. It's a choice that can be made.

Susanna Koczkur is the Executive Director of Connection Housing and Family Care Centre in Calgary.

The Good Society:



Planning a Just Economy that Serves the Entire Community

If the benefits of economic growth accrue to only the corporate sector; if much of the profit from resource development leaves the province; if income distribution creates a growing gap between the haves and the have nots while health care, education, senior citizens and the poor all see their critical support declining, then economic policy is clearly the domain of the elite on behalf of the elite.

In recent years Canada has been transformed. In a word, both our country and our province are being Americanized. Increasingly, a small, powerful, wealthy elite are firmly in control of our political, economic and social policies. And our future.

It's time to reintroduce compassion and community civility into our political priorities. A wealthy country like Canada, a wealthy province like Alberta, should never tolerate the tragic levels of poverty and unemployment that we have or the degrees of corporate concentration and foreign ownership and control of our economy that now exist.

In Alberta, despite burgeoning government surpluses and declining debt to GDP levels, the poor and the disadvantaged are being severely punished, while the banks and oil companies, among others, record profits well beyond previous expectations.

Government debt has never been the fault of the poor. It *has been* the fault of the terrible mismanagement of our economy at both the federal and provincial levels.

We **can** turn things around. We **can** create, here in this province, a shining example of a just, equitable, compassionate, civil society. We have the wealth, we have the talented, conscientious men and women and many citizens who have a strong desire for change.

There are a great number of things that need to be done. I am sceptical that Premier Klein's Alberta Growth Summit will lead to any important policy changes. I hope I am wrong.

Among a long list of things we need to do are the following. We need to:

1. Create a much fairer tax system.
2. Have an independent commission examine the royalties and taxes received from the exploitation of our natural resources.
3. Increase funding for health care, education and social services.
4. Make the elimination of child poverty a real, committed goal, not just a slogan.
5. Reform the political system to make it much more democratic.
6. Develop monetary and fiscal policies that encourage full employment and promote an egalitarian society.
7. Encourage small and medium-size Canadian-owned businesses and the recirculation of profits in the Canadian and provincial economies.

None of these things will ever happen without a huge increase in direct participation in our political system. Only a small percentage of Canadians are involved in politics. Unless this changes, our society will continue to be in the grips of the wealthy elite.

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thinking from those whose intellectual beliefs were formed on the left and the right. These terms really have no meaning in today's radically changed realities. We must listen to the right's statement that people need to rise to their challenges. And we must hear the left when it proclaims that some, through no fault of their own, cannot do so.

But there is a further, and perhaps more crucial, issue. Those of us who believe in social justice have lost our nerve. We often seem to be going through the motions rather than believing that we can change society for the better. We need passion. But this time it must be directed to pulling together all those who care about a better society for we need the wisdom of everybody if we are to see the potential of the 21st century.

Communism collapsed without anyone expecting it. If capitalism were collapsing now, would we know? (Idea summarized from writings of Willis Harman.)

Robert Theobald (rtheobald@ccc.org) has been working on fundamental change issues for 40 years. His latest book Reworking Success is a short summary of why fundamental change is needed. He has created a new network—the QEN Network—for those who want to work creatively and cooperatively to create the directions required for the 21st Century.

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competitiveness is damaging long-term investments in the common good. Even the IMF now concedes that a strong public sector and social safety net contribute to a country's long-term competitiveness. All of these concessions on the part of the market-driven trade liberalizers beg the questions which must be raised during the Alberta Growth Summit. How far do we want to go? Have we gone too far?

No one is suggesting that Canadians can return to the model of governance that was carved out of the post-war economic boom. At the same time, the chief architect of that model, Lord Keynes, left us an observation that still applies today. He cautioned us never to lose sight of the fact that "practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." We all have a stake in realizing a vibrant economy which will be sustainable and improve the lives of Albertans as we move into the 21st century. But, there is a profound difference between the democratic negotiation of a strategy for economic growth and the dictates of a particular school of thought in economics—a discipline John Ralston Saul describes as "the social science most given to wild guesses and imaginary facts." The experience of other countries such as Australia and Britain, who have gone further and earlier down the privatization road, give us other facts to consider—among them, environmental costs, unemployment, growing disparities between the rich and the poor, declining family incomes, business failures, and an eroding public infrastructure. These realities cannot be separated from growth strategies. They are, instead, integral to them and thus must be put front and centre on the current growth summit agenda.

Jantne Brodie is a political economist and the Chair of Political Science at the University of Alberta. She has written extensively in the areas of Canadian political development, regionalism, public policy and gender and politics. Her most recent books include Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement and Women and Canadian Public Policy.