



CHILDREN, A VALUABLE RESOURCE

The success of societies today is judged in many ways – GDP for economic performance, literacy for educational level, life expectancy for health, and so on. One would hardly think it necessary to use the treatment of children as a criterion. We would expect this to be a high priority everywhere, and so it has been in all so-called primitive societies where nurturing and safeguarding children was a societal responsibility, a valuable resource to be nurtured for the good of society as a whole, until the concept of private property developed when human resources, including children, came to be looked upon as something to be exploited for profit and then discarded like used-up raw materials or empty cans. Rick Westhead in “Modernizing India on the Backs of Children” (Toronto Star, March 6th, 2010) tells us something of the lives of many children as this nation attracts the investment dollars to modernize and become the next source of cheap labour and a market for the valorization of more and more capital. One story tells us of a ten-year-old boy who, wearing nothing but shorts, T-shirt, and flip-flop sandals, toils fourteen hours a day from 7:00am to 9:pm in the hot Indian sun collecting rocks in a wicker basket and carrying it to a crusher machine to make gravel for the new roads as part of the infrastructure necessary in the modernizing process. India must build 20km of roads per day to keep the raw materials and finished goods moving if it is to meet the growing commercial demand. India does have laws banning children from demanding and dangerous work but they are rarely enforced by the government and encouraged to do so by international organizations such as the World Bank as the required modernization is being accomplished at the lowest possible price. Like all investors, those providing the capital for the infrastructure demand the lowest costs and the highest returns, no matter how this is accomplished. An estimated sixty million children

are working in India. Thus, a very large group is not only being worked to death under terrible conditions, but they miss out on developmental experiences vital to any childhood, to say nothing of the damage to their physical development and their future health. That, of course, will be for the Indian society as a whole to remedy, not the investment capital that will have moved on to something else. For in the capitalist system, the dictates of capital – that money invested to realize a profit – transcends all other considerations, human and environmental. We do not have such conditions for children in Canada, which is why capital and manufacturing is flowing downhill to the areas of lowest cost, but we do have at least one child in five living below the poverty line and missing out on experiences and opportunities that we consider normal, often even suffering malnutrition.

G8 INSANITY

The G8 and G20 summits are just around the corner, set to be hosted in Huntsville and Toronto for a two-day event at the end of June. Items on the agenda for discussion at this year’s summit are predominantly economic, meaning fiscal reforms and cuts to public sector spending as a way to make markets more attractive for investment.

Considering the focus of discussion includes sound fiscal practices, the budget comes across as hypocritical. So far, the price tag is set to reach above 1 billion dollars to host, secure and feed the envoy of international figures. Approximately six months ago, when the budget was initially approved to host the dual summits in Canada, the figure was rounded out at \$179 million dollars. Since then it has ballooned to a staggering \$1.2 billion. Consider-

Common Ownership means that the resources of the world and the means to produce useful goods from them would be owned by everyone and, therefore, by no one. All humanity would be producers meeting as equals to decide what, how, and where to produce based solely on mankind’s needs. Distribution of goods and services would deny no one access to what they needed. This system would end the present class system and render money, trade, employment, exploitation, want, and war obsolete.

We welcome correspondences with our readers. Send email to spc@iname.com or write us at BOX 4280, Victoria BC, V8X 3X8

ing the 2010 Vancouver Olympic budget totalled up to \$890 million for the entire two-week period, one can only shake their head in disbelief when figures as astronomical as this are being discussed. A quick breakdown of the spending only baffles the mind even further. So far, \$160 million is allocated to pay for hospitality, infrastructure, food safety and all the extra goodies to be provided to the international delegates. The remaining \$933 million has been set aside to pay for security measures, ranging from sound cannons to private security companies. One especially outrageous allotment of funds is the \$2 million dollars used to build a fake lake, donned with Muskoka chairs, canoes and a large flat screen television projecting images of the Toronto skyline. Downtown Toronto is starting to look more like a scene from

the novel 1984 than a city in a country that supposedly boasts the right to freedom of speech and assembly, as well as freedom of conscience. One has to wonder why almost a billion dollars needs to be spent to protect the world's leaders from the citizens whose interests they are supposedly serving. Could it be that the interests these leaders are serving have nothing to do with you or I, but to protect the interests of capitalists? As more people come to understand that the policies and backdoor arrangements that are being made at these G8 and G20 summits are in opposition to the interests of the majority of people, it is no wonder that they feel the need to spend almost \$1 billion dollars shutting themselves away behind tall fences and riot police. When all is said and done, there are numerous causes that more worthy of

the kind of money and energy being funnelled into this wasteful and oppressive endeavour. Until we are free from a system where policy and planning is determined by the pursuit of profit we cannot concentrate on the major problems such as poverty, war, starvation, lack of housing and environmental destruction. If we truly want a world that is based upon the principles of humanity and freedom then we must strive towards eliminating the system that is the cause of all the major problems that afflict the world today: capitalism. The Socialist Party holds that only by establishing a system of society based upon the democratic, common ownership of the means and instruments of producing and distributing wealth can we address all the problems plaguing society under capitalism.

LOOKING AFTER OUR CHILDREN

Twenty years after the UN adopted a treaty guaranteeing children's rights, one billion are still deprived of food, shelter, and clean water, and nearly two hundred million are chronically malnourished, UNICEF reported on November 19th. The report, issued on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, said that more children are attending school and fewer are dying (Metro News, 20/Nov/09). UNICEF executive director, Ann Veneman said, "... the challenge for the next twenty years is to build on the progress achieved, working together to reach those children who are still being denied their rights to survival, development, protection, and participation." Looking at the numbers, one may well ask, 'what progress?' One hundred and ninety three countries have ratified the treaty, so why are one billion still living in dire poverty? If the agreement is legally binding on all the countries who have ratified it, and only the US and Somalia have not, then shouldn't we have seen more progress in twenty years? There is no reason to doubt the good intentions of UNICEF, but it

will obviously need more than good intentions. This is just another example of a reform not working, not fulfilling its promise. It doesn't matter whether a reform is proposed by local, national or international governments, if it tries to make capitalism solve the problem, it will fail. Why? Because the problems are created by capitalism, are natural consequences of its normal operation. Capitalism is a system designed to produce surplus value, profit, that goes into the pockets of the investors, without regard to how, when, or where that is done, and it is very successful at doing that. Food, housing, medical care, clean water, etc., are only produced if there is a reasonable expectation of profit, and, if not, production does not occur, or, in some cases, unsold surpluses are destroyed. Thus anyone without the ability to pay must do without, even the necessities. That's the way the system is. No amount of reforms, band-aid, or food-aid, is going to change that. Only COMMON OWNERSHIP of the production and distribution of wealth, where we all have control, can bring the obvious common sense reality of looking after our children properly.

Socialist Party of Canada

BOX 4280 Victoria BC
V8X 3X8, Canada

Victoria

Bill Johnson

bill_ _j@hotmail.com

Vancouver

John Ames

james@telus.net

Manitoba

Jaime Chinchilla Solano

jaimech@gmail.com

Ontario

John Ayers

jpayers@sympatico.ca

Jacob Hodgins

jacobhodgins@hotmail.com

Quebec

Michael Descamps

mich_international@hotmail.com