



GUATEMALA: Indigenous and campesino organizations withdraw from a workshop facilitated by the Canadian “NGO” FOCAL (Canadian Foundation for the Americas), and co-funded, the organizations discovered, by Goldcorp Inc., Skye Resources, the Mining Association of Canada (MAC) and the Prospectors and Developers' Association of Canada (PDAC).

“As representatives of communities and indigenous organizations, ... we directly question the fact that the workshop was financed by the entities responsible of the damages to and exploitation of our natural resources.”

BELOW:

- statement, in English and Spanish, by the participants that withdrew from this workshop
- background article, by Anthony Fenton, about FOCAL, a Canadian “NGO”

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\*Español Abajo\*

For Immediate Release - Guatemala, February 11, 2008

The participants in the workshop "Economic Opportunities and Indigenous Development," to have taken place from the 11th to the 14th of the present month, manifest the following before the national and international community:

First: As representatives of communities affected by mining activities, we were invited to participate in the aforementioned workshop by the Indigenous Development Fund of Guatemala (FODIGUA), to discuss the theme of mining exploration and exploitation in Guatemala.

Second: At the outset of the workshop, we were introduced to facilitators from FOCAL (Canadian Foundation for the Americas), who approached the topic of Indigenous development from the perspective of mining exploration and exploitation, with the supposed intention of learning about our proposals and generating dialogue between the state, mining companies and Indigenous communities.

Third: As the activity began to develop, the facilitator from FOCAL informed us that the workshop was co-financed by Goldcorp (Montana Exploradora de Guatemala), Skye Resources (Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel), the Mining Association of Canada (MAC) and the Prospectors and Developers' Association of Canada (PDAC), by which the bias in the distinctive themes of the workshop and later in the proposed dialogue were made immediately clear.

Fourth: That public opinion be informed about the position of Indigenous communities with respect to mining in Guatemala, which has been manifested through more than 17 community referenda (consulta) which have rejected mining activity.

Therefore: As representatives of communities and indigenous organizations, and analyzing the content and the intentions of the workshop, we directly question the fact that the workshop was financed by the entities responsible of the damages to and exploitation of our natural resources.

We Resolve:

- a) To withdraw our participation in the aforementioned workshop.
- b) To reiterate our firm commitment to continue the struggle in defense of Mother Earth and for the respect and dignity of our peoples.
- c) To urge Indigenous communities and organizations in solidarity to be vigilant of the permanent attempts by the state and transnational companies to publicly manipulate our struggles.

Guatemala City, Guatemala, February 11th 2008.

By organizations and communities from: Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Retalhuleu and San Marcos.

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### Comunicado de Prensa

Los participantes en el taller "Oportunidades Económicas y el Desarrollo Indígena" de las fechas del 11-14 de febrero ante la comunidad nacional y internacional exponen:

Primero: Como representantes de comunidades afectadas por actividades mineras, que fuimos invitados a participar al taller antes mencionado por el FODIGUA (Fondo de Desarrollo Indígena Guatemalteco) el cual se trataba de abordar el tema de exploración y explotación minera en Guatemala.

Segundo: Al inicio del taller, se presentaron facilitadores de FOCAL (Fundación Canadiense para las Américas), quienes abordaban el desarrollo indígena desde la perspectiva de la exploración y explotación minera, con el supuesto objetivo de conocer nuestras propuestas y generar un dialogo entre el estado, empresas mineras y comunidades indígenas.

Tercero: Durante el desarrollo de la actividad, según versión de FOCAL, el taller estaba co-financiado por Goldcorp (Montana Exploradora de Guatemala), Skye (Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel), Asociación Minera de Canada (MAC) y la Asociación de Prospectoras y PDAC, razón por la cual de inmediato se evidenciaba la tendencia en el enfoque de los distintos temas que abordarían en el taller y posteriormente en el dialogo.

Cuarto: Que la opinión publica conoce la postura de las comunidades indígenas respecto a la actividad minera en Guatemala, la cual se ha manifestado a través de las mas de 17 consultas comunitarias en donde se rechaza la actividad minera.

Por lo tanto: Como representantes de comunidades y organizaciones indígenas presentes, y analizando el contenido y las intenciones del taller, cuestionamos directamente el hecho que el mismo fuera financiado por entes responsables de los daños y el aprovechamiento de nuestros recursos naturales.

Resolvimos:

- a) Cancelar nuestra participación en dicha actividad.
- b) Reiterar nuestro firme compromiso para continuar en la lucha en defensa de la madre naturaleza y el respeto y la dignidad de nuestros pueblos.
- c) Instamos a las comunidades indígenas y organizaciones hermanos y solidarios a estar vigilantes de los permanentes intentos de mediatizar nuestra lucha, por parte del estado y las empresas transnacionales.

Dado en Guatemala la Asunción, 11 de febrero, 2008.

Por organizaciones y comunidades de: Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Retaluleu y San Marcos.

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## CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO "DEMOCRACY PROMOTION"

By Anthony Fenton, Canadian Dimension, November/December 2006 Issue

<http://canadiandimension.com/articles/2006/10/28/709/>

“FOCAL is a useful case study for understanding the extent of Canada's overt operations in Latin America, as well as its inter-connectedness with the U.S. model of "democracy promotion" generally, and with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) specifically.”

Since it signed NAFTA (1994) and joined the Organization of American States, the Canadian government has aligned its foreign policy with that of the United States more closely than at any point in recent history. At the same time, the Canadian government has taken an increasing interest in the affairs of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Some attention has been paid to things like joint military exercises in the Caribbean with the U.S. and other allies, support for the damaging practices of Canadian mining companies and the expanding presence of Canadian financial interests in the global South, but a newer area of Canada's foreign-policy posture warrants scrutiny:

Canada's deepening involvement in the controversial field of international "democracy promotion" activities.

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), a "quasi-governmental" organization, is a key but under-appreciated actor in assisting Canada's foreign-policy interests for the region in the name of democracy, private enterprise and free markets. As "the right arm" of the Canadian government in the region, FOCAL is on the vanguard of broader trends in Canadian "democracy promotion" activities in the region. The organization is notable for its material and ideological ties to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other U.S. agencies.

## PROMOTING DEMOCRACY THROUGH "OVERT OPERATIONS"

The NED was created in 1982 by a handful of powerful people, including former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Gone were the days of politically untenable support for military dictatorships, a strategy that was rigorously pursued for most of the Cold War period by the U.S. security and intelligence apparatus. This period saw over two dozen separate U.S. military- and CIA-led interventions throughout Latin America. "Where the Cold War-era CIA once crushed genuinely democratic movements, the NED attempts to coopt them," write James Ciment and Immanuel Ness in *CovertAction Quarterly*.

According to investigative-journalist-turned-social-theorist William I. Robinson, NED is "organically integrated into the overall execution of U.S. national security and foreign policy." Robinson argues that "democracy promotion ... is more accurately called polyarchy." He defines "polyarchy" as "a system in which a small group actually rules, and participation in decision-making by the majority is confined to choosing among competing elites in tightly controlled electoral processes." Former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott described the realpolitik reasoning behind the shift from supporting authoritarianism to promoting polyarchy this way: "democracies are more likely to be reliable partners in trade and diplomacy and more likely to pursue foreign and defense policies that are compatible with American interests."

Pioneered by the U.S., democracy promotion has gone global. While the U.S. is still the dominant player when it comes to exporting polyarchy, a multitude of Northern countries are adopting similar methods. Most recently, the United Nations established the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF)," which has already announced that it will be dispersing \$36 million in "democracy funds" to "civil society organizations" around the world. UNDEF was

adopted without a vote by the UN General Assembly at the 2005 UN World Summit, along with other controversial, interventionist endeavours like the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine, a Canadian initiative which allows, through a de facto revision of the UN Charter, for military intervention and the suspension of state sovereignty when states have been deemed "failing or failed." In preparing to enter the democracy-promotion field, UNDEF officials met with U.S. agencies, including a number of NED affiliates, as a first order of business.

### Canada in the Game

In one of the few critical analyses of Canada and democratization, Mark Neufeld argues that it is not to be overlooked that the U.S. depends on second-tier core states like Canada fulfilling their functions as legitimizers not to mention taking a lead role in contexts "where U.S. activism would do more harm than good."

Neufeld describes how the "democratization" "in/of" Canadian foreign policy was designed to "re-establish the legitimacy of Canadian foreign policy in the eyes of its counter-consensus critics." The critics Neufeld refers to were scrutinizing Canadian foreign policy for its commitment to emerging neoliberal capitalism, tied aid, the structural adjustment policies of the IMF, and Canadian banking and corporate interests.

Critics who demanded the "democratization" of Canadian foreign policy got more than they bargained for. They were transformed into "stakeholders." "Stakeholder politics is an excellent tool of political management for state officials.... It ... binds the stakeholders more tightly to the policies eventually adopted," says professor Kin Nossal.

Beginning in the late 1980's, the Canadian government created several arms-length agencies dedicated to "democracy promotion." Thomas Axworthy and Les Campbell, who have recently proposed and conceptualized a "blueprint" for an NED-like structure under the banner of the "Democracy Canada Institute," point out that policy makers were initially seeking to create an organization similar to the National Endowment for Democracy.

Things did not proceed quite as planned, and Parliament instead created the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD, later renamed Rights & Democracy). Ed Broadbent was named R&D's first president, following his retirement as leader of the NDP. It is no secret, however, that R&D maintains a close affiliation with the NED, sharing a database on the NED's website along with funding, and partnering with some of the same organizations as NED. On its website, the NED describes R&D as a "counterpart institution" and reveals that, "During the planning phase for the new Centre, members of a Parliamentary task force consulted with the leadership of NED."

Campbell's and Axworthy's contributions demonstrate the non-partisan nature of overt operations in Canada. Campbell was once chief of staff for former NDP leader Audrey McLaughlin, and later joined one of the NED's core institutes, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), where he is regional director for Middle East operations. He has recruited so many Canadians to work there that nearly a quarter of NDI's staff are Canadian. Axworthy, meanwhile, is a former Liberal insider (and brother of former Liberal foreign-affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy) and a one-time secretary to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

### FOCAL POINT: REGIME CHANGE

FOCAL is a useful case study for understanding the extent of Canada's overt operations in Latin America, as well as its inter-connectedness with the U.S. model of "democracy promotion" generally, and with the NED specifically.

FOCAL was created in 1990 in response to a cabinet-level decision to deepen ties with Latin America. Its primary role, according to a government-commissioned evaluation of its activities in 2004, is to function "as a bridge between civil society, government and the private sector." Although it claims to be a "non-partisan, independent NGO," the authors of the evaluation make it clear that FOCAL is widely perceived to be no more than an extension of the government itself.

As part of FOCAL's mandate to nurture ties and network with the private sector, its board chairman, John W. Graham, brought two well-connected individuals, Beatrice Rangel and Alan J. Stoga, onto FOCAL's board in 2002. Graham got to know Rangel when he was Canada's ambassador to Venezuela in the early 1990's. At that time, Rangel was an advisor and chief of staff to Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez, an unpopular ally of the U.S. in its "low-intensity" war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and the object of a failed coup attempt by Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez in 1992. Rangel spent many years in the business world working for Gustavo Cisneros, a billionaire media mogul, a personal friend both of George Bush, Sr. and Brian Mulroney, and an alleged backer of the April, 2002 coup attempt against Hugo Chavez. In 2004, the former president, Perez, said that President Chavez "must die like a dog, because he deserves it."

There are strong indications that Rangel has a rich background in overt and possibly covert operations. A section of William I. Robinson's *A Faustian Bargain* is devoted to "the Venezuelan connection," which provided key support to the U.S. in its efforts to subvert the Nicaraguan Revolution. Like President Reagan at the time, President Perez believed the "Nicaraguan Revolution should be contained ... through the bolstering of the anti-Sandinista civic opposition." Citing "Venezuelan diplomats ... and ... sources close to U.S. intelligence," Robinson describes the role of Rangel, who Perez had appointed as his personal representative "in some contacts with the Bush administration." "Rangel ... met with administration officials in Washington several times during the first half of 1989. On at least one occasion, she personally carried a suitcase stuffed with secret funds from Washington and Miami to Caracas for use in Venezuelan-based Nicaraguan operations." Elsewhere, Robinson describes how Perez worked closely with the NED and the CIA. "The secret flow of funds clearly involved the CIA and NED as well as the State Department...."

In an e-mail response to Canadian Dimension, Rangel denied carrying bags of money. "I never received and have not received any funds from the U.S. government except for taxation returns; I never brought any funds to Managua." Robinson, in an e-mail response, stood by his original sources and information.

Subsequent to joining FOCAL's Board, Rangel would facilitate the first National Endowment for Democracy grant for FOCAL. She did so in 2004, through her connections to the NED's then-Latin American and Caribbean director, Christopher Sabatini. Rangel told me why she thought it would be a good idea for a Canadian organization to step in to do the NED's work: "I believe the United States has, right now, such a bad image, the work would proceed much better, and it would be a better investment, for NED if FOCAL does the job because Canada, Canadians don't elicit these kinds of feelings of rejection that Americans do now."

FOCAL's role as NED "proxy" may also be due to the greater scrutiny of the NED's activities within Venezuela. In *The Chavez Code*, her expose of the U.S. role in the 2002 coup attempt (detailed through Freedom of Information Act documents), Eva Golinger mentions Beatrice Rangel in the context of the NED's history in Venezuela. Golinger also contextualizes the allegations against Rangel's employer, Gustavo Cisneros.

As a result of Golinger's book, there has been far greater scrutiny of the NED's activities and charges of treason against some Venezuelan recipients of NED funding like Sumate. At the time of the coup, Rangel's friend Sabatini was overseeing the NED's operations. In her wide-ranging interview with Canadian Dimension, Rangel dismissed Golinger as a "typical American from the left that believes in conspiracy theories." And, defending the NED, she said, "I think that the NED has helped institutional development throughout Latin America. I do not think for one minute that the NED has worked to subvert democratic governance."

Today Rangel is also the president and CEO of AMLA Consulting, which is owned by fellow FOCAL board member Alan Stoga. The latter also heads Zemi Communications, a public-relations firm that "develops and manages communications programs for major corporations as well as governments." Demonstrating perhaps the true nature of the private-sector ties that FOCAL is cultivating, Stoga has long-standing links to former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger. For many years, Stoga worked as the chief economist at Kissinger & Associates.

The Zemi Communications website lists three "strategic partners," one of which is AMLA consulting. The other two are Kissinger & Associates and McLarty-Kissinger. Stoga is also on the board of the elitist business

roundtable Council of the Americas.

Christopher Sabatini, who left the NED in 2005, and has denied requests for an interview, works for the Council, while Gustavo Cisneros is on its chairman's international advisory council along with Tom d'Aquino, the prominent head of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives.

FOCAL chair John Graham's history further speaks to FOCAL's ties to Washington and Canada's role as a U.S. foreign-policy proxy via the Organization of American States (OAS). Graham is a long-time overt operator in a number of capacities. He was the first head of the Unit for Promotion of Democracy within the OAS, which Canada helped create soon after joining the OAS. Since then, a Canadian has always headed this foundation.

Graham was later a consultant for IFES, the NED affiliate that specializes in electoral intervention and human rights co-optation.

Other FOCAL board members with ties to the OAS include Paul Durand, Canada's Ambassador to the OAS, and Elizabeth Spehar, who was the head of the UPD until she took on the role of overseeing "demonstration elections" in Haiti on behalf of the OAS. In this capacity, she helped carry out the "trusteeship" role that was strongly advocated by FOCAL during parliamentary hearings into Canada's role in Haiti.

#### TAKING THE LEAD IN HAITI

FOCAL would play a central role in providing legitimacy and justification for Canada's role in the 2004 coup d'tat that overthrew Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. FOCAL's official mandate commits it to "support Canadian engagement in the reconstruction of the Haitian state and economy." They have appeared as witnesses for Parliamentary Committees, organized high-level meetings with Haitian, Canadian and other regional officials, and have cultivated close ties with Haiti's elites, many of which were involved in the campaign to overthrow Aristide. FOCAL has also been among the most vocal in calling for a "trusteeship" over Haiti. In April, 2004, John Graham flirted with this idea during a Parliamentary hearing:

"In the case of Haiti, there is a need for international organizations to occupy some of the space that has been abandoned by the Haitian government.... We have to be extremely careful and when I say "we," I mean Canada or the international community as a whole in addressing this kind of problem lest we have the stones of anti-colonialism hurled at us. We don't want to call it a trusteeship.... But some control has to be vested in the international community to give Haiti a beginning."

Carlo Dade is a FOCAL senior advisor and has been the main point person for FOCAL's "Canada and the Rebuilding of Haiti" program. A strong advocate of a "leadership role" for Canada in post-Aristide Haiti, he told the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs:

"Canada and the Caribbean really stand out in terms of the historical relation vis- -vis Haiti, and this creates a huge opportunity, a huge amount of political capital that we have to spend in Haiti.... Canada also enjoys a perception in the region as a counterweight to what is viewed as heavy U.S. involvement in the region, a voice of moderation, a positive influence ... and that creates an opportunity to engage too."

Dade also went to considerable lengths to relate Canada's potential role in Haiti as a way of bolstering Canada-U.S. relations: "The U.S. would welcome Canadian involvement and Canada's taking the lead in Haiti. The administration in Washington has its hands more than full with Afghanistan, Iraq.... This is a chance for Canada to step up and provide that sort of focused attention and leadership, and the administration would welcome this."

Part of FOCAL's efforts at "reconstructing the Haitian economy" have included pushing the Canadian government to endorse the privatization of key Haitian industries, a process that has been resisted by Haitians at the grassroots level, as well as by President Aristide prior to his overthrow in 2004.

A "policy brief" not intended for public dissemination, which FOCAL submitted to CIDA, proposes that, "There is a clear need for a rational, transparent and intelligent privatization programme." This report was the result of a

high-level meeting co-hosted by FOCAL in September, 2005, which brought several members of Haiti's elite to discuss the theme of "the role of the private sector" in Haiti with Canadian political and diplomatic officials. Former prime minister and FOCAL board member Joe Clark chaired the meeting.

FOCAL provides us with an example of the extent to which Canada's emergent "democracy promotion" apparatus is "interlocked" with that of the U.S., which remains the dominant player in the field. FOCAL's evident distaste for populism and revolutionary movements also suggests that it will be called upon, as in Haiti, to offer legitimization, justification and intellectual and material support for future "transitions" that Canada intends to be a part of. One high-ranking Canadian diplomat in Haiti inferred as much, when CD interviewed him in September, 2005:

"Canada is one of the most important aid donors in the country and I think now there is a new spirit and if we can use this new multilateralism to solve the crisis in Haiti, this could be, I would say, an example for the crisis to come in this hemisphere. We could think, for example, what will happen when Cuba will be in transition, will it be just an American issue? Or will it be an inter-hemispheric issue?"

Canada's Latin American and Caribbean policy has become more prominent and more closely integrated with that of the United States. Through the development of an extensive Canadian "democracy (polyarchy) promotion" apparatus that has material and ideological ties to the dominant and ultra-interventionist U.S. apparatus, Canada may pose a serious danger to any popular movement that should arise in the hemisphere with the intention of empowering poor people and bucking the Washington/Ottawa consensus.

Further Reading:

- \* William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Common Courage Press, 2004).
- \* James Ciment and Immanuel Ness, "NED and the Empire's New Clothes," *CovertAction Quarterly* (Spring-Summer, 1999).
- \* William I. Robinson, *A Faustian Bargain: U.S. Intervention in the Nicaraguan Elections and American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (Westview Press, 1992).
- \* William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge, 1996).
- \* Mark Neufeld, "Democratization in/of Canadian Foreign Policy: Critical Reflections," *Studies in Political Economy* (Spring, 1999).
- \* Thomas S. Axworthy and Leslie Campbell, "Advancing Democracy Abroad: A Proposal to Create the Democracy Canada Institute," Paper Presented to Institute for Research on Public Policy, Canada's Role in International Assistance to Democratic Development, September 10-11, 2004.
- \* David Corn, "Our Gang in Venezuela?", *The Nation* (August 5, 2002).

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