

DECLARE BAY STREET A GREED-FREE ZONE: MAY DAY ON BAY, A NON-VIOLENT BLOCKADE TO SHUT DOWN THE HEARTLAND OF CANADIAN CORPORATE VIOLENCE, MAY 1, 1996, MORNING RUSH HOUR

The Bank of Montreal has called on us to resist corporate violence. A series of its ads shows a well-heeled businessman holding a placard which reads: "No Business as Usual."

Business as Usual—as practiced by transnational corporations and banks—means starving children, violence against women, racism, mistreatment of working people and high unemployment, the murder of First Nations peoples, plunder of the environment.

Their idea of a level playing field (through free trade and NAFTA) is equal exploitation of all people: no health and safety regulations, no universal, accessible health care, no unions or social agencies standing up for our rights, and jail, torture and murder of those who dissent, whether in China, Mexico or Ipperwash.

In essence, Business as Usual is a no-holds-barred attack on the most vulnerable citizens of the planet to benefit the wealthiest.

The excuse for this attack is the need to control "deficits."

But the economic crisis of our times—indeed, of all history—is not a shortfall of funds. It's a question of who owns what, unequal distribution of that wealth, and the billions of people who suffer as a result of this greed. Take a stroll through Rosedale or peruse the business pages and you get the picture.

Canada is one of the wealthiest nations on the planet, with the highest per capita accumulation of billionaires of any country. The big Five Banks in 1995 posted \$5 billion in profits, but Canadian corporations owe in excess of \$40 billion in deferred taxes.

Canada is also home to an alarming rate of child poverty, chronically high unemployment and underemployment, and ongoing environmental degradation. The metropolitan region which is home to Bay Street is also home to a mini-city of perhaps a quarter-million people who are hungry, forced to rely on food banks. One in three Metro kids is forced to live on welfare.

Transnational corporations are the engine which drive deficit hysteria. Their ownership of the media allows them to whip a nation into frenzy, reviling single

mothers forced to rely on welfare while celebrating the multi-million dollar salaries of its CEOs.

Forgotten in the name-calling and attacks on the poor is the cause of this deficit: greed.

The deficit, according to StatsCan, is only 2-4% composed of social spending. Over 50% is due to uncollected taxes on corporate and individual wealth, and 46% is due to high interest rates.

In the current world economic system, governments are even more obviously those agents whose strings are pulled by the Royal Bank, Bell Canada and Chrysler. The "economy" of Ford is larger than that of Saudi Arabia and Norway combined.

Although opposed to the policies of cutbacks pursued by Ontario and Ottawa, we realize that the directives to gut the basic rights to food, shelter and security of the person are coming from Bay Street and international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund.

We are completely opposed to the violence of these corporate entities. Although we are angry, we refuse to adopt their violence. Instead, through active, non-violent confrontation to stop these injustices, we seek to create a life-affirming, greed-free zone in the heart of the bottom-line district.

It is May Day, a traditional day of solidarity for oppressed peoples around the world. It's a labour holiday, it's Mother Jones's birthday. It is also a time of rebirth, of spring,

new ideas, new hopes, new dreams. We hope actions like May Day on Bay will serve as an inspiration for the rebirth of massive, non-violent resistance to corporate attempts to make us all minimum-wage slaves in McWorld.

Again, we will name corporations and policies which are violent, but we refuse to do violence to them or their leaders. Instead, we seek to transform them, to empower the many who are hurt by their policies, and to awaken the conscience of those who stand by silently as our children are served up for Global Assembly Line, Inc.

We heed (for once) the advice of the Bank of Montreal this May Day and declare boldly, defiantly, non-violently: "No More Business As Usual."

While Canadian corporations owe in excess of \$40 billion in deferred taxes, child poverty has risen 55% since 1989. More than 20% of Canadian children—at least 1,447,000—officially live in poverty. The number of Canadian communities with food banks has increased 187% since 1989; two-parent families in poverty are up 48%, single parent families in poverty up 13%.

May Day on Bay is organized by the Ontario Coalition for Non-Violent Action. To endorse the project call or mail in your organization's name. Donations are gratefully accepted to offset costs of printing, travel, phone bills, and action costs, and can be sent to us c/o P.O. Box 73620, 509 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto, Ontario M6C 1C0. (416) 651-5800.