



Coffee Roasters Co-op

# "full o' beans" newsletter

Summer/Fall 2002

Wolfville/Grand Pré, Nova Scotia

Issue 12



## Stanfest Edition

With deadlines looming for our summer newsletter and no time to do it in the foreseeable future, my only choice was to combine a little writing with the Stan Rogers Songwriters Festival.

Every year, Just Us! not only sponsors Stanfest but sets up a coffee stand that puts out more cups of "Rise Again" Blend than notes in a J. P. Cormier solo.

The newsletter came together while listening to so many wonderful, dedicated and passionate performers in the land of Stan, Canso. What a treasure this festival is - a real place struggling like crazy to survive, real music, real weather and a real good time - everything Stan Rogers stood for - no holds barred.

## Fair Trade Confusion

Sometimes it is difficult for the average consumer to know what's what.

It seems for the most part, they have figured out "organic" products not only as a way of getting better food but also as the only way to avoid being guinea pigs in the giant GMO experiment.

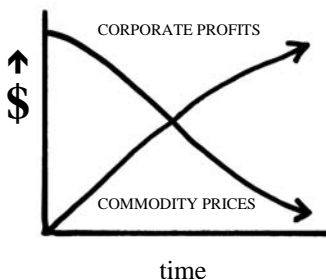
What do people look for if they want to make sure something is "organic"? It has to be certified organic. It is no longer enough to claim "all natural", "no additives" or even "organic". They trust the certification and of course the brand name and the retailer.

With organics, consumers know enough and care enough that the seller would not want to risk betraying this trust. They would not even want to be unclear about what is and what is not certified organic or they would risk serious backlash from their customers.

With fair trade, there isn't quite the same sophistication or urgency on the part of consumers - yet. Fair Trade isn't something that affects "us" as much as it affects "others". What's the big deal if we're fuzzy about ethics as long as people think they are doing the right thing?

Continued on page 3

JUSTICE ?  
PROGRESS ?  
RESPECT ?



## Code of Ethics for a Millennium of Peace

*There will be no Peace if there is no Justice.*

*There will be no Justice if there is no Equity.*

*There will be no Equity if there is no Progress.*

*There will be no Progress if there is no Democracy.*

*There will be no Democracy if there is no respect for the Identity and Dignity of the Peoples and Cultures.*

*Rigoberta Menchu Tum (Guatemala)*

*Nobel Peace Prize Winner*





Val having tea with a family in Indugashinna, Sri Lanka

## Interview with Val on Return from Sri Lanka

Valerie (Sales) recently attended the fifteenth anniversary celebrations of the Indulgashinna Tea Project in Sri Lanka. They are the world's first certified organic tea producers. We asked Val, never at a loss for words, to tell us briefly how it went.

Q: How did you enjoy the trip?

A: *I'd go back in a flash.*

Q: Why?

A: *Because it was beautiful*

Q: What most impressed you?

A: *The people I met made me feel so welcome. They had next to nothing, but were so generous.*



Val making friends wherever she went.

Q: You visited different tea producers?

A: *Yes, I visited the fair trade, organic producers and other more conventional plantations.*

Q: What were the main differences?

A: *It was quite shocking. I had no idea how tea workers had been treated historically and are still treated - terrible living conditions. They seemed so sad and broken.*

Q: And what was the difference with fair trade producers?

A: *Dramatic - decent housing, clean water, health care, day care and education. They have had opportunities to learn, take leadership and improve their own lives.*

Q: What does the future hold?

A: *Hopefully the market will grow for them and others can also benefit.*

If you want to know more, Val loves to talk about Sri Lanka.

### Child Sponsorships - Child Pornography?

This is a difficult subject to broach but one I've felt strongly about for some time, so I'll write something and leave it up to the "editorial review committee" to make the final decision.

The subject is child sponsorship campaigns in the mass media. The ones with the pathetic images of children starving, sick, malformed, being pestered by flies, seeming to have lost all hope. This is what a friend of mine calls the "pornography of poverty". Whose heart would not be ripped out by such graphic images of innocent suffering? To me it seems so transparent and so cynical. The costs are so great and the benefits so small. It is such a flagrant exploitation of not only the people depicted but also of the sincere desire of viewers to do "something". I know people who support these programs (and I see it as support for programs, rather than children) who should know better - respected university professors and international development workers. Their hearts have been touched and they feel good about their contributions to the point of going to visit their "adopted" child in the third world.

All I can say is that the problems depicted on these programs are not individual problems, but systemic problems. I have traveled in a lot of third world countries and have seen people in the most hopeless circumstances struggling valiantly and creatively to help themselves and others against monstrous forces of injustice, corruption and exploitation, driven mostly by foreigners. They don't need this kind of pity and token crumbs of charity. They do need, among other things, clean water, health programs and economic development that doesn't exploit them or their resources. There are countless development organizations with integrity which are trying to help third world communities and address these needs: Oxfam, Red Cross, Development and Peace, to name a few. Of course we can also investigate and lobby our government and Canadian corporations to be socially and environmentally responsible.

**"\$1.5 trillion change hands every day through currency trading; 97% of all currency trades are for speculative purposes, rather than to fund the exchange of "real" goods and services."**

New Internationalist, July 2002

**"OUT OF THE TOP 100 ECONOMIC UNITS ON THE PLANET, 51 ARE CORPORATIONS. THE OTHER 49 ARE COUNTRIES."**

INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES, 2000



## Confusion (continued from page 1)

However as consumers become more knowledgeable about the ethics of global trade and our interconnectiveness with third world producers, hopefully they will develop the same sense of conviction and urgency. In other words they will want to know that the "fair trade" products they purchase adhere to specific criteria concerning the producers and the environment.

As it stands now, retailers and consumers may feel they are doing the right thing by supporting "fair trade" when they are not.

The words "fair trade" are such common words that they cannot be trademarked. Basically anyone can call what they are doing "fair trade" and you pretty much have to take their word for it.

An even bigger issue is that some companies who do "a bit of fair trade" (i.e. certified fair trade) can be purposely fuzzy, if not downright misleading, about what is and what is not "fair trade". They can give the impression through advertising campaigns and in-store displays that they are 100% fair trade when, in fact, they may be 1% or 2%.

As with organics, the only real hope is for consumers to keep their retailers honest by asking questions about fair trade expecting open and accurate information in return.

Lastly, some businesses look for cheaper alternatives to fair trade. And fair trade is expensive. Aside from paying producers over twice as much for coffee, the certification seal actually adds over \$0.40 per pound of coffee. It is much less expensive to boost your business image in other ways - supporting causes like "bird friendly", "shade grown" or "Coffee Kids" (a charity for children and their families in coffee growing communities). Do these projects really make a difference like fair trade does? Are you empowering producers to not only provide for themselves, but make decisions for themselves and have hope for a better future? Obviously not.

The only way for this to happen is to have an internationally agreed upon mechanism like "fair trade" that is clearly defined and independently monitored, as with organics. Whether this is supported in the end depends largely on pressure from consumers. Amazingly enough, it does not take many passionate consumers to promote honesty and integrity.



Guatemalan young people in the village where the Just Us! Intern lived.

## "Breaking the Silence" Coffee

"Breaking the Silence" is a Maritimes - Guatemala solidarity network that has been speaking out against injustice in Guatemala since the 1980's.

Since the European conquest of the 16th century, more and more land has been taken over and used in the interests of the conquering elite. As coffee and banana plantations grew bigger and indigenous people more exploited, the government became more oppressive to maintain order. After WWII, reform governments were elected that returned unused and foreign owned lands to peasant farmers. However, in 1954, to protect the interests of the US owned United Fruit Company, the CIA stepped in to overthrow the elected government and their reforms and replace it with military rule which has continued with US support to this day - as corrupt and ruthless as any government in history.

And we hear little or nothing - hence "Breaking the Silence". The Breaking the Silence network has been primarily involved in organizing exchanges with Guatemala so Atlantic Canadians can learn and speak about Guatemalan realities.

One of the communities closest to Breaking the Silence is San Lucas Toliman - one of twelve communities named after the Christian apostles, surrounding "the most beautiful lake in the world", Lake Atitlan

The area is dominated by coffee - mostly grown on large plantations for large coffee companies. Small scale producers have struggled to eke out a living but were generally paid peanuts for their coffee by buyers (known as Coyotes) for the larger companies. In recent years, world coffee prices have fallen to an all time low, far lower than the cost of production. The situation is very bleak for small producers. The only hope is to go through the process of becoming a certified Fair Trade co-op and eventually certified organic. The challenge, of course, is finding the resources to do so. Another problem is that because the supply of fair trade coffee is far greater than the demand, the Fair Trade Register is closed to new groups for now.

Together with Breaking the Silence, Just Us! has sponsored a CIDA intern, Caren Weisbart, to work with coffee producers around San Lucas Toliman with the idea of developing a potential long term relationship. We have just purchased our first shipment of 40 bags (6000+ lbs.) at fair trade prices (even though it is not officially fair trade). This will give them additional resources to pursue certification.

We will promote the sale of "Breaking the Silence" coffee through their network, but will certainly appreciate the support of any of our customers to help build this fair trade co-op from the ground up

If you are interested in supporting "Breaking the Silence", please give us a call.



**NOT BY CHARITY,  
NOR BY SYMPATHY,  
BUT THROUGH OUR HARD  
WORK AND INTEGRITY,  
WE SHALL STRIVE FOR OUR  
DIGNITY**

Motto of Ankur Kala Women's Centre,  
Fair Trade Producer for Ten Thousand Villages.



## State of G-8?

*"The challenges before the leaders of the G-8 may seem massive. Yet these are not only the responsibility of the eight leaders, but of all citizens of their countries. The challenges are recognizable: to discover new strategies to eradicate poverty, to create just economic relations, to defend the global environment, and to share the abundant life that God meant to be available to all."*

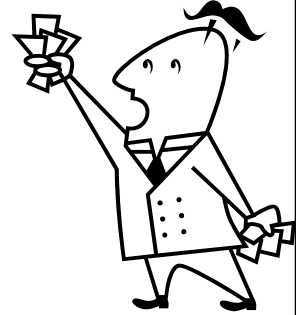
Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, June 2002.

## Just Investing!

We just ran out of time for our Just Us! Community Investment Fund proposal last year. It requires an extensive proposal to the Securities Commission and the establishment of a separate Board of Directors by September so we can promote it in the fall.

Again, keep Just Us! in mind. Your investment would be not only eligible for a 30% Equity Tax Credit, but also for an RRSP.

Imagine, an investment you can feel good about.



## Recycling Contest

Sharon LeBlanc from Chester Basin, NS has been stockpiling all of her used coffee bags waiting for a good idea for recycling.



She suggested we have a contest to test and reward the ingenuity of Just Us! Coffee drinkers.

You could be making a great contribution and there will be prizes for the top three ideas before November 1, 2002. Thanks for giving it some thought.

## Fair Trade Art

If you come by Just Us! In the next few months, you'll find an artist in residence. Raul Guzman Enriquez is a mural painter from the UCIRI Cooperative in Oaxaca, Mexico. He paints large murals depicting the life of coffee farmers before and after fair trade.



His work is vibrant and passionate and we feel very fortunate to have him with us. Come by and see his work in progress.

## M&M's Bitter? Let Mars Know

Global Exchange([globalexchange.org](http://globalexchange.org)) has been a successful fair trade coffee campaigner in the past.

Now Mars is asking its customers to vote for a new colour of M&M's.

Global Exchange suggests you go to the M&M's website (<http://gvc.mms.com/us/>) and select "write in your own colour". Instead of a colour put in "certified fair trade".

Struggling cocoa farmers will thank you!

**"NO MATTER WHAT THE SHADE,  
MAKE MY M&M'S FAIR TRADE."**

## Corporate Watchdog



[www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org) - Reports by sector and company  
[www.business-humanrights.org](http://www.business-humanrights.org) - Legal actions against companies  
[www.multinationalmonitor.org](http://www.multinationalmonitor.org) - Monthly U.S reports  
[www.transnationale.org](http://www.transnationale.org) - Comprehensive, multilingual guide  
NEW INTERNATIONALIST, July 2002

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