



**Union of Employees of  
DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE**

**(FEESP-CSN)**

**Syndicat des employé-es de  
DÉVELOPPEMENT ET PAIX**

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Extract analysis presented by the employees  
of Développement and Peace  
at the National Council

## **INTRODUCTION**

The discussions that will be taking place over the weekend are neither simple nor easy. They will require a lot of thought and courage from the members of the National Council. This crisis is unique because it questions the values and mission of Development and Peace, its very raison d'être. In opening the International Development Committee, Gilio asked the following questions: *Development: For what and for whom?* You will be asked to answer these questions over the weekend. The answer you give will have consequences and a profound and lasting impact on the organization, both in the Global South and here in Canada.

Several groups of employees undertook a reflection to identify what those consequences will be. The Union Executive deemed the situation serious enough to ask Management to organize a Staff Day. This day allowed everyone to have the same information and share some initial thoughts. The Union Executive also convened an extraordinary general assembly; I want to thank the directors who allowed this meeting to be held during a working day and a special thank-you is in order for the Directors in the Education Department, who agreed to turn our departmental meeting upside down to permit this meeting. The vast majority of unionized staff were present and contributed to the discussions that led to thinking that we want to share with you today.

## **BACKGROUND**

We are well aware that we live in an era of change, not just in Canada but globally. We are in a world that is increasingly turning towards a conservative ideology. There is clearly a turn to the right in several societies, as well as in the Universal Church.

What will be our response to this shift that runs counter to the prophetic vision that gave rise to Development and Peace nearly 45 years ago?

The events of recent months are forcing us to respond to these questions that have been hanging over our heads since 2009. To think about this properly, let's take the time to recall the facts.

## THE FACTS ABOUT PRODH:

Father Luis Arriaga, director of the Centre Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights (PRODH), was extended an invitation in early December 2010 to participate in the Share Lent 2011 campaign and he very quickly accepted our invitation. That information was sent to the three relevant Directors.

As soon as the activities calendar for Father Luis Arriaga's tour circulated through the networks of the Ottawa Archdiocese, around last March 20, new attacks against the Centre PRODH were published, starting with two LSN blogs. Just like in 2009, the allegations concerned a supposed link between the work of PRODH and the promotion of abortion, using accusation by association. Similar charges had been laid against the same human rights centre in 2009 and had been refuted by the CCCB's Committee of Inquiry in 2009.

On March 24, Luis Arriaga received a letter signed by the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, in which he was asked to respond to the attacks published on LSN within the next four days. In addition, this letter informed him that steps had been taken with the Cardinal of Mexico to obtain "credentials."

In a letter sent on March 28, the PRODH team responded strongly to the allegations, denounced the defamation of which it was a victim and strongly showcased the work it promotes defending human rights in Mexico (see letter from the Centre PRODH in appendix). It also enclosed a letter from the Secretary General of the Episcopal Commission for Social Pastoral of the Archdiocese of Mexico, which confirmed that the Jesuit Luis Arriaga has been advising this body of the Mexican bishops on human rights issues since 2008.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these waves of protest and the doubts raised about PRODH's work, Luis Arriaga chose not to cancel his trip to Canada and the management team at Development and Peace reiterated their support. Moreover, after receiving the letter from PRODH, Archbishop Prendergast invited the pastors of his diocese to participate in large numbers at the diocesan meeting on Saturday, April 2, and listen to the words of Luis Arriaga with openness.

However, in the hours that followed, pressure from various groups continued. Now in Canada, Luis Arriaga found himself obliged to continue his defence when he was asked to sign the following declaration: "The Centre PRODH supports the cause of life from conception to natural death; the Director and staff reject any link associating the Centre with abortion rights." Lawyer and human rights defender Luis Arriaga refused to sign such a declaration which, in his own words, is a violation of basic human rights.

At the same time, the CCCB let it be known, through Development and Peace directors, that Luis Arriaga could no longer attend the dinner organized at their Ottawa premises in the next hour. Other partners of Development and Peace had been invited to this dinner within the framework of Share Lent.

By late afternoon on March 31, after trying in every possible way to the answer the charges of which he was the victim since the beginning of this campaign against him and his organization,

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<sup>1</sup> See PRODH letter in appendix.

Luis Arriaga notified Development and Peace of his decision to return to Mexico. His reason for being here, to show his support for Share Lent, had been overshadowed by the crisis.

A few days later, the CCCB informed Development and Peace that it had received a negative letter from the office of the Archdiocese of Mexico. That letter led to the unilateral decision to cease our support to PRODH. However, neither the letter nor the attached three-page document brought any new evidence to the fore which had not already been refuted by Luis Arriaga and PRODH in 2009 and 2011.

There are a multitude of details that describe how the PRODH Centre and Luis Arriaga were bullied in March and April. However, we will just say the following: Lobby groups dragged our partner and its director Luis Arriaga through the mud and savaged his reputation while he was visiting Canada at our invitation, and we did not defend him. Worse: we immediately terminated the partnership with PRODH without any regard for the excellence and relevance of its work, the long years of fruitful relationship and the findings of the 2009 CCCB inquiry, and we acquiesced to the directive of the CCCB to not publicly defend PRODH.

## **RELATIONS WITH THE CCCB**

Following several incidents which arose during Lent 2011, a meeting took place between Development and Peace's General Management and the Secretary of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). At this meeting, directives were given to Development and Peace. Every one of the directives that we are familiar with will impact the work of Development and Peace both in the North and in the Global South.

### **1. IMPACT ON OUR PROGRAMS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

One of the directives that is of particular concern to the employees is the request to obtain a letter from the local bishop for each of our partners. On every continent, the consequences of this directive risk profoundly transforming our approach to development as well as the programming in several countries.<sup>2</sup>

In several places on this planet, human rights are still being violated on a regular basis. In these countries, courageous people have begun to fight these injustices. They have set up groups to defend the poorest and most marginalized. These are civil society initiatives—aimed at achieving peace, equity and freedom of expression—that Development and Peace supports, often for the duration, because things take time to evolve and the struggles are long. This is what has made Development and Peace's name.

The countries where our organization operates have varied histories, cultures and religions. In some countries, the Catholic Church plays a leading role. In other countries, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is less involved in fighting for justice and democracy. And in still other countries, the Catholic Church is a very small minority and its voice has little impact.

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<sup>2</sup> The Program Officers have sent a letter to Ronald Breau and Michael Casey emphasizing the impacts of this request on the partners and programs of Development and Peace.

We believe that many of our partners could not or would not want to get such a letter from their local bishop, not because these partners are violating the teachings of the Catholic Church, but for reasons that are more political or economical, as we will describe below. We also believe that some bishops will be reluctant to judge the quality of the work of a partner.<sup>3</sup>

Based on various cases, we wonder about the willingness of the bishops to play this role of authorizing or refusing support to a partner organization of Development and Peace. Some might feel a conflict of interest, since they are themselves in search of funds for diocesan projects. For example, would a bishop accept to give a letter of support for a non-denominational community radio station at the same time that he himself is seeking funding for his diocesan radio station?<sup>4</sup>

### **Organizations defending human rights:**

These organizations must maintain their independence in order to be able to objectively report human rights violations in all contexts. By their very nature, these organizations must send out clarion calls and report abuses, whatever they may be, even in situations where the Catholic Church might prefer to remain silent, which was the case in many countries during various periods of political instability or dictatorship.

### **Empowerment of women and women's groups:**

On every continent, Development and Peace is supporting women's organizations that promote equity between men and women and promote human rights, specifically those of women. These are autonomous groups taking control of their own development and that of their communities.

Doesn't asking a group of women—whose autonomy we are promoting—to seek the permission of a local bishop go against this approach?

Moreover, for the women's groups, working in concert and in coalition with other groups gives them a stronger voice and protection. We believe that it must be recognized that there is a range of nuances of opinions and interests defended in the search for gender equity. However, we believe that we must recognize the autonomy of the women's organizations with which we work.

Will the current pressures bring about the isolation of our partners and, if so, will they still be relevant? Will we find ourselves deprived of fundamental partnerships in the building of a more just society between men and women? Will women and their organizations suffer setbacks to the gains they have fought so hard to win in recent decades, all because of certain binding decisions?

### **Working in coalition:**

Many of our partners are part of broad coalitions that can press for social change. Within these coalitions, it may happen that some organizations (who are not our partners) defend positions that are not in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Development and Peace encourages partner organizations to network, as was the case with PRODH. We also directly support several national coalitions. It has always been clear that no group endorses the entire political agenda of the other members of the coalition. We believe that we must continue to

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<sup>3</sup> See the case of APHD, in appendix.

<sup>4</sup> See case of NMJD in appendix.

promote this convergence of forces strategy: it is essential for bringing about change. However, in requesting the support of the local church, these alliances could become more restrictive and even impossible. We do not hide our deep concern about this.

**Multiethnic and multifaith contexts:**

Finally, we work in many multiethnic and multifaith contexts where the Catholic Church is sometimes a very minor player. In these contexts, we generally favour strengthening diverse actors. These organizations may be non-confessional, led by members of various religious denominations (including organizations of the Catholic Church) but also organizations of various ethnicities that are mostly not part of the local Catholic Church. All these groups may not receive letters of support or do not want to swear allegiance to the Catholic Church.

**CIDA program:**

If the directive to obtain letters of support from each local bishop for every single partner is implemented by the National Council, we fear that many partnerships will collapse, for the reasons mentioned above. In certain cases, this could even mean the end of our programs in entire countries.

Could our proposal to CIDA be endangered because of the termination of long-standing partnerships that form the pillars of our programs in certain countries?

**2. IMPACT ON OUR PROGRAMS IN THE NORTH**

We live in a diverse and pluralistic society that is crisscrossed by all sorts of political and religious currents. We are a society that is open to the world. Our organization, although Catholic, should reflect this diversity of thought and openness in the pursuit of its mission in Canada. The proposed new directives for approving projects are another source of questioning and concern for our mission in Canada

**Advancement:**

A large part of this department's mandate is to make the organization known to the public and diversify fundraising sources. These collections are carried out among Catholics, practicing or non-practicing, and other publics as well. How will we be able to fulfill this mandate? What message will we have to convey?

We have to build long-term relationships of trust with donors. We cultivate and foster these relationships in connection with specific areas of interest or by developing their knowledge about certain partners. How will we justify the fact that these partners whose work we have praised are arbitrarily cut off? How will we be able to justify to donors that we must have the support of local bishops? And that the CCCB, through its Standing Committee, is directly orienting the choices of Development and Peace, an organization of the entire church?

**Education:**

Will Development and Peace have to receive prior approval from the Church hierarchy for the political and strategic positioning of its education campaigns? What freedom of analysis will the organization still have?

We could not have carried out the campaign on the social responsibility of mining companies had we not been able to work with other civil society groups. How will we be able to talk about environmental justice without building partnerships with various groups and networks engaged on this issue? How will we be able to manage to change the policies of our country if we have to work alone? It will be very difficult or even impossible in those circumstances to carry out effective advocacy in support of our partners and their struggles.

To what extent will we be able to function with people who think differently but whose analysis is indispensable to us? Who will define the criteria that will frame the choice of campaign issues.

At national, regional and local levels, our members and employees have always been able to associate freely with civil society organizations to carry out our education work in Canada. We will not be able to do as good a job if we are restricted to working only within the Catholic Church.

It is already becoming difficult for the Education and Advancement departments to choose partners to illustrate our work. What will it be like in the future? Every time a partner is thrust into the spotlight, we are afraid they will be victims of attacks and defamation, which has extremely negative impacts on them. The PRODH case illustrates those risks quite well.

**3. IMPACT ON THE MOVEMENT**

We are a large movement. We have the objective of renewing and diversifying our membership. To achieve this objective, we want to welcome members from the cultural communities and youth.

Currently, our members are Catholics, church-going or not, who see in Development and Peace a place where they can live their faith by putting into practice the Gospel's call to work on promoting love and justice.

This specificity of being a movement is fundamental for our young members who see in Development and Peace a democratic, non-partisan organization whose fundamental mission is the promotion of social justice. Without that aspect, there is no doubt that these young people, as well as a good portion of our network of members, will look elsewhere to offer their energy and resources. This has already started.

**Democracy and transparency:**

This crisis has demonstrated the fragility of democracy within Development and Peace. This fragility was revealed not only by what is perceived by many members as interference by the CCCB, but also by the ease with which decisions of great importance can be taken without any consultation of the National Council.

A few days away from the first Regional Assemblies, not only were members of the National Council not informed about the crisis we were going through, but the members of the Executive

had not been informed either. This probably explains why the information was transmitted differently from one Assembly to another as well as part of the difference in the reaction between Quebec and the rest of Canada. More and more members of English Canada are taking a stand as they gradually receive the information. To those facts must be added the fact that the employees were instructed not to answer any questions and to refer people to General Management. Trust can only be built on transparency.

Tighter supervision by the CCCB also means the loss of the democratic aspect of Development and Peace. If this is confirmed, we would lose a fundamental pillar of our organization's identity. This specificity attracts Catholics who dream of building a Church that is first and foremost an active community and where the laity have an active role.

#### **4. CRISIS MANAGEMENT:**

We are very aware of the high level of difficulty of managing such a crisis. Since the allegations started in 2009, the employees have argued that this crisis was going to persist over time. Ever since then, we have been asking Management to communicate with the members and employees with diligence and transparency. We believe that the silence and rumours have done as much harm to the organization as the allegations of which we have been victims.

#### **5. IMPACT ON THE EMPLOYEES**

Employees feel dispossessed of their organization and that feeling has been exacerbated by the deficiencies in internal communication and transparency. We the employees are working under pressure and in confusion, which is generating an almost universal lack of motivation. Several employees have already expressed their desire to leave the organization if the mission and values of Development and Peace are reoriented.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Neither the employees nor the Union challenge the fact that Development and Peace is a Catholic organization. We are fully committed to the prophetic vision of D&P.

Development and Peace has invested more than 40 years in building a vision of development based on long-term partnership, which is our specificity and what makes us special. Some of the orientations currently being considered would endanger that vision.

*Union of employees of  
Development and Peace  
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