

## The Balance of Reformational Thinking<sup>1</sup>

Ed,<sup>2</sup> you know that I have long given my moral support to the mission of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) and have often cheered you on in correspondence. I continue to do so. In so far as I can see from the sidelines in Nigeria, your mission is exciting and relevant in that it strikes Canada where the rubber hits the road. For years have I enjoyed reading *The Guide*, though I sometimes wonder whether it is not too intellectualistic for a labour publication.

However, today I read your review of a GATT-Fly publication in the July/August, 1985 issue and it forces me to respond. I am not sure whether my hunch is right, but sometimes I get the feeling of a creeping conservatism in the pages of *The Guide*. Whether or not your review is an expression of such a trend or not, it calls for a reaction.

I have not read Ah-Hah of GATT-Fly. The only thing I know about it is what you write in your review. It does indeed sound as if the GATT-Fly approach is one-sided and simplistic, a characteristic of many organizations attacking multinationals and capitalism – but no less characteristic of organizations defending the same.

One of the strengths of the Reformed approach to issues of politics and economics is that it has usually avoided the pitfalls of both capitalism and its main opponents: we are known for seeking a third way, having found all the established camps as equally wanting. But I am afraid that your rather sarcastic review of the GATT-Fly publication falls below the usual standard and makes it appear as if you defend capitalism and its major embodiment, the multinational.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Editor of *The Guide*, 1 Sept/1985. *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 291-292. The title of this version was not part of the original letter.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Vanderkloet was the Editor of *The Guide* and Executive Director of the CLAC.

The problem is that you cannot quite so easily do away with GATT-Fly's concerns. In spite of its one-sided and simplistic approach, there is enough truth in it that must be admitted before you sarcastically dismiss their whole effort. The truths are these:

- (1) The corporations may not consciously aim to play workers in one country off against workers in another, but they do frequently end up doing just that. When a corporation packs up and leaves a country in favour of another where wages are lower and labour stability guaranteed by the government, then they pit the workers of one country against their foreign counterparts.
- (2) I am not sure that banks, bureaucrats, corporations, the military and the churches consciously interact deviously to make the lot of the poor more difficult. In fact, I reject that contention. But there *is* a good case to be made that there is an interaction going on between these institutions that often creates problems for the poor. The intentions may not be devious and the problems not created intentionally, but that they are nevertheless frequently a result of this interaction can hardly be disputed. Even the participation of the church in this alliance, though more in need of qualification even in the worst situation than GATT-Fly may wish to admit, cannot be dismissed with a mere sarcastic wave of the hand. The pre-liberation era of the church in Latin America is a case in point.
- (3) That owners of corporations – mostly shareholders – generally have profit or a modern variety of it such as growth as their main motive is an accepted fact of capitalist theory and practice. And it is not unheard of that corporations lay off people or as in point no. 1, move lock, stock, and barrel to another country, simply to increase their profits.

(4) As both a missionary and missionary scholar, I cannot deny that the arrival of the missionary has more than once driven “native religion and healing skills underground.” This has had its positive and negative effects. The growth of the Christian church at the expense of “native religions” I applaud as a missionary, of course, but the approach to those religions has often not been wise. As to healing, the church’s hospitals in many mission efforts have usually been secular with their one-sided emphasis on the physical. Adherents of “native religions” have more truth on their side in their realizations that sickness is often the result of spiritual and other forces. After a Christian patient is pronounced healed by a mission hospital, she will often consult a priest of the native religion from which she was converted. She does so in order to find out the non-physical causes of her sickness, causes the Christian hospital in practice denies, in spite of the Biblical testimony and the data of recent more wholistic theories of sickness and health.

You see, Ed, doing away with GATT-Fly’s charges in your fashion is also an “infantile exercise of disinformation,” not by what you say as by the way in which you say it and by what you fail to say. GATT-Fly’s approach needs to be countered, true, but it must be done responsibly, clearly and in a balanced way. It must be countered by the whole truth, not by implying merely that the opposite camp has truth by the tail.