

Missives from Scotland prior to the G8 Summit
From Andrew Kang Bartlett

MESSAGE 1 - July 1, 2005

Dear Friends in the Struggle for a World Free from Hunger and Want,

For the next week, the eyes of the world (especially people in the poorest countries -- though probably not Fox News unless there are riots in the streets) will focus on Edinburgh and Gleneagles, Scotland. Here, tens of thousands of people demanding justice in international affairs are gathering to raise their voices to say NO MORE EXCUSES, Make Poverty History.

Tomorrow, July 2, thousands (organizing groups hope the marchers will top 100,000) of people will form a ring of white around the old city section of Edinburgh, as 70,000 people did in Birmingham in 1998, the last time the G8 was in Great Britain. You can take a look at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/edinburgh/> if you want to make it easier to picture being here.

(Right now there are hoots and cat-calls from crowds of people walking down the narrow street below me... some with Code Pink buttons on - <http://www.codepink4peace.org>)

The call is for **Trade Justice**, to **Drop the Debt**, and for **More and Better Aid** because the gap between the world's rich and poor has never been wider. Malnutrition, malaria/TB/AIDS, conflict and illiteracy are a daily reality for millions.

And, because we can make poverty history -- with sufficient push from civil society and the political will, because it isn't chance or bad luck that keeps people trapped in bitter, unrelenting poverty. It's man-made factors like a glaringly unjust global trade system, a debt burden so great that it suffocates any chance of recovery, and insufficient and ineffective aid.

They are closing down this place in just 5 minutes, so let me end with a positive note. Debt relief has worked. The limited debt relief so far has doubled poverty alleviation expenditures in the countries that received it. There are examples of how savings from debt relief have more than doubled school enrollment in Uganda, provided 3 extra years of school for Honduran children, and provided resources to fight against HIV/AIDS in Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Cameroon.

So the 100% debt relief announced for 18 highly indebted poor nations means real resources for real people. We can celebrate that and celebrate the important role that people of faith (the Jubilee networks) and many others all over the world have played in shifting the debate from complete stonewalling 10 years ago to the current situation.

But here comes the BUT - Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of South Africa has said: "Our objective is a clean slate - a total cancellation of odious and unpayable debts owed by African countries." The G8 deal has fallen short on this and other measures, as there are 44 other poor and middle income countries that need full debt cancellation to meet the Millennium Development Goals (see <http://www.theonecampaign.org>).

Ah, the hour has struck. I will try to find an open internet cafe tomorrow (though most of the shops are closing for the weekend due to uncertainty about violent bands coming through) and send a dispatch.

Enjoy the weekend and Liberation Day.

From Edinburgh with regards,
Andrew

MESSAGE 2 - July 2, 2005 AM

Good morning,

Thousands and thousands of people dressed in white channel their way from the train station, from the airport, from cars and buses, from impromptu camp grounds, hostels and hotels like white blood cells through arterial streets. Orange Christian AID placards are everywhere.

Today at 3 PM our time (10 AM Eastern; 9 Central, 8 Mountain, 7 Pacific) there will be a time of silence here in Edinburgh and around the world. Please hold that silence wherever you are (or whenever you remember during the day, or on Tuesday if you are only reading this then) and pray for our leaders, for enlightenment and for an end to such massive suffering from poverty. Pray for Creation, for dignity and for justice.

The silence will be followed by noise-making and celebration, and the samba drumming will resume...

The TearFund flyer I picked up last night says (also see <http://www.tearfund.org/News/G8+Edinburgh+rally>):

"We are here as Christians following in Christ's footsteps, sent to bring good news to the poor and set the captives free."

"We are here because we believe it is wrong that tens of thousands of people made in the image of God die from poverty every day. We believe that faith and action should go hand in hand: 'Faith without action is dead.'

We believe that poor countries should not be trapped in poverty by debts that they cannot pay back.

We believe trade rules should not deny poor people the ability to work their way out of poverty.

And we believe that God appoints our leaders, calls upon them to act justly - and calls on us to pray for them."

While more and better aid, full debt cancellation and trade justice are major themes at the March and G8, the potential for action on global warming and climate disruption is growing. France and Germany are worlds apart from the United States on global warming, and Tony Blair, who is hosting the G8 as well as leaders from the Global South (who were invited to discuss global warming), is in a tight spot. His convictions about the need to act decisively to reduce carbon emissions and political pressures from UK and the rest of the world (he will be European Union President next year), may force him to oppose Bush and the US's head-in-the-sand position on climate change.

President Bush continues to claim that the Kyoto Protocol "would have wrecked our economy." And he frankly admitted, "We're hooked on oil from the Middle East, which is a national security problem and an economic security problem."

You've no doubt heard the statistics of the US having only 4-5% of the world population and producing 25% of the global emissions of carbon dioxide. Given the fact that climate change may wipe out 25% of the species on the planet this century (many scientists agree on 2050) this is truly horrifying.

May Bush (and Rove) see the light (a CFL I hope)!

I must make my way to The Meadows.

I'll let you know how it goes.

andrew

MESSAGE 3 - July 2, 2005 PM

Because we are so far north, the sun comes up VERY early, irregardless of whether I was kept up too late by one of my hostel roommates whose snoring vibrated through the metal frame of the bunk bed, bypassing my ear plugs. And

though it is almost 10 at night, the sky is bright with grey clouds and seagulls passing in front of the pale blue sky.

The Make Poverty History (MPH) March and gathering in Edinburgh's "The Meadows" was amazing, with police and organizers putting the number of people at around 225,000. In a nation of this size, I am hit by how truly huge that is.

We can only hope that our leaders see that as a statement more significant than the wishes (and gifts) of their corporate friends.

While young people dominated the day, the diversity of those 200K+ people was wonderful - young women wrapped in and carrying rainbow Peace flags, old Welsh folk with a giant red dragon and dragon banners calling for trade justice, boys on skate boards, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim contingents, trade unions, families, school kids, anarchists, young women with wings, samba bands and the dancing crowds that were sucked into the driving rhythms, nonprofit groups of myriad stripes: anti-corporate, WTO and corporate regulatory reformist, development aid groups, environmental groups, environmental trade justice campaigners, and bag pipers, to mention just some.

Oh, and they close at 10 (as they did last night), so I should wrap this up.

Just one more thing about debt. We should keep pressuring to drop the debt because the \$56 billion in debt stock being cancelled under the current G-8 agreement amounts to less than 10% of the total external debt of all low-income countries that need 100% cancellation to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). ALL odious or illegitimate debts must be dropped.

We have done it before and we can do it again!

Tired but thrilled,
andrew

P.S. Good coverage of the march on BBC at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/>

MESSAGE 4 - July 3, 2005

Notes from the Alternative G8 Summit:

Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, Scotland

[Fine Print: The views expressed by the speakers are not necessarily those of the PC(USA) and the facts cited have not been verified.]

Challenging Corporations

[Amit Srivastava](#) is the Coordinator of India Resource Center and the Director of Global Resistance. Amit has been involved in social movements for the last 15 years. Amit coordinated the Climate Justice Initiative and International Programs at CorpWatch from 1997-2002. Prior to CorpWatch, Amit worked as Community Organizer with the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) in California, working with low-income, Chinese immigrant women working in the garment industry. He has also served as the National Organizer and Training Director with the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC), the largest student environmental organization in the US at the time. His writing has appeared in various newspapers including The Toronto Star, The Montreal Gazette, and The San Francisco Chronicle and Amit has appeared on various radio and TV outlets, including CNN and BBC.

<http://www.CokeJustice.org> or <http://www.KillerCoke.org>

FROM A FLYER THAT WAS HANDED OUT:

Eight trade union leaders from Coca-Cola bottling plants in Colombia have been murdered by paramilitary forces since 1989.

SINALTRAINAL union leaders and organizers have been subject to a gruesome cycle of violence unleashed by Colombian paramilitary forces in complicity with Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling subsidiary.

Coca-Cola's main Latin American bottler, Panamco, is on trial in the US for hiring right-wing paramilitaries to kill and intimidate union leaders in Colombia.

Unthinkable!
Undrinkable!

Join the International Campaign Against Coca-Cola.

Amit talked about the situation in India giving us both the good news and the bad news. First the bad news:

1) COCA-COLA puts their bottling plants in rural areas where labor is cheap. The water in at least five communities has become very scarce and villagers have to dig wells ever deeper to get to the water. In one village the water level dropped 100 feet in one year.

Then, they noticed it smelled funny, and the rice tasted bad when using the water. Turns out COCA-COLA has polluted the water as well. Water is life, so using up and poisoning the water means lives are disrupted, people are hurt.

2) COCA-COLA began distributing a byproduct of the processing - this whitish gooey stuff. They gave it to farmers saying it was a good fertilizer. The BBC helped locals investigate the substance and found that it had very high heavy metal levels - lead and cadmium - in two communities. So farmers were handling this and quite likely the products also absorbed these heavy metals.

3) The Center for Science and the Environment -or was this Shiva's Ctr.? - sampled COCA-COLA from the UK, USA and India and found that while the UK-USA soda was fine, the India COCA-COLA had high levels of nasty chemicals. The levels of Lindane (a organic persistent pollutant and on the Dirty Dozen list - see Pesticide Action Network <http://www.panna.org> for more information), I think it was, were in one case 34 times higher than allowable EPA standards.

THE GOOD NEWS:

Tens of thousands of Indian people have been protesting and have been successful in shutting down COCA-COLA's largest bottling plant in the world for 15 months now. Now they are working on closing down the next one. One by one.

India's High Court demanded that COCA-COLA stop extracting water because, they said, water is a right and cannot be taken away from the people. It is a public, common good.

In Rajasthan also, the High Court ruled that COCA-COLA must state the ingredients on the can. **They also ruled that COCA-COLA must list the pesticides in the product on each can.**

COCA-COLA appealed. But the Indian Supreme Court reaffirmed the decision and starting in the middle of July 2005, COCA-COLA is required to do so.

Students in the U.S. have so far revoked COCA-COLA permits in 15 universities. They took names of UK students who wanted to organize similar activities there.

CHALLENGING CORPORATIONS - continued

Trevor Ngwane

An expelled ANC councilor for his anti-privatization views and the leader of a well-published boycott against the privatization of electricity in the country's largest township.

In 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa was killed on behalf of Shell for his activism against the exploration and oil taking from Ogoniland. (More info at <http://www.sierraclub.org/human-rights/nigeria/> or through a web search)

So, the next time you go the gasoline stand and put a drop in your tank, the drop is not oil at all, it is blood. It is blood.

In 1993, the Ogoni people pushed Shell out of their territory. Because resource control is the power to control what is yours, what belongs to the people, what God has put in that land.

In 2004, Shell admitted its practices in Nigeria. See "Oil giant Shell admits it fuels Nigeria violence"
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/06/13/1087065033937.html?oneclick=true>

In response to a question on CLIMATE CHANGE:

We must recognize those who are suffering and have been suffering from climate change.

Communities, because of fossil fuel extraction, have been destroyed, women raped, people killed.

In Nigeria, we have gotten them to shut down the gas flaring which pollutes the area but also puts massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere.