



Ontario Catholic Education and the Corporate Sector

*A Report Submitted to the Institute for
Catholic Education
by Philip G. Hill*

*Published by the
Institute for Catholic Education*

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Institute for Catholic Education
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Acknowledgements

Philip G. Hill, a classroom teacher, holds a doctorate from OISE in the area of Philosophy of Education. With a particular interest and expertise in educational partnerships, Philip has authored papers for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and for the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. His most recent project was the development of this paper which examines partnerships and Catholic schools in Ontario.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to examine the involvement of the corporate sector in various facets of Ontario Catholic education.¹ We will begin with a brief overview of the current state of affairs of Canada's publicly-funded education system. The overview will incorporate a discussion about the superior quality of education throughout the country, and an analysis of trends and changes in education which have occurred in recent years. Secondly, we will consider some reasons for and various types of corporate involvement in Catholic

education. Thirdly, we will discuss the relationship between changes in provincial systems of education and national political and economic forces. Fourthly, we will highlight a few case-studies which raise for debate some of the Catholic moral and ethical concerns which underlie the issue of corporate involvement in schools. Lastly, we will evaluate critically the role of the corporate sector in Catholic schools in light of the Sacred Scripture and the teachings of Church. The report will close with some discussion questions in order to generate further dialogue among members of the Catholic Community.

¹This report is based on a document entitled *Corporate Involvement in Ontario's Catholic Schools*, co-authored by Philip G. Hill and Brian McGowan and published by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. A special thanks is owing to OECTA for permission to borrow from and re-develop parts of its document.

Current State of Affairs

In recent years, an economic-determinist view of education, with its emphasis on global economic competitiveness, has made tremendous strides in Ontario's Catholic schools. Educational discourse is motivated primarily by "global restructuring" and "corporate downsizing" tactics, and defined significantly by the interests of the corporate sector. Far removed from debate in the mass media are progressive elements of educational theory and practice which contribute fundamentally to a democratic society and the common good. Catholic education, as part of Canada's publicly-funded education system, is rated consistently in the higher percentiles in international systems of evaluation. Ironically, as we will see shortly, even though ministers of education throughout the country often make reference to the superior quality of Canadian education, they have also condoned attempts by leading provincial and national forces to dismantle many of the core elements of publicly-funded schooling.

Superior Quality Education

A recent study conducted by UNESCO concludes that publicly-funded education is a major contributing factor to Canada's status as the best place in the world in which to live.² In their 1995 report, the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) highlights the high levels of literacy found in our nation's schools. Canada's youth display high levels of literacy, numeracy, and computer skills. In fact, over 70 per cent of 16 year-olds can easily read and understand complex texts, and approximately 80 per cent of them demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental elements of writing.³ Computer literacy skills and abilities in mathematics and science among Canada's youth are also exceptionally high. A recent report by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation found that "many Canadian children ... have higher levels of computer literacy than their parents, an area many anticipate to be important for the future."⁴ A 1991 study conducted by the International Assessment of Education Progress found that 13 year-olds in Canada performed at or above average in mathematics and science compared to students of the same age in 19 other countries.⁵

National and international reports reassure the public that Canada's youth are receiving a well-rounded education. Nevertheless, almost 50 per cent of Canada's CEOs believe that graduates are poorly trained for the workforce.⁶ Such remarks often serve those who wish to dismantle publicly-funded schools, but they don't speak the truth. Canada's education system provides the business community with more well-educated graduates than ever before. Furthermore, Canada has the highest rate of co-operative education programs in the world.

A factor which is often neglected in public discourse about education is that while well-educated and well-trained graduates are ready to work, jobs are not available. According to a recent survey conducted by CIBC Wood Gundy Securities Inc., Canada's youth jobless rate is

²British Columbia Teachers' Federation, *Inventing Crisis: The Erosion of Confidence in Canadian Public Education*, p.14.

³Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, *A Report on Education in Canada, 1995*. Findings are based on Statistics Canada, *Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, 1989*.

⁴*Ibid.*, p.14.

⁵See CMEC, *Report*.

⁶Bertrand Marotte, "Canada's schools failing the grade: business leaders," *Southam News*, May 5, 1993.

approximately 17 per cent.⁷ The jobs which are available for our youth are normally part-time or short-term contractual work, with limited health and retirement benefits and few opportunities for professional advancement. In fact, according to a 1994 survey conducted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, over 70 per cent of 18-24 year-olds claim that “With the level of schooling I have, I am entitled to a better job than I have been able to get.”⁸

Public Support

Interestingly, even though mainstream mass media continue to downplay the positive features of publicly-funded education, and perpetuate illusory claims that “[t]he education system is on trial across Canada,”⁹ Canadians have been and continue to be satisfied with the quality of education in Catholic and public schools.¹⁰ In a 1984 CEA sponsored Canadian poll, 90 per cent of the respondents graded schools with a passing mark, and almost 60 per cent of the respondents ranked schools with top marks.¹¹ A 1993 Gallup Poll indicates that Canadians have tremendous confidence in our system of schooling as a public institution, second only to the Supreme Court, and far ahead of the confidence expressed by the public in large corporations and political parties.¹²

Cost of Education

The cost of public education is often an issue of concern which contributes commonly to public opinion about schooling in Canada. The mainstream mass media report that the public spends too much on education. Media reports are often based on myths, rather than facts. Thus, in 1993, a CTV public affairs program claimed “Canadians spend more on education than any other country in the world.”¹³ Nevertheless, a 1992 OECD study concluded that for elementary/secondary per student spending as a proportion of GDP, Canada ranked ninth overall.¹⁴ Similar findings have been reported by Statistics Canada.¹⁵ In addition, it is worth noting that Canadian are willing to contribute large proportions of their tax dollars to public education. In fact, a 1995 Gallup Poll indicated that almost 70 per cent of Canadians are willing to pay higher taxes if the money is directed to public schools.¹⁶

⁷*The Toronto Star*, Saturday, March 8, 1997.

⁸D. W. Livingstone, D. Hart, and L. E. Davie, *Public Attitudes Towards Education In Ontario 1994* (Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1995).

⁹*Globe and Mail*, December 28, 1992.

¹⁰Maude Barlow and Heather-Jane Robertson, *Class Warfare* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1994), p.42.

¹¹D. W. Livingstone and D. J. Hart, “The People Speak: Public Attitudes Toward Schooling in Canada.” In Ratna Ghosh and Douglas Ray (eds.), *Social Change and Education in Canada* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p.7. I collapsed the categories presented by Livingstone and Hart into two categories - Pass (A,B,C) or Fail (D,F). By adjusting for the 17 per cent of respondents who were unable or unwilling to offer an opinion, 75/83, or 90 per cent of respondents ranked schools with a passing grade.

¹²Gallup Canada, *The Gallup Report*, February 1, 1993.

¹³Quoted in Barlow and Roberston, *Class Warfare*, p.31.

¹⁴See BCTF, *Inventing Crisis*, p.24.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.26.

International Ranking

An additional feature of publicly-funded education which is often misinterpreted in public debate is Canada's international ranking. While Canadians are often led to believe that students in Canada are ranked lower in numeracy and literacy skills than students in other countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a 1992 International Assessment of Educational Progress survey rated Canada ninth overall in mathematics and science test scores.¹⁷ Similarly, a 1995 International Adult Literacy survey of seven OECD countries placed Canada "above average in comparative terms, positioned somewhere in the middle of participating countries, along with Germany and the Netherlands."¹⁸

The findings cited above indicate clearly that Catholic education, as part of Canada's publicly-funded education system, provides Canada's youth with superior quality schooling. The facts speak for themselves. Numerous provincial, national, and international studies conducted by teachers' federations, provincial governments, Statistics Canada, and international institutions, such as the OECD, praise public schooling in Canada. Nevertheless, our vision of schools as publicly-funded and public-serving institutions is being dismantled at an unprecedented rate. Before we consider who is dismantling public education, and their reasons for doing so, we will highlight some of the changes in schools which have taken place across the country in recent years.

¹⁷Ibid., p.17.

¹⁸Ibid., p.19.

Dismantling a Vision

From coast to coast to coast, few schools have escaped the turmoil of recent social change. While the process of change can often lead to positive developments, changes in recent years in Canada's education system are placing restrictions on the efficaciousness of the schooling process and, more generally, on its contribution to the common good. As we will see shortly, reduced funding to local school boards, larger class sizes, lack of support services, increased workloads for teachers, and other factors have placed undue strain on the dynamics of the schooling process.

Cuts to education funding reflect a general shift of national and international economic and political priorities. If changes in education in the U.S. indicate what is on the horizon for publicly funded schools in Canada, we should pay particular attention to recent reports by American financial and investment groups. In a 1996 report on investment opportunities in education, the Lehman Brothers declared that "education could replace health care as the politically 'hot' industry, causing changes and new opportunities for entrepreneurs ... Public reform movements are gaining strength, from which the private sector will benefit."¹⁹ Such changes come in light of recent international reports which state clearly that corporate-driven economic policies and political agendas have hampered human progress. In 1995, the United Nations Children's Fund's annual report stated "[i]t is far from obvious that [free market economies] are capable of creating just, civilized and sustainable human societies."²⁰ Similarly, a report by the OECD, a research and policy group which generally supports reductions in public expenditures, stated recently that a greater reliance on market forces in schools may increase social inequality.²¹

Education in Ontario

Similar in nature and severity to changes in education throughout the country, restructuring and re-prioritizing tactics in Ontario's Catholic education system have raised public concern about the quality of schooling which is being offered to the province's youth. Almost 90 per cent of Ontarians are concerned about the future state of affairs of public schools in light of recent draconian cuts. The majority of people in Ontario believe that provincial government restructuring tactics in education have gone too far.²²

In order to convince the public that \$1 billion worth of changes are imperative in Ontario's schools, the Tories had to "invent a crisis." In a speech to senior bureaucrats, the Minister of Education stated,

*If we really want to fundamentally change the issue in training and ... education we'll have to first make sure we've communicated brilliantly the breakdown in the process we currently experience. That's not easy. We need to invent a crisis. That's not just an act of courage. There's some skill involved.*²³

¹⁹Lehman Brothers, *Investment Opportunity in the Education Industry* (1996), p.1.

²⁰Quoted in *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 6(3), March 1995, p.10.

²¹See *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 7(2), December 1995, p.10.

²²OECTA/Environics '95 survey.

²³Quoted in *Our Schools/Our Selves*, December 1995, p.12.

The Minister of Education's "tool kit" of proposed reforms include:

- standardized testing
- four-year high school program
- longer school year
- extended school day
- streamed Grade 9 program
- amalgamation of 129 school boards into 72
- reduced number of elected trustees from 1900 to 700
- implementation of school councils
- financial cuts to kindergarten, summer school, upgrading, continuing education, and special education programs
- replacement of up to 90 hours of classroom learning time with work experience
- reduced class preparation time for teachers
- reduced annual number of professional development days
- incorporate non-professional workers into the classroom
- reduction in the powers of teachers' federations
- restrict teachers' right to strike

The Corporate Sector and Ontario Catholic Education

As an integral part of the broader education community, members of the private sector have a right and a responsibility to involve themselves in and contribute positively to public education. In fact, since the early stages of development of public education in Canada, the business community has contributed fruitfully to the success of the schooling process. Nevertheless, underlying recent changes in education are corporate-driven interests which are clearly different in nature and purpose to the intentions of earlier, small-scale business ventures in schools.

In 1994, research conducted for the *Financial Post* indicated that barriers between the business community and public education are collapsing rapidly. Ninety-nine per cent of business respondents believe that business can play a “major role in improving the quality of education.” In fact, almost 90 per cent of the respondents are already actively involved in schools. Over 80 per cent of the respondents proclaim they are involved in public education in order to improve public relations.²⁴ Interestingly, 98 per cent of school boards agree that the business community should play a major role in public education. Seventy-five per cent of school boards condone greater business involvement in schools in order to gain access to material and financial support they could otherwise not afford.²⁵

A Corporate Point of View

Even though national and international surveys indicate that Canada’s system of public education is far superior to systems in many other OECD countries, the corporate sector claims that students lack basic reading, writing, analytical, and interpersonal skills, functional illiteracy skills are too high, graduates lack work habits suitable to the workforce, and schools place undue emphasis on academic courses as opposed to vocational studies. Surveys conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicate that “almost 70 percent of its members are dissatisfied with how the high school system prepares students for work.”²⁶ The Federation states,

*It is becoming clear to business that its future survival may well depend not only on what is happening in the boardroom, but also upon what is happening in the classroom. Business leaders are realizing that successful movement into this area has the potential to generate a goodly supply of employees who can not only read, write and compute but also who are more alert and flexible ... Business leaders are finding it necessary to become more interested, involved and committed to the importance of education in the secondary school.*²⁷

Both the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC) and the OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation have noticed increased levels of corporate involvement in schools in recent years, inserting into all facets of schooling free market strategies which have proven successful in business.²⁸ Louis Gerstner, Chairman and CEO of IBM, writes,

²⁴“An Educational Partnership,” Editorial, *The Financial Post*, November 10, 1994.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, *Focus 2000*, August 1989, p.15.

²⁷Ibid., p.38.

²⁸For example, see The Conference Board of Canada, *Ethical Guidelines for Business-Education Partnerships*, 1995; and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Schools and Business: A*

*Simple organizational ideas like listening to customers, decentralized decision-making, measuring performance, and continuous improvement are notable by their absence in public schools. These ideas and techniques have had undeniable power in the business and nonprofit worlds, and when applied to schools, they can lead to drastic results.*²⁹

Similarly, Robert Fulford states,

*The business elite should put education at the top of its policy agenda and stimulate a national discussion of what's wrong with it and how it can be put right. Business should develop its own experts on education, and should try to reformulate the goals of the system.*³⁰

According to the OECD, a primary reason for an increased corporate presence in the classroom is “to make pupils into the adaptable and thoughtful workers that employers now need.”³¹ Education and training creates and maintains a sufficient pool of well-trained or easily trainable workers. For James Nininger, President of the CBOC, business-education links are “the key to national prosperity and corporate success in the future.”³² Interestingly, even though the corporate sector proclaims that concentration on science and technology is imperative if students intend to enter the high-tech workforce in the near future, a recent study conducted by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the bulk of new jobs in the next decade will be low-skill positions, including salespersons, cashiers, general office clerks, truck drivers, janitors, cleaners, nursing aides, food counter workers, and waiters and waitresses.

A brief glance at a few reports and policy statements highlights some of the primary reasons why the corporate sector is paying particular attention to schools. The business sector states that its involvement in education will:

- prepare students for the learning transition from the classroom to the work world.³³
- ensure a technologically advanced work force.³⁴
- provide students with the skills and attitudes that form the basis of an entrepreneurial culture, including the spirit of adventure and enterprise, an appreciation of risk and reward, and the satisfaction of transforming an idea into a reality.³⁵
- help to improve Canada's competitiveness and quality of life.³⁶
- foster the acquisition of employability skills.³⁷
- integrate in-class and on-the-job workplace experiences.³⁸
- develop a positive attitude toward business.³⁹

New Partnership, 1992.

²⁹Louis Gerstner, *Reinventing Education* (New York: Plume, 1995), p.15.

³⁰Robert Fulford, “Business Must Lead School Reform,” *Financial Times*, April 27, 1992.

³¹OECD, *Schools and Business*, p.7.

³²Quoted in Michael Bloom, *Reaching for Success: Business and Education Working Together*. First national conference on business-education partnerships, July 1990, p.1.

³³The Learning Partnership, *Real Partnerships: Real Results*. Flyer for annual conference, April 13, 1996.

³⁴The Learning Partnership, *Our Current Projects*, February 1996.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶The Conference Board of Canada, *100 Best Business-Education Partnerships*, 1996, p.ii.

³⁷Ibid., p.iv.

³⁸Ibid.

Few Canadians would disagree that the list cited above reflects an integral part of the schooling process. Indeed, students should prepare themselves adequately for rewarding and self-satisfying careers. Nevertheless, the education process should also provide students with valuable opportunities to develop their moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social qualities which play a vital role in life.

Forms of Corporate Involvement in Schools

There are two general forms of corporate involvement in schools. *For-profit education organizations*, found commonly in the U.S., own and operate, or lease and manage schools on a contractual basis. They are responsible for all components of the schooling process, including the hiring of teachers and support staff, defining working conditions, developing curriculum, and setting standards of academic performance.

The list of for-profit education organizations includes Education Alternatives Inc. (EAI), a firm which, in recent years, operated ten public schools in Baltimore, and has targeted schools in Canada as a profitable project in the near future. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) conducted an in-depth analysis of the operations, finances, and outcomes of EAI's project in Baltimore. The findings are enlightening, especially in light of the fact that EAI made at least \$2.6 million (U.S.) in gross profit in 1992-93 and \$4.3 million (U.S.) in 1993-94. In its report, the AFT stated:

- Student test scores declined in EAI elementary schools over the first two years, while scores in non-EAI schools showed modest gains.
- EAI consistently blamed teachers for failure to improve test scores. Meanwhile, EAI reduced the teaching staff by 20 per cent.
- EAI teachers have low morale.
- EAI teachers do not believe that EAI has a positive effect on academic achievement.
- EAI dismantled special education programs, eliminating half of the special education teachers and providing fewer services.
- EAI makes money by spending less than the revenue they collect, not by improving learning. The company diverted funding from the classroom into facilities, administrative overhead, lawyers, accountants, corporate travel and profit.⁴⁰

Business-education partnership programs are a second common form of corporate involvement in schools. There are approximately 20,000 business-education partnerships in Canada's schools.⁴¹ Links between the business community and schools have increased in recent years as employers have realized that the most effective way to influence public education is to work together with it.

A recent OECD publication differentiates between European and North American business-education partnership programs. In continental Europe, partnerships involve various sectors of

³⁹Toronto Area Partnership Network, *A Resource Guide for Creating and Maintaining Educational Partnerships*, May 1994, p.1.

⁴⁰American Federation of Teachers, *How Private Managers Make Money in Public Schools: Update on the EAI Experiment in Baltimore*, September, 1995, pp.i-vi.

⁴¹*The Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1997.

the community, including large- and small-scale businesses, parents, unions, and non-profit community groups. Businesses play a supporting role in education, while educational policies and objectives are developed and implemented mainly by educators and education administrators. This approach to partnerships permits genuine community participation in education, with all sectors of the broader community contributing positively to the schooling process. In the United Kingdom, most partnerships are small-scale relationships between local businesses and individual schools. Ninety per cent of secondary schools and over 50 per cent of elementary schools have direct links with industry.⁴²

In contrast, in the U.S., and in recent years in Canada, “big business has increasingly been showing a willingness to take the initiative.”⁴³ Even though local, regional, and national partnership programs declare in their aims and objectives that all members of the community are involved in partnerships, a random selection of a few existing programs indicates that the majority of partnerships are negotiated deals between schools and/or school boards and big business. In contrast to the European partnership model, in Canada the term *community* is defined predominantly in terms of corporate interests, and often excludes reference to other integral members of the community, including non-profit organizations and labour. John Snobelen, Ontario’s former Minister of Education, speaking to participants of the Third International Partnership Conference, called for “the cultivation of innovative partnerships between schools and their communities ... when I use that term ‘community partners,’ I’m speaking of business.”⁴⁴

Business-education partnership programs vary in scale and nature. Large-scale business-education partnership programs involve hundreds of businesses and various school boards, include long-term projects, are profit-driven, and seek measurable student-learning outcomes. They are designed and implemented primarily to instill in students what the Conference Board of Canada calls “employability skills,” that is, academic, personal management, and teamwork skills which provide “the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.”⁴⁵ Thus, James Downey, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of New Brunswick, states that “business motives are not only philanthropic and altruistic; business cares about education because profits depend upon it.” Similarly, Anita Ross, Vice-President, Personnel, IBM Canada, declares “education has become a matter of human resources strategy and bottom-line business success.”⁴⁶

Small-scale partnerships are often developed between local members of the business community and individual schools. Such programs are normally short-term and informal, and are directed toward enriching schools with community-based learning experiences. While large-scale partnerships often treat students as consumer commodities and future production workers, small-scale partnerships identify students as inquisitive learners, and often address ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious issues, the needs of minority groups, and the concerns of disadvantaged youth.

⁴²Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Schools and Business: a new partnership*, 1992, p.13.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p.18.

⁴⁴Excerpts from a speech at the Third International Partnership Conference, co-sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada and the International Partnership Network, April 14, 1996.

⁴⁵Conference Board of Canada, *Employability Skills*.

⁴⁶Quoted in the Conference Board of Canada, *Reaching for Success: Business and Education Working Together*, Report 57-90-E/F, July 1990, pp.5,13.

National Link: The Conference Board of Canada

The most influential national-level business-education link is the conference Board of Canada (CBOC). A business-lobby group comprised of the largest corporations conducting business in Canada, the CBOC promotes vigorously stronger ties between the corporate sector and public education. The Board's membership list includes the largest corporate forces in Canada. Its Board of Directors includes Presidents and CEOs of Imperial Oil, Royal Bank of Canada, Northern Telecom (Nortel), Bank of Montreal, Alcan Aluminum, Chrysler Canada, and Inco Limited. More than two-thirds of the CBOC's list of members of education councils are representatives of the corporate sector, while teachers' associations, labour unions, community-based organizations, and other groups concerned about the state of affairs of education in Canada are suspiciously absent from the membership list.

The CBOC has developed practical business-education guidelines and policy statements which find their way into Ministry of Education documentation and school board policies and procedures. The CBOC hosts more than 200 seminars and councils annually, including its national Business-Education Conference, and the International Business-Education Partnership Conference. Its mission, in line with the objectives of the Business Council on National Issues, is to be a leading private applied research institution dedicated to enhancing the performance of Canada's corporate sector in the global economy. The CBOC's numerous councils, including the National Council on Education, the Corporate Council on Education, the Business-Education Partnership Forum, and the Business and Education Forum on Science, Technology and Mathematics, provide its members with research reports, access to research centres, and conferences, seminars, and workshops.

The CBOC has produced two documents on education which have influenced significantly the way schools and school boards across Canada interact with the business community. The first document contends that schools are failing to prepare students properly for the workforce. It argues that schools should promote "employability skills," that is, academic skills such as effective communication, critical thinking, and the ability to learn; personal management skills including a positive attitude and behaviour, responsibility, and adaptability; and teamwork skills. The second document proposes "ethical guidelines" for partners in business-education partnership programs. Unlike stringent codes of conduct which require the monitoring and assessment of partnerships by a third party, and ensure that certain rules are met and standards are maintained, CBOC guidelines encourage partners to "regulate themselves as they create, implement and run business-education partnerships".⁴⁷ Ethical guidelines avoid strict rules and regulations. Rather, they "help partners make ethical decisions, while leaving them free to express their individuality."⁴⁸

⁴⁷The Conference Board of Canada, *Ethical Guidelines for Business-Education Partnerships*. Report 153-95, p.5.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Global Links

The International Partnership Network (IPN) is perhaps the leading international centre for the promotion of business-education partnerships worldwide. The IPN works closely with national partnership bodies, including the Conference Board of Canada and the National Association of Partners in Education (USA), and also with international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Based at the University of Warwick's Centre for Education and Industry, and directed by Professor John Woolhouse, the IPN publishes bulletins and reports, organizes seminars, workshops, and international partnership conferences, and provides IPN members with access to an in-house database which contains information regarding international partnership contacts, organizations, and research groups. Its primary aim is to promote business-education partnerships in OECD countries, and develop a "world partnership movement."⁴⁹

Small-scale partnerships between schools and the broader community, including community-based organizations, labour groups, and members of the local business sector, have existed since the birth of Canadian public education, and, in most cases, contribute positively to the efficaciousness of the schooling process. Nevertheless, the rapid growth, in recent years, of for-profit education organizations and business-education partnerships with the corporate sector have initiated debate in the Catholic Community regarding the moral nature of such programs. In many cases, corporations involved in business-education partnerships commonly conduct business in countries where fundamental human rights are violated and the environment is exploited. The Catholic Community is immediately confronted with a question of morality which is rooted deeply in the words and actions of Christ and Catholic social teaching. Is it morally right for a school (or school board) to negotiate a partnership program with a corporation which is, at the same time, contributing, directly or indirectly, to human suffering and environmental degradation in other parts of the world?

It is to this particularly pressing issue we now turn our attention. We will begin by analyzing critically a few case-studies. Each case-study will incorporate specific moral issues which urgently need to be addressed by the Catholic Community. This will be followed by a theological reflection which will guide us toward an appropriation of the pressing issues in light of the words and actions of Christ and Catholic social teaching.

⁴⁹The International Partnership Network Report on the Second International Partnership Conference, June 30-July 2, 1994, p.6.

Discussion Questions

1. How does your view of the quality of education in Ontario's Catholic schools compare to reports perpetuated frequently in the mass media?
2. Do you believe that education should be a funding priority for the Ontario government?
3. Why is our publicly-funded school system in Ontario being dramatically restructured, even though Canada's youth are rated consistently in the upper percentiles on international standardized tests?
4. What effects will the Ontario Ministry of Education's reform proposals have on the structure and dynamics of schooling in the province?
5. What role do you believe the corporate sector should play in publicly-funded schools?
6. .Is preparation for the work force the primary purpose of education?
7. Is there a relationship between recent changes in Ontario's education and the leading political and economic role played by the province's corporate sector?
8. Why is the corporate sector involved in Catholic education?

Case-Studies

Transnational corporations (TNC) often conduct business ventures globally in a relatively autonomous manner, largely independent of national political authorities, and free from the restrictions associated with corporate social responsibility. At the same time, they invest time and money in schools for altruistic reasons - improving the quality of education, and offering additional services to disadvantaged youth, or for self-serving interests - gaining access to lucrative contracts, perpetuating a corporate ideology, and developing a labour pool suited to corporate needs. For instance, Sears Canada has developed a partnership program with the City of York Board of Education which emphasizes primarily the need to promote dramatic arts in schools. Sears organizes a drama festival and provides students with scholarships and project funding. Connaught Labs and Xerox work with the North York Board of Education and provide services to at-risk students. Similarly, Polar Gas and the Sahtu Board of Education, Northwest Territories, have developed a program to encourage at-risk students to remain in school after Grade 9.

However, while there exist many valuable business-education partnership programs in schools across Ontario, in this report I wish to focus on partnerships which incorporate some particularly contentious issues, to ensure that in the future only partnerships aimed authentically toward improving the quality of the schooling process are implemented in the classroom. Consider the following cases:

- Pizza Hut has introduced a “Book It!” program to over 25,000 classrooms across Canada. *Book It!* is a reading incentive program for elementary school students. It is designed “to motivate children to read more, by rewarding them for their reading accomplishments.”⁵⁰ When a monthly reading goal is met, students are rewarded with a Pizza Hut Award Certificate. Students are encouraged to visit their local Pizza Hut restaurant, where they will be “personally congratulated by the manager and given a free, one-topping Personal Pan Pizza.”⁵¹ A *Book It!* chart is posted in the classroom to record the name of students who have met their monthly reading goal.
- Laidlaw Motorways, a transnational waste management company, developed “Earth Academy,” a comprehensive package of videos and curriculum material for use in schools. According to the Center for Environmental Justice, Laidlaw’s project “blames the individual student for hazardous and solid waste problems. Conveniently, the role large corporations play in environmental degradation is never mentioned.”⁵²
- Coca Cola has developed a curriculum package, *A Business Studies Resource Kit for Canadian Secondary Schools*, which contains video and audio cassettes of Coca Cola commercials, and material ranging from campaign promotion, logo development, to a section on how to infiltrate Third World markets.
- A Fairfield, Connecticut company, Lifetime Learning Systems (LLS), creates and markets corporate-sponsored educational material that has reached over 2 million

⁵⁰*Book It!* Programme Guide 1995/96, p.3.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p.3.

⁵²Quoted in Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, *Commercialization in Ontario Schools: A Research Report*, September 15, 1995, p.3.

teachers. A LLS advertisement states, “They’re ready to spend and we reach them!!” The company posits, “Kids spend 40% of each day in the classroom where traditional advertising can’t reach them. Now YOU CAN ENTER THE CLASSROOM through custom-made learning materials created with your specific marketing objectives in mind.”⁵³

Discussion Questions

1. Should corporate logos be displayed in classrooms?
2. Should the achievement of literacy skills be associated with corporate prizes?
3. Should companies which contribute significantly to the deterioration of the environment be granted access to the classroom in order to present themselves as responsible corporate citizens?
4. Should corporate curriculum resource material be used in the classroom?
5. Should schools be used as profitable consumer markets?

The majority of links between the business community and schools are relatively free of morally contentious issues, and influence positively the dynamics of the schooling process. Nevertheless, the case-studies below suggest that corporate partnerships exist in Catholic schools which contradict blatantly the fundamental teachings of Christ, and, one could argue, should not be part of Catholic education.

PepsiCo

In 1993, the Toronto Board of Education signed a three-year joint venture with PepsiCo, one of the largest transnational corporations (TNC) in the snack food and soft drink sector. The business venture granted PepsiCo a monopoly over all soft drink and snack food vending machines in Toronto public schools. In return, PepsiCo agreed to “give the school board one million dollars over three years and supply schools with student-of-the-month plaques, prizes, Pepsi T-shirts and hats.”⁵⁴

Two years prior to formalizing a contract with the Toronto Board of Education, PepsiCo entered a soft drink joint venture in Burma.⁵⁵ Burma is currently ruled by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), one of the most brutal military regimes in the world. In 1988, the SLORC injured and killed tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters. The military regime

⁵³Quoted in Barlow and Roberston, *Class Warfare*, p.84.

⁵⁴Quoted in Barlow and Robertson, *Class Warfare*, p.162.

⁵⁵Burma was renamed “Myanmar” by its illegitimate military regime after it overthrew a democratically elected government in 1988.

has closed universities, enforced mass slave labour, and condoned drug dealing. Human rights abuses in Burma have been documented extensively by human rights groups and social justice research centres. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights denounced the country's dictatorship for its forced labour, torture, and summary executions of any citizens who dare to oppose it.

Human rights groups claim that by conducting business in Burma, PepsiCo is condoning and financing the repressive actions of the military regime. This position is supported by Levi Strauss & Co., a TNC in the clothing industry that withdrew business operations in Burma, stating that it's impossible "to do business in Myanmar [Burma] without directly supporting the military government and its pervasive violations of human rights."⁵⁶ Likewise, Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, declared that "profits from business enterprises go merely to a small, very privileged elite. Companies that continue to invest in Burma only serve to prolong the agony of my country by encouraging the military regime to persevere in its atrocities. This is not the time for any foreign company to invest in Burma."⁵⁷

Even so, Kenneth Ross, Vice-President of Public Relations, Pepsi-Cola International, in a letter to the sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, defends PepsiCo's business interests in Burma, stating, "PepsiCo neither invests in nor supports political or military systems of government. We invest in business and people."⁵⁸ Ross neglects to mention that PepsiCo's joint venture partner is a "private" trading company owned and controlled by SLORC. Similar in structure to the business venture held by Disney in Burma, in which Disney "Mickey & Co." jerseys and sweatpants are made in a plant which is 45 per cent owned by SLORC, approximately 45 cents out of every dollar made from producing PepsiCo soft drinks flows back directly into the pockets of the military regime. In addition, even though Ross declares that PepsiCo invests in people, he does not discuss the contentious issue of work conditions. According to the U.S. Embassy in Burma, a work week of 60 hours is not uncommon, with wages as low as 6 cents an hour.

Spar Aerospace Ltd.

In Toronto's East York district, a high school particularly well known for its emphasis on programs in mathematics, science, computer science, and space education, offers a "TOPS" program designed to prepare students for professional careers in science and technology. TOPS students have access to IBM, ICONIX and Apple computer labs, including TechLab 2000, a lab complete with robotics, computer-aided design, aerodynamic testing, systems simulation, and satellite monitoring.

One of the school's founding partners is Spar Aerospace Ltd., a leading high technology firm (and a key financial supporter of Chrétien's Liberal Party⁵⁹). Spar develops "products for application in space, communications, defense, aviation and advanced industrial systems."⁶⁰ In

⁵⁶Quoted in a message to PepsiCo shareholders. See PepsiCo file in the office of the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR).

⁵⁷Quoted in the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Monitor*, 3(8), February 1997, p.14.

⁵⁸In a letter dated January 28, 1994. Refer to TCCR file.

⁵⁹Spar contributed \$27,654 to the Federal Liberal Party in 1994. See Richard Cleroux, "The Party of Corporate Canada," *Canadian Forum*, April 1996.

⁶⁰Spar brochure, "Intelligent Machines: Reaching for the Future ... Today."

addition, the company designed the well-known Canadarm - a device that can extend 49 feet from a space shuttle and lift the equivalent of a fully loaded bus into space.⁶¹ Spar has also designed various communications satellites, and is currently involved in the development of a Mobile Servicing System, a \$825 million system that will be used to assemble and maintain components during the construction and operations phases of a \$39 billion U.S. space station.⁶²

Spar has invested time and money in a business-education partnership program. It has funded the acquisition of a satellite dish “to serve as tangible evidence of commitment to ... our adopted school.”⁶³ The aerospace firm also supports professional development activities and events for staff and students. Corporate representatives interact with teachers and students, and promote the importance of aerospace research, the natural sciences and engineering through various school-based activities - classroom visits, consultation services, video presentations, school assemblies, funding, and tours for students and staff of the company’s site.

Even though Spar’s partnership program has undoubtedly enriched the quality of education in its adopted school, there are two particularly contentious issues surrounding the company’s research and development interests which raise for debate the matter of whether or not Spar should be involved in schools. First, Spar Aerospace is ranked consistently in Canada’s top few military contractors, and is a leading recipient of U.S. Department of Defense prime contracts.⁶⁴ For instance, during the 1988-89 fiscal year, Spar produced components for the F-16C/D fighter and trainer aircraft in Brunei, Chile, Gabon, Morocco, Mozambique and Turkey, and F/A-18 Hornet fighter aircraft in Kuwait.⁶⁵ In the 1990s, Spar has produced components for Apache helicopters, F/A-18 fighter jets, military transport aircraft, along with tactical air navigation systems, in countries including Malaysia, Kuwait, Israel, Thailand and Brazil.

A second problematic issue is Spar’s business interests in countries with contentious human rights records. Spar Aerospace has been actively involved in “Team Canada” trade missions, along with the prime minister, provincial premiers, and hundreds of business leaders, to Asia and Latin America. In 1994, China’s elite signed \$5.1 billion worth of business ventures with 50 Canadian companies, including Spar, Nortel, Power Corp., and Barrick Gold. Spar Aerospace and other Canadian business leaders negotiated deals and dined with the same Chinese leaders who ordered a student massacre in Tiananmen Square, and who enforced labour prison camps. As one Canadian Foreign Affairs official states, “We used to go with lists of political prisoners we wanted released. Now we go with lists of companies that want contracts.”⁶⁶

Shortly thereafter, Chrétien led a trade mission with Spar and members of the corporate sector to Indonesia and other parts of Asia. More than 50 business contracts were negotiated with the Indonesian government, totally almost \$3 billion.

⁶¹*Maclean’s Magazine*, May 9, 1988, p.41.

⁶²*The Toronto Star*, Saturday, November 4, 1995. Spar’s Mobile Servicing System is funded by Canadian taxpayers through a 17-year \$1.2 billion federal government grant. See *Maclean’s*, May 9, 1988, pp.40-42.

⁶³Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, “Educational Partnerships.”

⁶⁴See Project Ploughshares, *The Ploughshares Monitor*, 12(4), December 1991; 14(1), March 1993; 15(1), March 1994.

⁶⁵Project Ploughshares, *The Ploughshares Monitor* 12(3), September 1991, pp.22-23.

⁶⁶Tony Clarke, *Silent Coup: Confronting the Big Business Takeover of Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, James Lorimer & Company, 1997) p.100.

Indonesia, which is one of Canada's strongest economic partners, has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Indonesia's New Order Government has been responsible for human rights violations on a staggering scale since it came to power in the 1965 military coup. According to Amnesty International, "Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed; prisoners have been routinely tortured, some so severely that they died; thousands have been imprisoned following show trials solely for their peaceful political or religious views."⁶⁷

In 1975, Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. By 1981, a third of East Timor's population had been killed. Research conducted by Amnesty International indicates that "Hundreds of thousands of East Timorese have suffered death, 'disappearance', torture, including rape, political imprisonment, arbitrary arrest, intimidation and harassment. No one has been spared, no matter how old, how young or how vulnerable."⁶⁸ Mass executions, indiscriminate shooting, aerial strafing of populated areas, destruction of food crops and other deliberate strategies of mass starvation, have left hundreds of thousands of East Timorese dead or dying of starvation. In recent years, the Indonesian army has led military offensives on a regular basis, culminating in the Santa Cruz massacre, November 12, 1991. During a peaceful funeral procession to Santa Cruz Cemetery, Timorese were fired upon by Indonesian troops, killing 271 peasants, wounding 382, and 250 remain listed as "disappeared."

In the federal government's policy paper, *Canada in the World* (1995), we read that trade with repressive regimes leads naturally to greater democracy, that is, "As wealth is created and the middle class grow, democracy is also taking root."⁶⁹ Even though Canada's most recent Conservative government suspended trade and military exports to Indonesia, Chrétien's Liberal Party has chosen to abdicate its moral responsibility in favour of \$1 billion/year of trade. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, André Ouellet, declared boldly, "Canada has expressed ... our desire to vigorously pursue a series of [trading] initiatives in a number of countries irrespective of their human rights record."⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Ed Broadbent, former president of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, disagrees that increased trade leads to a greater sense of democracy. He states,

*Some people would have us believe that market liberalization automatically entails improvements in human rights. They tell us that the best way to promote human rights in China is simply through freer trade. This argument is false. The fact of the matter is that there is no automatic positive impact on rights from increased trade of market liberalization.*⁷¹

In the case of Indonesia, the *de facto* acceptance of Chrétien's position on trade and human rights by Spar Aerospace and other Canadian corporations is testimony to the fact that Spar has little concern for human rights violations so long as corporate profits are at stake.

⁶⁷Amnesty International, *Indonesia and East Timor*, p.1.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p.3.

⁶⁹Quoted in Sharon Scharfe, *Complicity: Human Rights and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1996), p.26.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p.29.

⁷¹Edward Broadbent, "Commerce and Conscience: Trade and Human Rights." Notes for a speech to Champlain College, Lennoxville, February 8, 1995, p.1.

Shell Oil

Shell Oil (Royal Dutch/Shell Group) has been intricately involved in numerous business-education partnership programs over the years. Most notably, Shell has financed curriculum development and school-based projects which promote the importance of science and technology in society. In 1993, for instance, Shell spent over \$5 million (U.S.) in high school programs, highlighting the value of careers in the natural sciences, and encouraging students to pursue studies in mathematics, science and technology.⁷² In addition, Shell plays a key role in the activities of the Conference Board of Canada. Shell is a Conference Board associate, a member of numerous of the Board's forums and councils, including the National Business and Education Centre, Business-Education Partnerships Forum (which developed "ethical guidelines" for partnerships), and the Corporate Council on Education (which developed the Board's "employability skills").

More than 95 per cent of Nigeria's foreign exchange and 80 per cent of government revenue is guaranteed by oil production and export. The State-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Company controls sales and production through joint ventures with European and U.S. oil companies, including Royal Dutch/Shell.⁷³ Shell controls more than 60 per cent of Nigeria's commercially viable oil bearing land.⁷⁴

In 1958, Shell began oil production in the Ogoni region, promising members of the Ogoni tribe immediate financial rewards and a better life in the near future. Today, the Ogoni people live amidst poverty and a ravaged local environment, with no apparent signs of a better life. The devastating results of Shell's business venture are visible on every acre of scorched Ogoni land - one hundred oil wells, two refineries, a fertilizer complex, flaring gas wells, broken pipelines, chronic oil spills, and unlined toxic waste pits.

In response to Shell's blatant neglect of the environment in the Ogoni region, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a Nigerian poet and 1996 Nobel Peace Prize nominee, organized the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). The aim of MOSOP is to promote two goals; political self-determination, and a greater share of oil revenues. Shortly before the Nigerian military arrested Saro-Wiwa on May 22, 1994, the poet predicted that "They are going to arrest us all and execute us. All for Shell."⁷⁵ He informed the Ogoni community of a police memo that was "meant to intimidate and terrorize the Ogoni people in order to allow Shell to recommence its operations in the area without carrying out the environmental, health, and social impact studies which the Ogoni people have demanded since 1992."⁷⁶ A Rivers State Internal Security Task Force memo, signed by Nigerian Major Okuntimo 12 days before Saro-Wiwa's arrest, states, "Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence."⁷⁷ The memo recommended that 400 soldiers undertake "wasting operations," removing Ogoni leaders who are "especially vocal individuals." The memo also recommended pressuring Shell and other oil companies in the region to come forward with "prompt, regular" payments to support the cost of the military operations."⁷⁸

⁷²*Fortune*, November 29, 1993, p.160.

⁷³See Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, Annual Report 1995-96.

⁷⁴*Multinational Monitor* 16(1-2), January/February 1995, p.9.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p.8.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p.25.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

On November 10, 1995, Nigeria's General Sani Abacha ordered the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority rights activists. Shell's working relationship with Abacha and its blatant lack of respect for human rights and the environment in Nigeria has earned it a reputation as the worst corporation of 1995.⁷⁹ In light of worldwide protest, Shell tried to convince the public that the company's "sound and ethical business practices" in Nigeria did not, in any way, influence Abacha's decision to hang the social activists. In a one-page message in *The Toronto Star*, Shell stated, "Politics is the business of governments and politicians. The world where companies use their economic influence to prop up or bring down governments would be a frightening and bleak one indeed."⁸⁰

⁷⁹See *Multinational Monitor*, December 1995.

⁸⁰*The Toronto Star*, Tuesday, November 21, 1995.

Discussion Questions

1. Effectively the school board sold monopoly access to its students, a relatively captive audience, and granted the company an opportunity to establish long-term consumer loyalty among young people. Is the student body a commodity or market which the board is entitled to make available to corporations for a fee? Is such practice in the best interests of students?
2. Are the international business ventures of a corporation a relevant factor in the decision of a board to enter into a partnership agreement?
3. Even though, under tremendous public pressure, PepsiCo's shareholders decided recently (January 24, 1997) to cease operations with SLORC, and announced "total disengagement" from Burma, the corporation collaborated with the SLORC for the full duration of the company's agreement with the school board. In establishing a partnership with a business enterprise, does a board (or school) tacitly endorse the company's business practices?
4. Is there need for careful scrutiny by school boards of the corporate profile of its potential partners?
5. Should companies which conduct business in China, Indonesia and other countries that violate human rights, have direct access, through partnership programs, to the classroom?
6. What measures can be taken by members of the Catholic Community to ensure that corporations which violate fundamental human rights remain far removed from the classroom?
7. Should Shell and other companies which violate human rights and devastate the environment be involved in Catholic schools?
8. Should a company's business interests in other parts of the world be considered prior to its involvement in schools, even though the company's policies and practices prove it to be a responsible corporate citizen in Canada?

The Learning Partnership

The Learning Partnership (LP) was founded in 1993 by members of the Metropolitan Toronto corporate and education communities. Even though it is not a corporation like PepsiCo, Spar or Shell, the LP deserves our attention because it influences significantly the development of business-education partnership programs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and also because it collaborates regularly with the corporate sector in order to promote and implement school projects. The goal of the LP is to unite “leaders in education, business and the community so that educational resources and the opportunities are maximized.”⁸¹ The LP is a primary driving force behind hundreds of small- and large-scale business-education partnerships in the GTA.

The Board of Directors of the LP is comprised of directors of the 17 GTA school boards, 14 presidents and CEOs of corporations and financial institutions, and 6 community members.⁸² There are 73 Partner Organizations and 17 Associate Members.⁸³ Classroom teachers, labour, small business, and community advocacy groups are visibly under represented in the organization.

The LP offers a variety of innovative programs, including:

- Entrepreneurial Adventure Project (EAP)

The EAP targets young children, and introduces them to “the skills and attitudes that form the basis of an entrepreneurial culture.”⁸⁴ Students from kindergarten to Grade 8 are paired with a member of the business community. Students learn firsthand about the skills needed to operate a business venture. Teachers receive training, entrepreneurial education, and curriculum guides before the program is implemented. The EAP includes “field trips to local businesses, classroom visits by entrepreneurs, and classroom exercises in specific entrepreneurial skills.”⁸⁵

- Teacher Professional Development Project (TPDP)

The TPDP provides teachers with an opportunity “to observe how businesses operate in the lean and competitive nineties.”⁸⁶ Teachers spend a half-day observing the operations of a corporation as part of their professional development day activities. The program offers teachers an opportunity to “establish valuable contacts for future exchange programs or school visits by the host company.”⁸⁷

- Take Our Kids To Work

This program encourages Grade 9 students to participate in a place of work for a day with a parent, relative or friend. It provides the private sector with a “first hand look at future

⁸¹Quoted in a package of material prepared by The Learning Partnership.

⁸²As of February 5, 1996.

⁸³As of January 26, 1996.

⁸⁴The Learning Partnership, “Our Current Projects,” February, 1996.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

employees and consumers. Students receive increased exposure to the working world.”⁸⁸ During the 1994 and 1995 academic years, 180,000 students in Ontario participated in the program. The LP plans to expand the project nationwide in the near future.

The LP’s *Financial Post 500* membership list of corporations and financial institutions include corporations with particularly contentious business venture records in other parts of the world, including the maquila region of Northern Mexico. A maquiladora is an export-oriented assembly plant, and provides corporations with cheap labour, alluring investment and tariff policies, lax environmental regulations, and minimal worker protection. There are over 3000 maquiladoras located in the U.S.-Mexico border region,⁸⁹ owned or sub-contracted predominantly by U.S.-based corporations or Japanese electronics firms. During the period 1986-1990, the average hourly wage of a maquila worker was \$0.50, compared to \$6-\$9 in the U.S. A worker in a General Motors plant earns 290 pesos for a 48-hour work week, or the equivalent of 77 cents per hour,⁹⁰ far below the minimum salary required to provide one’s family with the basic necessities for a decent life.

Human rights groups such as Americas Watch, Amnesty International, and the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras have documented extensively many cases which incorporate blatant violations of fundamental human rights or destruction of the environment by corporations in the maquila region. Member organizations of the LP, including AT&T, Cara Operations, Fuji, Hewlett Packard, IBM, and Northern Telecom (Nortel) conduct business in Northern Mexico.

AT&T is a case in point. From 1987-1992, Tamaulipas, Mexico recorded 386 cases of anencephaly. Anencephaly is a severe neural tube defect in which the brain or parts of it are missing. Most anencephalic babies are stillborn or die soon after birth. Occupational health specialists in the border region claim that uncontrolled pollution by a few chemical plants and electronic assembly factories, including AT&T, is to blame for the outbreak of anencephalic births. As a result, 16 Brownsville, Texas families have sued AT&T and other maquiladoras in Brownsville and Matamoros. The lawsuit states that the families “suffered injuries arising out of exposure to hazardous chemicals, hazardous hydrocarbons, hazardous wastes, similarly harmful organic or mineral substances and/or similarly harmful substances placed into the local environment through the negligent acts and omissions of the defendants.”⁹¹ In addition, according to a report by the Women’s Rights Project of Human Rights Watch, in an AT&T plant, “women are routinely subjected to questions on the use of contraceptives and their sexual habits. They are forced to resign when they get pregnant.”⁹² Women comprise approximately 70 per cent of the workforce in the maquiladora factories, and range in age from 16 to 25 years.⁹³ In Matamoros, AT&T was charged with endangering the health of workers in the plant. Workers are often required to solder without facial and body protection, often resulting in facial and body burns by sparks of molten lead.⁹⁴ In some AT&T plants, workers use a compound containing silica to polish telephones, in substandard safety conditions. Ventilation is often insufficient in the factories, protective equipment is unavailable, and workers often leave the maquiladoras with

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹See Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Newsletter, Summer 1996. The Coalition estimates that as of the end of May, 1996, there were 3,138 maquiladoras in the border region.

⁹⁰Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Annual Report 1996, p.12.

⁹¹Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, *The Human Face of Work*, p.61.

⁹²NACLA, Report on the Americas, 30(3), November/December 1996, p.37.

⁹³Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, *The Human Face of Work*, p.17.

⁹⁴Ibid., p.50.

nose, throat, eye, and skin irritations.⁹⁵

A second case in point associated with the LP's member organizations is KPMG Peat Marwick Thorne. Peat Marwick is one of the largest North American management and financial consulting firms (and a generous financial supporter of Chrétien's Liberal Party⁹⁶). It has participated in various small- and large-scale business-education partnership programs.⁹⁷ More importantly, Peat Marwick is a financial subcontractor for Education Alternatives, Inc., the Minnesota-based private, for-profit company which, as we saw earlier, attempted to privatize public schools in Baltimore.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe that the Learning Partnership, with member organizations such as AT&T and Peat Marwick, condone human rights violations and privatization of publicly-funded education?
2. Does the Learning Partnership case-study reveal both the educational allure of business partnerships, and the disquieting implications of a corporate ideology and ethos entering the learning experience of our youth?
3. Should the Learning Partnership be involved in publicly-funded schools, even though its membership is defined predominately by the corporate sector, and in light of the fact that recent changes in education have been initiated primarily by the Government and its private sector affiliates?

⁹⁵Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Annual Report 1993, p.10.

⁹⁶In 1994, Peat Marwick donated \$37,733 to the Federal Liberal Party. See Richard Cleroux, "The Party of Corporate Canada," *Canadian Forum*, April, 1996.

⁹⁷For instance, in 1995 Peat Marwick signed a formal partnership agreement with a Catholic high school in York Region. Students were invited to prepare a periodic newsletter and a marketing-oriented video for the accounting firm. In return, Peat Marwick would provide students with placements in co-operative programs, review and supplement curriculum, and provide students with achievement awards.

Gospel Response

The Catholic Community has challenged consistently the validity of economic systems and political structures which marginalize individuals, exclude them from meaningful participation in society, exploit workers, or treat people as a means to an economic end. Economic systems and political structures must be based on the absolute centrality of the common good. “All other rights whatsoever, including those of property and free commerce are to be subordinated to this principle.” (*Populorum Progressio*, n.22). They must promote the integral development of the human person, encourage effective economic and political participation, and enhance self-reliance and solidarity. Finally, the Catholic Community advocates the priority of the less-fortunate over the wants of the wealthy, and the priority of labour over the maximization of profit.

Catholic social teaching is rooted firmly in the scriptures, the Hebrew prophets, and the words and actions of Christ. As the final document of the Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, in many respects, reflects the essence of the Christian message. Its focus is on Catholic social teaching and the sacredness of the human person. The document challenges members of the Catholic Community to view individual subjects as part of a larger social, political, and economic system. *Gaudium et Spes* views the pressing issues of human dignity, human rights, and democratic social systems as integral parts of the process of building God’s Kingdom in the here-and-now.

The foundations of Catholic education reflect wholeheartedly the concerns and aspirations of the Catholic Community on matters of economic and political import. Fundamentally, Catholic education is “directed towards the formation of the human person in view of ... the good of the society to which he belongs.” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, n.1.) Catholic education moves far beyond the boundaries of cognitive learning. It provides the fertile soil essential for the growth of mind, heart, and will, and “draw[s] out of young people their God-given potential, to enable them to fulfill their unique role in creation within the human community.”⁹⁸ It encourages students to be compassionate creators with Christ in the present, address critically the nature and purpose of social structures which negate the sacredness of humanity, and reconstruct social relations, guided by Jesus’ assumption that persons are of infinite worth.

Catholic Education and the Common Good

The essence of Catholic education is the pursuit of the common good in light of the Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church. The expression *the common good* implies a state of being, a way of life whereby people are granted complete accessibility to those conditions required to achieve self-perfection and social harmony. The common good balances harmoniously the recognition, respect, and interests of the human person with the needs and expectations of the community. The common good is “the sum total of those conditions of social life by which individuals, families, and groups can achieve their own fulfillment in a relatively thorough and ready way.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.74.)

The political community plays a key role in the pursuit of the common good. Elected

⁹⁸Catholic Education Service, *The Common Good in Education: A Commentary on the Implications of the Church’s Social Teachings for the Work of Catholic Schools and Colleges*, p.7.

government officials and leaders of political institutions have a moral responsibility to exercise their decision-making powers in light of the betterment of society. The goal of serving the needs of the majority must take precedence over self-serving interests. As Pope John Paul II states,

*[The] needs of the poor must take priority over the desires of the rich, the rights of workers over the maximization of profits, the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion, and the production to meet social needs over production for military purposes.*⁹⁹

Pope Paul VI reminds us that corporations “are able to act in autonomous ways, largely independent of national political authorities, and thus free in that respect from accountability for the common good.”¹⁰⁰ The corporate sector must respect the rights of workers, thereby recognizing that labour unions have an essential role to play in preventing the violation of the dignity of human work. The Catholic Community has consistently maintained that “the right to decent work, to just wages, to security of employment, to adequate rest and holidays, to limitation of hours of work, to health and safety protection, to non-discrimination, to form and join trade unions, and, as a last resort, to go on strike,”¹⁰¹ are superior to the rights of capital. Of particular relevance to the case-studies presented earlier, the CCCB argues that governments must ensure that transnational corporations exercise social responsibility and serve the common good. In clear terms, the bishops declare,

*In particular we maintain that the federal government should discourage investments by Canada-based corporations in countries which flagrantly violate human rights. For the partnership between Canada-based corporations and repressive governments of other countries means that natural resources are continually exploited without the participation of, and benefit to, the people most affected.*¹⁰²

The pursuit of the common good implies moving beyond words to concrete forms of action. It means, as members of the Catholic Community, we have a moral responsibility to redirect political and economic forces in light of Church teachings, to “participate in actions to change the policies of government, corporations and other institutions that cause human suffering,”¹⁰³ and to ensure that the well-being of the majority is protected. It means choosing the preferential option for the poor, that is, following Christ by identifying and joining in solidarity with victims of injustice. Thus, declares the 1971 International Synod of Bishops,

*Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.*¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹Quoted in Gregory Baum, *Theology and Society* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p.93.

¹⁰⁰Quoted in Michael Ryan, *Solidarity: Christian Social Teaching & Canadian Society* (London: The Divine Word International Centre of Religious Education, 1986), p.101.

¹⁰¹Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching*, 1996. Quoted in Catholic Education Service, *The Common Good in Education*, p.18.

¹⁰²Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Justice Demands Action*, n.16.

¹⁰³Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Labour Day Message 1976, “From Words to Action: On Christian Political and Social Responsibility,” n.9.

¹⁰⁴Synod of Bishops Second General Assembly, *Justice in the World*, November 30, 1971, n.6.

Similarly, the CCCB states,

*Too often people see examples of exploitation around them but remain silent. Yet, silence amounts to a form of consent and approval of what is happening. In the tradition of the prophets, we are called to denounce injustice and speak the truth to those in power. As citizens we must exercise our freedom and responsibility to take positions on specific issues and speak out against the causes of injustice. Until the voices for justice are multiplied, they will continue to be ignored by those who hold power.*¹⁰⁵

The Christian message is clear regarding the moral responsibility of political and economic authorities. If business ventures downplay the value of human dignity for the sake of profit, treat people as commodities, blatantly violate human rights, or, more fundamentally, threaten the common good, then their business practices must be challenged in light of the teachings of Christ.

Catholic education is not a commodity for sale to the highest corporate bidder, nor a venue for business negotiations with companies which violate the Christian message of compassion and justice. Catholic schools are heirs to a rich legacy of Church teachings from pontifical, ecclesial and conciliar sources on such issues as employment, corporate responsibility, human work and unions. It is imperative that the social teachings of the Catholic Church act as a foundation upon which partnerships between Catholic schools and the business community are built. Catholic schools need to bear witness to an alternative worldview from that which is emerging in a corporate-driven global economy. Relationships between the business sector and Catholic schools, unless they are governed according to Christ's message, compromise the school's ability to be a leader in the pursuit of the common good.

In closing, it is worth keeping in mind the words of Brazilian theologian, Dom Helder Camara.

*I used to think, when I was a child, that Christ might have been exaggerating when he warned about the dangers of wealth. Today I know better. I know how very hard it is to be rich and still keep the milk of human kindness. Money has a dangerous way of putting scales on one's eyes, a dangerous way of freezing people's hands, eyes, lips, and hearts.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Labour Day Message, 1976. "From Words to Action: On Christian Political and Social Responsibility," n.9.

¹⁰⁶Dom Helder Camara, *Revolution Through Peace* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp.142-143.

Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education

Questions of ethical, social, and pedagogical import associated with corporate involvement in Catholic schools are numerous and often complex in nature. In order to address critically the issues, the questions to follow have been categorized according to seven principles of Catholic social teaching. The questions are intended to initiate within the Catholic Community a critical discourse on the issues addressed in this report.

1. Dignity of the Human Person

The Roman Catholic Church, through almost a century of social teaching, has consistently maintained that there is an ethical order to be followed in the organization of an economy. This is evident, for example, in the writings of Pope John Paul II. In Catholic social teaching, the value and dignity of the human person lies at the centre of an economy based on justice.

(The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Ethical Reflections on Canada's Socio-Economic Order," December 13, 1983, n.9.)

What are the elements of a dignified human existence?

What does the sacredness of humanity imply?

What is the relationship between human dignity and labour?

What features of Catholic education address specifically the dignity of the human person?

2. Human Rights and Responsibilities

It is our earnest wish that the day may come when every human being may find therein an effective safeguard for the rights which derive directly from his dignity as a person, and which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable.

(Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Human Rights: The Road to Peace," December 18, 1968, n.6.)

What are some fundamental human rights?

According to Catholic social teaching, what is the relationship between violations of human rights and the responsibilities of members of the Catholic Community?

How are human rights protected in the workplace?

What should members of the Catholic education community do to ensure that human rights are protected in the workplace?

3. Social Nature of the Person

*The obvious truth is that in labor, especially hired labor, as in ownership, there is a social as well as a personal or individual aspect to be considered. For unless human society forms a truly social and organic body; unless labor be protected in the social and juridical order; unless the various forms of human endeavor, dependent one upon the other, are united in mutual harmony and mutual support; unless, above all, brains, capital and labor combine together for common effort, man's toil cannot produce due fruit. Hence, if the social and individual character of labor be overlooked, it can be neither equitably appraised nor properly recompensed according to strict justice. (Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *On Social Reconstruction*, p.35.)*

Do you believe people are social by nature?

How can we preserve our sense of authenticity as individual subjects and be active members of our community?

How is the process of education regarded as a social process?

Who are the key members of a school community?

What role should members of the business community play in the dynamics of Catholic education?

4. Common Good

*To lower or raise wages unduly, with a view to private profit, and with no consideration for the common good, is contrary to social justice... (Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *On Social Reconstruction*, p.38.)*

What is meant by the expression *the common good*?

How can the Catholic education community serve the common good?

If a member of the business community conducts business ventures contrary to the interests of the common good, should the business enterprise be involved actively in Catholic education?

What forms of corporate involvement in schools contradict the nature and purpose of Catholic education?

5. Solidarity

*In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries, and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject or work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. (Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, pp.21-22.)*

How does Catholic social teaching relate solidarity to forms of social change?

With whom should members of the Catholic education community join in solidarity?

What are some primary reasons for joining in solidarity with other members of the local community?

What forms of solidarity between Catholic schools and the corporate community would contradict the nature and purpose of Catholic education?

What kinds of solidarity with the business community would best meet the needs of the Catholic school community?

6. **Preferential Option for the Poor**

I wish to appeal with simplicity and humility to everyone, to all men and women without exception. I wish to ask them to be convinced of the seriousness of the present moment and of each one's individual responsibility, and to implement...the measures inspired by solidarity and love of preference for the poor. This is what is demanded by the present moment and above all by the very dignity of the human person, the indestructible image of God the creator, which is identical in each one of us.
(Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n.47.)

Define the term *poverty*.

Which social groups in Canadian society are most likely to live in poverty?

What role should Catholic schools play in reducing poverty in society?

How could partnerships between Catholic schools and the business community address the pressing issue of poverty in Canadian society?

7. **Community Organizations**

Human solidarity, given flesh each day in different forms of fraternity, is the touchstone for both personal and communal development.

(Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Inequality Divides, Justice Reconciles," n.10.)

Explain the role of some important voluntary groups in your community.

How are community organizations normally structured and operated? What are their primary concerns? How is decision-making power distributed in each organization?

How could community organizations contribute positively to the dynamics of Catholic education?

As an integral part of the Catholic school community, what role should the corporate sector play in the schooling process?

What measures can a Catholic school community take to better inform itself of the nature and purpose of partnership programs?

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