

CPT
Kits
Andrew

September 21, 1993

Mr. Bob Read
OP-ED Editor
The Ottawa Citizen
1101 Baxter Road
Ottawa, Ontario
K2C 3M4

Dear Mr. Read:

Re: Bob Harvey's Column of August 7, 1993

This is a follow-up to your letter and our telephone conversation of a few weeks ago. I appreciate your suggestion that I include some examples as to how the six principles could be translated into actions that would contribute to human wellbeing, especially that of families.

Please find enclosed my revised response entitled, "Canadian families deserve fiscal and socio-economic justice." (You can probably think of a better title.)

I hope you will seriously consider publishing this opinion piece. If necessary, I'll be glad to do further work on it.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your advice and cooperation.

With kind regards!

Sincerely yours,

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GV/jl

enclosure

Canadian families deserve fiscal and socio-economic justice
by Gerald Vandezande

Religion editor Bob Harvey's timely suggestion that "family groups should join forces for election" (Aug. 7) deserves more than one response.

It is indeed becoming more apparent that our federal and provincial laws and policies require careful revision in order to make them less discriminatory and more equitable, also when it comes to respecting the legitimate needs and human rights of our families. The current income tax provisions and rates are a good example.

As a non-partisan Christian political research and advocacy organization, Citizens for Public Justice has been actively concerned that Canadians of diverse backgrounds increasingly work together in a politically constructive way. Much can be accomplished through coalitions such as the Family Lobby Group proposed by Bob Harvey. However, such cooperative efforts require agreement on the principles that should guide our public-policy aims.

During the recent national-unity debates and at pre-budget consultations, CPJ representatives articulated a public-justice framework for policy-making that would include the following six principles:

- 1) **Human dignity:** the right of all persons and their communities to be treated with justice, love, compassion and respect, and their responsibility to treat others likewise.

For Aboriginal families, this would mean a commitment on the part of government to work towards Aboriginal self-government and a fair land rights settlement process.

- 2) **Mutual responsibility:** the duty of all persons to contribute to the well-being of the community as they are able, and the duty of each community to contribute to the well-being both of all its members, regardless of their ability, and of those in the larger society.

Community economic development initiatives, for example, often address local needs such as housing, and any profits are re-invested in the local community.

- 3) **Economic equity:** the right of all persons and communities to adequate access to the resources necessary for a full life, including access to worthwhile work, fair employment conditions and income-security provisions, and our communal responsibility to use such resources responsibly.

Gainful, permanent employment and adequate income security helps to stabilize family life.

- 4) **Social justice:** the right of all persons and communities to full participation in the life and decision-making of Canada, and to adequate access to the resources necessary for a full life, including access to adequate education, health care, housing and child care, and our communal responsibility to use such resources responsibly.

Work done that is done in the home, such as caring for children, should be recognized and valued, including giving it a value in the tax system equivalent to that for employed parents. Workplaces should accommodate the needs of parents caring for their children, and adult children caring for their elderly parents. This might be done through job-sharing, flexible work hours, parental/family leave provisions, etc.

- 5) **Environmental integrity:** the duty of all persons, communities and institutions to live in harmony with, and to practice responsible stewardship of, the earth and its environment.

Business and industry should take responsibility for the social and ecological effects of their production in their corporate planning. Consumers should be prepared to pay the extra costs for environmentally responsible production.

- 6) **Fiscal fairness:** the right of all persons, communities and institutions to fair fiscal treatment and the responsibility of all to contribute fairly for the well-being of all.

Tax deductions that benefit primarily upper-income families, such as the child care expense deduction and the RRSP deduction, should

be converted to credits and the additional revenue used to reduce the tax burden on low-income families.

We have received favourable responses to this public-justice approach. We were encouraged to help work out constitutional approaches and socio-economic policies that would, among other things, enable needy people to be free of poverty so that they may be capable of responsible living. That will also require businesses, trade unions and other organizations (such as churches and church agencies) to act in such a way that needy people have access to necessary goods and services.

Since there is widespread concern about all the bankruptcies, unemployment, poverty and environmental degradation, there obviously is an urgent need for an integrated understanding of the economy. Economic development and social development must take place together. The creation of relationships of justice, cooperation and mutual respect is essential to social, economic and environmental well-being.

CPJ views mutual respect as a way to justice, linking people and communities through bonds of equity and fairness. Likewise, we view mutual responsibility as a tie that binds, linking people and communities through deeds of compassion and solidarity.

I share these principles and suggestions in the hope that they will contribute to cooperative actions by like-minded citizens and groups in the interest of equity, fairness and justice for all people, including our families.

Gerald Vandezande is the National Public Affairs Director of Citizens for Public Justice. CPJ is a national, non-partisan citizens' organization which promotes justice and stewardship in Canadian public affairs. For more information, contact: CPJ, Suite 311, 229 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4 (Tel. (416) 979-2443; Fax (416) 979-2458)