



# The Tea Party Review

*“Civil Society sounds kind of like a Tea Party...”*

The Civicus Youth Engagement Project is about giving youth a chance to be involved and heard at the Civicus World Assembly. Young people from the Vancouver area have joined together to create the first Civicus Youth Media Team.

From our space on the second floor (in the media room) we are writing articles for our newsletter, updating our website daily ([www.tgmag.ca/civicus](http://www.tgmag.ca/civicus)) and chatting online twice a day with youth from Canada and around the world who, unfortunately, did not have the opportunity to come to the conference. We hope to report to them the issues that are being discussed here so that they might have an opportunity to give feedback into the process.

## VOLUNTEER UNDER APPRECIATION

**By Tania Willard**

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2001 as International Year of Volunteers. Volunteerism has become a part of the fabric of nations encouraging citizen participation. The Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, created in 1999, is a sponsor among other NGO and civil society organizations that rely on volunteerism for a significant part of their work. However, volunteerism is not as home-baked and full of goodness as the Year of the Volunteer poster tells us.

By turning away volunteers from meals and transportation the Civicus World Assembly has ensured a clear separation between delegates and volunteers.

Volunteers receive the leftovers (because we never paid \$700 in conference fees). As volunteers we were told we would only receive food after everyone else who paid had eaten. We were told that we would not be able to travel on the buses from UBC until the very last one. None of these stipulations were made clear ahead of time; volunteers were told after waiting in line and in front of others that we were expected to go to the end of the line for everything.

Without the work of the 300 volunteers this conference would not have been possible and yet we are treated as though we do not deserve to eat at the same time as delegates or ride on the same buses as them. The lines are clear: you are a volunteer at the bottom of the line, you had to work your way here, you do not deserve the same treatment as delegates who can afford \$700 in registration fees. The treatment of volunteers—especially youth at Civicus—has turned us sour. We thought it important to give a more accurate picture of volunteering to contrast with the sunny pictures of happy poor receiving help from happy volunteers.



**For the rest of this article, and others, visit:  
[www.tgmag.ca/civicus/](http://www.tgmag.ca/civicus/)**



**New Band Review:**

# **Kids Can Free the Children**

**Craig Chilburger – darling**  
**Interview by Lyndsay Popes**



**Current Fixations:**

Youth empowerment, getting youth socially active and children's rights.

**Mind altering work of art:**

Children paint their dreams – an installment of works created by child labourers.

**Most Memorable or inspirational gig and why?**

Speaking to 28,000 youth in St. Louis at a conference. (Can't remember the name).

**What was your career high and low?**

High - Last week at the Fifth annual Free the Children conference; not being able to vote for the first time and seeing the next generation of leaders.

Low – returning to India and not being able to track down a young girl who worked in a factory dismantling and recycling used syringes

**What should everyone shut-up about?**

Government's empty promises.

I would drop everything to do a benefit for...

A group of youth who were fighting for their rights and for a voice.

**What traits do you like and dislike most about yourself?**

I have a lot of new ideas, but I don't always know how to make them happen.

**When you think of Canada you think of...**

A country that could once again regain its status as Boy Scout of the world.

**What is your vital daily ritual?**

Reading the comics. It's what got me started.

**How do you spoil yourself?**

I take days off to enjoy wherever I am. That, and Thai food.

**What was your most memorable day job?**

I've never had a day job. I've never earned a wage.

**If you weren't an activist you would be...**

Lost. Activism is an important part of my life.

**What is your greatest fear?**

As I get older, losing the idealism of youth.

**If you had a superpower what would it be?**

Flying. It would make it a lot cheaper to get around.

**Strangest brush with celebrity.**

Mother Teresa. She was so inspiring.

**Who would be your ideal dinner guest, living or dead and what would you serve them?**

Jean Chretien because we have lots to talk about and I would have pizza and pop.

**What does your mom wish you were doing instead?**

Studying for my exams.

## **So, what is civil society?**

**By Darrell Day**

*It's the second day of the conference, and some of us still don't know. Here, Darrell defines what he thinks it isn't.*

I'm sure everyone has their own ideas and views of "civil society". I'm also sure that these ideas and views are as varied and complex as the different cultures and ethnicities which create our many societies. Well, I'll tell you what it's not!

It's not a bunch of rich old white guys in \$900 suits blowing hot air on the issues and social problems which plague us in the new millennium. Economic and educational inaccessibility, it seems, are being overlooked as a primary focus in preference for long drawn-out discussions about the Internet and computer technology. "Only one in ten have access to the Internet,"

said A. Vittachi, speaker and delegate. In my mind, it's events like Civicus which only further create depravity, discontent and alienation among the masses.

Are we forgetting that there are more of us who live in the working and under classes, the un-privileged classes? Without input or knowledge of these people's experiences and ideas, we can never really make a truly progressive step toward a "civil society"—whatever the hell it is! Thus, we only make it that much more difficult to ever know or realize any kind of true equality in society.



# International Year of the Volunteer!?

By Damien McCombs

There is a Public Service Employee's national strike currently in Canada. A group of strikers showed up to the Civicus World Assembly to expose wage disparities in the government pay structure; Lucienne Robillard, President of the Treasury Board, was present at the conference and the union wanted to apply pressure.

This strike is an interesting irony, after all, this is the International Year of the Volunteer (IYV). It is ironic because the very nature of the IYV is to appreciate people for the work they do for free. That is what the strike is about: people not being appreciated for their work. Case in point: the Prime Minister (PM) got a 42% raise, Members of Parliament just gave themselves and 20.6% pay increase, and Senior Executives got 7% as well as a bonus. And the Public Service Employees? They might get 2%. And remember that 2% is only relative to their specific wages,

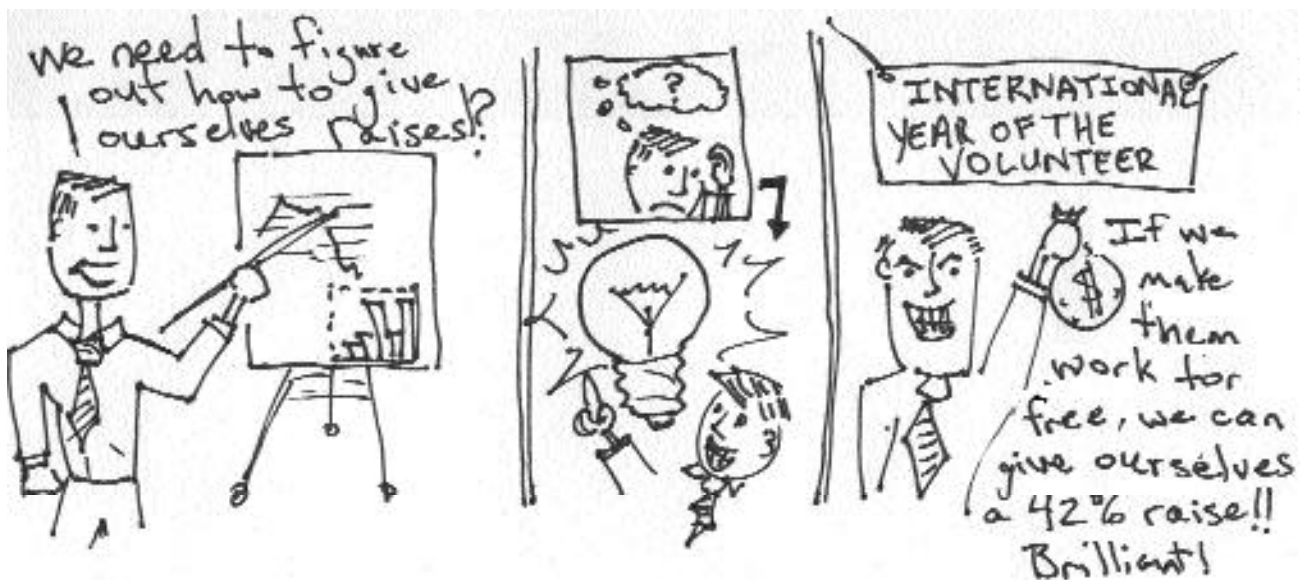
and so the 42% of the PM's wage equates to substantially more money. According to Robillard, the 2% offer is fair when compared to private sectors, as well as and when you compare the work done by the PM to the kind of work that is done by the PS employees. "That is fair," explained one of the protesting strikers who showed up to question

Lucienne. (After all, the PM is on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.)

"That is not fair when you consider that inflation has gone up over 4% and we're getting offered only 2%."

So when I thought about that a little more, I came to this conclusion. In relative terms, if the cost of living is higher than your wage, you're working for free and essentially volunteering your time and labour. The Public Service Employees have had an imposed wage freeze for seven out of the last ten years. This called for a cartoon....

"That is not fair when you consider that inflation has gone up over 4% and we're getting offered only 2%."



# REAL SOCIAL CHANGE will still come from the streets.

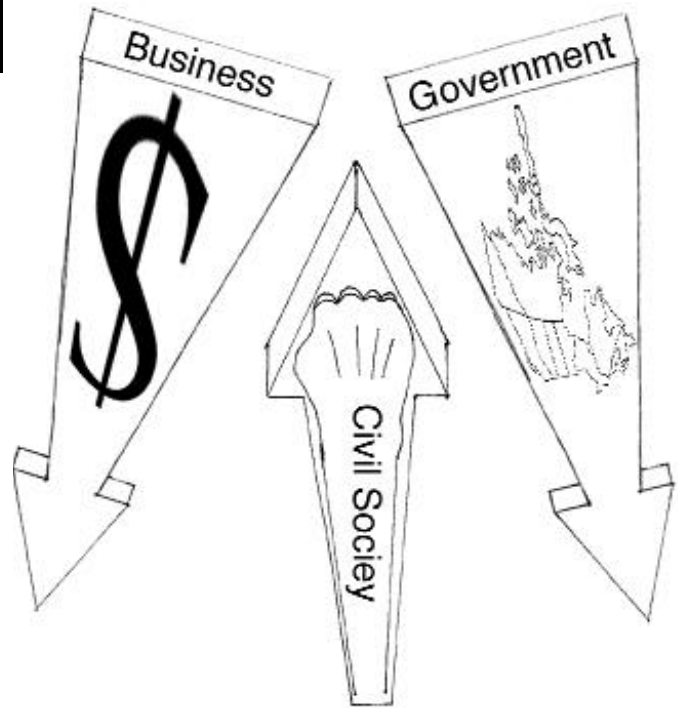
By Kevin Adam

While a global network of NGO's and civil society can debate at the same table with governments and corporations, and this may result in well-worded reports which suggest future laws and legislation, the real change in our societies will come from people in the street and hands-on hard work.

Although some useful action has come from international forums that have generated networks and raised awareness on certain issues, many times the end results fall short of actually making a lasting change in the day to day struggle of the majority of people around the world. Resolutions were passed more than 50 years ago to "end" torture, but of course the horrible reality is that in many countries it is still standard practice. Even in the "democratic" west/north police repression has increased against dissent as the failure of capitalist systems is becoming more apparent to many who were not previously affected by its harsh conditions, for-profit production. If the governments of the world were serious about making lasting social change, and corporations really cared that the environment may not outlive their profits, then they would radically change their structure of wealth production and protection—but the coffers of the banks and police around the world continue to increase.

To use a local example, the BC Liberal government (who came to power just months ago) have already merged multiple ministries into one called the Ministry of Community, Native, and Women's Services, and its budget was promptly cut. Meanwhile, huge corporate tax cuts were given out, environmental standards weakened, and the attacks on the working class unions have already begun. Not to be outdone the RCMP recently announced its new force: the Public Order Program (POP), which is aimed at gathering information (spying) and controlling public protest. Were the Canadian Security Establishment (CSE), Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (CSIS), National Security Intelligence Services (NSIS), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and city police not enough? Yet this same government sponsors and participates in Civicus and is using it as a showcase for themselves and the police to look good for PR reasons. How will the Civicus index rate them?

Progressive solutions for the myriad of problems facing society may come from some of the individuals and organizations attending this conference, but chances are that this work would be done regardless of corporate-government relations. Also, it is questionable if "civil



society" should be looking to potentially adopt corporate structure or if negotiating is anything more than fighting for "a piece of the pie."

At a time when the government and corporate sectors are looking to do damage control over rising dissent, is civil society handing them an easy out? To quote Claude Ake a

critic of civil society:

"...We should recall that the high profile of civil society in democratic discourse is (actually) part of a project of devaluing democracy. It is associated with the perennial

preoccupation of European elites with blunting the egalitarianism of the classical notion of democracy as popular power. Civil society was used to redefine democracy from popular sovereignty and direct participation in rulership: from individual and collective self-determination, to the modest privilege of protection against the power of the state."

At the end of the day, lasting change will only happen when the poor, marginalized and oppressed people of the world unite and act for their own empowerment and control of resources; not managed for them by governments, sold to them by corporations, and patronized by "civil society."

*PS. While I was writing this at the conference for civil society I witnessed a native man asking for change to get food who was told by "the Downtown Ambassador" that he had to leave the area. This "public space" is on private property, and the poor are not welcome.*

*....and why couldn't I get a coffee that was fair trade and not corporate?*

**"...and why couldn't I get a coffee that was fair trade and not corporate?"**

# Semantic Antics

By Damien McCombs

I come from a background of fairly "radical" involvement in my community. (I say radical in quotations because all I want is to have freedom and justice, which doesn't seem too radical to me). I have come to understand a lot of terms that were new to me when I first got involved at the grassroots level. At the World Assembly, there are new meanings for many of these words that, to myself and others, appear co-opted and perverted. This is a feeling that is often shared by grassroots activist in regards to larger NGOs. There is a trend of co-opting activities and becoming removed from the original intent.

In skimming the Civicus calendar there are lots of words and phrases that stand out. For example, on the "frontline." To myself, this means being at the edge of a protest, or battle, where people and law enforcers clash, often with tear gas, batons, rubber bullets, etc, the frontlines on a battle field. At the Civicus Assembly, the Frontline Volunteers are not doing this, and in a way, it offends that meaning. "Affinity groups" is another example. They are groups that form to match the goals and safety concerns of a few individuals for a protest. They are derived from trust, as security issues around police infiltration are often major concerns and many work on consensus models to ensure every one has equal say,

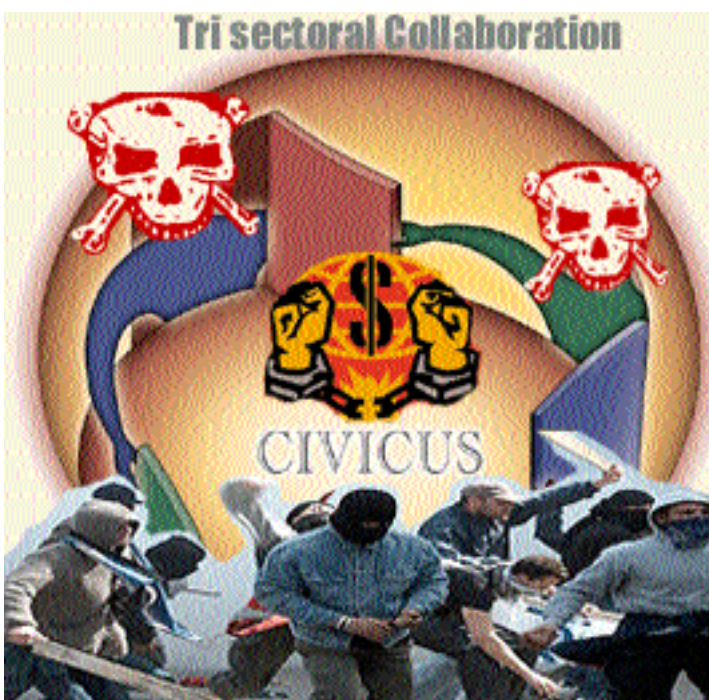
voice, and veto. Civicus has affinity groups, too. I like the idea of the small group discussions, but the root of the phrase is being effaced. "Direct action:" Just doing it, instead of waiting for some watered down version that is outdated by the time it is received. Or, doing something because the people in charge don't represent your needs, so you do what you have to do to fulfill your needs. At

**"Direct action: Just doing it, instead of waiting for some watered down version that is outdated by the time it is received"**

Civicus they have (this is my personal favorite) "Direct Delegate Interaction." These volunteers get the delegates what they need. So instead of civil

disobedience, there is obedience.

This said, I believe positive steps toward a better dialogue with grassroots organizations, and larger NGOs is something that needs to be addressed and pursued. Deconstructing the barriers and demystifying the stigmas of "radical action" is a good thing. Applying tactics across the board and learning, experiencing, and growing is invaluable. I just don't think it is OK to co-opt language, and efface the root of those meanings, while also financially excluding those groups who gave meaning to those terms in the first place.



By Darrell Day

Tri-sector partnerships for sustainable development is an idea that is still relatively new. Having been developed in only the last few years, it's obvious that there is a great need for further consideration and contemplation. I, myself, had only recently heard of it, via the Internet. This little reality is one that is all too common, considering the fact that there are still so many people in society who cannot or do not have access to the Internet. To further alienate the common person from this idea of tri-sector partnerships is the fact that most discussions about it take place in forums which inherently exclude them (Civicus 2001 and the WTO conference in Seattle a few years ago are prime examples). This is significant. Delegates from all around the world gather together to discuss issues and ideas, which directly involve the lives and fates of the common citizen. One example of this is the suggestion that new terms must be created "like 'co-optation' which can be used to inform and attract others to support the civil society movement"

**For the rest of this article, and others, visit:  
[www.tgmag.ca/civicus/](http://www.tgmag.ca/civicus/)**

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Kumi Naidoo, CEO & Secretary General of Civicus acknowledges popular criticism of Non Government Organisations in the morning plenary.

**"BRNGO's": Briefcase NGO's**

Those suits you see in the back of the expensive confrence and trade centre with two cell phones talking to the UN and some other policy maker while workers strike for wages outside

**"GONGO's": Government Ordered NGO's**

This refers to government agendas fronting as NGO's  
Humm..World Bank/WTO let's make a deal!

**"PNGO's": Political Party NGO's**

Ditto, except maybe this involves an election or coup

**"RNGO's": Royal NGO's**

Royals setting up NGO's to serve their interests

**"MNGO's": My Own NGO**

"I am seeking a World Bank loan to develop my Investment portfolio."



Graphic by Tania Willard