



Transnational CED

The North American Network for the Solidarity Economy

For three days we gathered in Trois-Rivières, Québec under the banner “Communities – Creating the World We Want.” It was the largest community economic development conference ever held in Canada. Nearly 600 people from every province and territory in the country were joined by colleagues from the U.S, Africa, New Zealand, and Latin America. We educated each other, debated our movement-building work and policy agendas, and celebrated some victories; Among the points of discussion: how can we strengthen the international effort to build the “world we want”?

Representing the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (INPSS), President Abdou Salam Fall from Senegal invited participants to Dakar, Senegal on Africa's northwest coast in November 2005. This will be the third international gathering of networks and organizations to facilitate exchange, learning, and projects that build economies founded on the values of social solidarity, democracy, and co-operation. INPSS will elevate to a global stage the tens of thousands of people and projects currently at work in communities around the world.

Stimulated by this vision, about 30 of the conference delegates (representing several thousand Canadian and American organizations and citizens) met to explore the formation of a North American Network. We decided to move forward and within our limited means build a North American Network for the Solidarity Economy (NANSE).

Nancy Neamtan sees NANSE as an important step. President of the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, a network of networks that gathers Quebec's CED, social movements, labour, and co-op sectors behind an social economy agenda, Neamtan comments:

In a market-driven world we need both a continental & a global framework for constructing a solidarity economy: an economy where social goals are embedded in our vision & our practice.

“Here in Quebec we have learned so much over the last 20 years from the practice in other parts of Europe and North America. We have been able to leverage positive change in our own context through these connections. Now, others from different countries are doing the same with us, examining our experience and seeking ways to leverage our progress into their context. This is part of a mutual project of solidarity, one that is necessary if goals for reshaping economies are to be realized over the long term.”

Mike Lewis, of the Canadian CED Network and the Centre for Community Enterprise concurs:

“Although a modest initiative at this point, NANSE can be a vehicle for strengthening cross-border learning, projects, and solidarity. We need to share the Canadian experience at larger table of individuals, organizations, and networks. Let's face it – the Canadian and American economies are becoming more and more linked, too often in ways that do not serve ordinary people. In a market-driven world we need both a continental and global framework for constructing a

solidarity economy: an economy where social goals are embedded in our vision and our practice.” Dan Swinney, Director of the Center for Labor and Community Research in Chicago, believes we must move towards a more strategic and sustainable basis for co-operation in order to combat the forces of impoverishment:

“Mutual interests, common values and strategic priorities can be shaped into durable and lasting results. We are interested in the creation of wealth, not just redistribution. We believe development must be practical and

profoundly rooted in the local level. We know it is possible to increase community control of assets through strategic alliances made up of community, labour and business. All of this is part of building a solidarity economy. NANSE can help structure the cross-border exchanges, relationships and learning to further these goals in North America.”

Apart from the long-term benefits that such a network could bring to actors on both sides of the border, delegates saw NANSE as an important means for mobilizing participants for Dakar 2005. Twenty or more organizations or networks will be purchasing \$75 NANSE memberships to kick off the process. Each member will receive a subscription to *Making Waves: Canada's Community Economic Development Magazine*, which will devote four pages to the NANSE newsletter. For the immediate future, NANSE is exploring the possibility of a cross-border work-study tour as a way to build relationships and learning.

Keep in touch! Go to www.cedworks.com, website of the Centre for Community Enterprise, and click on “International” to learn the latest and register as a member. Copies of this and other NANSE newsletters, in French and English, will be posted in PDF for the convenience of networks in Canada, the United States, and beyond. (Other languages may be considered, given sufficient volunteers and resources.)■

The High Road is the new quarterly newsletter of the North American Network for the Solidarity Economy. For further information about NANSE, contact:

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The NANSE Vision

The following is a draft of NANSE's operating assumptions that will help us define our partners in building a dynamic movement for CED.

Community economic development can only really happen in an economy based on *solidarity* that taps into the creativity, ingenuity, determination, and passion of all of our residents. We contend in the market and the state for control and ownership of our societies' assets, guided and strengthened by our community and democratic values.

1. Our main objectives are the eradication of poverty and the development of a society that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. These objectives are practical and achievable. Our approach is holistic and comprehensive and seeks the building of a strong and effective civil society. We take into consideration all social, cultural, and political factors, and particularly the issues of race, class, gender, and the environment.
2. We pursue High Road strategies in the creation of wealth and profit. The High Road seeks family-supporting and fulfilling jobs for the employee; a sustainable society and economy; high performance companies; a high degree of participation and local ownership; and accountability to the broader community and the various stakeholders of the enterprise. We advance a proactive High Road solution as we block and oppose the Low Road. Low Road strategies, simply put, are those that destroy productive and human capacity in the search for return on investment or benefits for a narrow constituency. Low Road business strategies are the emerging and most powerful trend in the global economy – and must be countered with a positive High Road alternative.
3. Community development can only be achieved through a strategic alliance of labour, community, and business to drive the creation of wealth, promote the just distribution of wealth, and seek government policy to support the High Road and block the Low Road. Essentially, this is a struggle for power. It requires building the institutional capacity of our partners and the self-sufficiency of communities.
4. Community economic development must be rooted in effective action at the micro-level of the economy – at the level of the firm, the household, and the local community. This reality must guide and inform as well as be supported by effective macro policy and government action.
5. While we are particularly responsible for our local community, we must be guided by a commitment to promote stability and sustainable development in all the world's communities. We have a particular commitment to building a dynamic development linkage between the developed and developing worlds recognizing that we increasingly face similar conditions, similar challenges, and can learn from and assist each other in finding solutions in our respective countries.

We are eager for your comments as we shape our guiding principles. Please forward any comments and suggestions to Dan Swinney at dswinney@clcr.org.■

The Center for Labor & Community Research

CLCR WAS FOUNDED in 1982 by local union and community leaders in reaction to the wave of plant closings in Chicago. It combines excellent research skills with the ability to organize and educate unions, communities, and local government to better understand the causes of the problems they face and to find creative and effective solutions.

CLCR is anchored in Chicago but does consulting and research work around the country, and has increasing

international contact. We are proud to have two Canadians on our Board of Directors: Nancy Neamtan (Montreal) and Tessa Hebb (Ottawa).

In 1998, CLCR published *Building the Bridge to the High Road* to explain the Center's thinking and approach in detail. This “manifesto” and other information about the organization and Food Chicago are available at the CLCR website www.clcr.org.■



SSFPA – Building an Appetite for Solidarity

By Frank Moreland

WITH ASSISTANCE and contributions from 600 people and organizations in B.C. and Alberta, the Small Scale Food Processor Association has grown in the last three years to over 100 members. A federally-incorporated nonprofit, SSFPA is a lean organization with a volunteer secretariat and a board of 11, eight of whom are small-scale food processors (i.e., they have less than 25 full-time equivalent employees).

SSFPA research maintains that we must re-localize food systems in order to resist prevailing export-led global agriculture and agri-food policies. In what is sometimes called “the Great Food Swap,” northern countries ship agricultural commodities to the most competitive southern country for processing, and then ship the finished product back for consumption.

Our initial research shows that all countries, North and South, are reacting to these unsustainable policies, which depend on cheap fuels for transportation and on exploited labour. Our research also shows that different groups in almost every community are responding to the local repercussions of these worrisome policies. Small-scale food initiatives are emerging in an effort to

make it possible for farmers to keep farming and for people to have access to nutritious food.

In this development, the SSFPA has decided to take a role building solidarity amongst a wide range of food interests and endeavours:

- local branding
- farmers’ markets
- farmers’ diners
- special diet
- functional foods
- small lot agriculture
- agricultural tourism
- First Nations traditional foods
- non-timber forest products
- permaculture
- urban community kitchens
- shared-use commercial kitchens
- community groups looking to create food training and/or community businesses

SSFPA sees its first task as the creation of a flexible manufacturing and marketing network. The SSFPA will deal with the network’s product and market research, promotion, and small-scale agri-preneur training. It will also advocate the creation of regional and municipal food councils, policies, and bylaws that support this and

other initiatives in locally, high-value food production and processing. To cover off other crucial tasks that our members cannot handle on their own, we will create a shared services co-operative. This for-profit partner to SSFPA will address data management, business-to-business services, bulk buying, and sales brokerage.

For CED “foodies” there are two big questions. Can regional systems like this increase the economic viability of local food initiatives? Might such systems, networked internationally, even begin to challenge centralized megafood systems with a vision of de-centralized, regional food economies that provide dependable, safe, nutritious diets and sustainable economic livelihoods? Now that’s a vision worthy of discussion. ■

FRANK MORELAND and Sandra Mark are principals of Community Venture Development Services and have provided three years technical assistance to the SSFPA, now situated in Fanny Bay, B.C. Contact Frank at 250-335-3001/ 250-893-7737 or frank@ssfpa.net. To keep abreast of SSFPA’s shared services co-operative, go to the SSFPA website at www.ssfpa.net and register to receive the monthly e-newsletter, *sound bits*.

(above) Tour of the Fountainview Academy’s organic carrot washing and processing conveyor belt during the Lillooet, B.C.’s Field-to-Table workshops, an event hosted by Lillooet Learns.

Food Chicago

FOOD MANUFACTURING is a significant part of Chicago's economy. It includes 800 food companies, employs 45,000 workers, and has US\$16.5 billion in sales every year. (\$26.5 billion when you factor in the sales multiplier.) Eight hundred new and replacement jobs open up every year. For every direct job in food manufacturing, another 1.5 jobs are created to support the industry.

The industry has a diverse workforce and a productivity rate that is 16% higher than the national average. The food manufacturing industry also has a relatively high pay scale, commanding \$13-30 per hour for skilled jobs.

Food Chicago is a "signature" program that CLCR initiated to test as well as refine its strategic vision. Food Chicago was established to retain and

grow the number of skilled jobs with good salaries in the food manufacturing industry, strengthen the regional economy, and build wealth for all.

To do so, in addition to research, policy, and advocacy work, Food Chicago has developed formalized training programs for the various food manufacturing sectors. These programs have been successful in meeting the needs of both workers and businesses.

A 30% increase in efficiency due to Food Chicago training programs caused one company to reverse a decision to move to Mexico. Participating workers received an increase of \$2.50 an hour and greater job security. Another Food Chicago training program enabled a company to reduce product rejects from 4% to 1%, resulting in savings of \$500,000.

CLCR has completed a business plan for the Center for Business Innovation and Training (CBIT) in Lawndale, an inner-city African American community on the West Side of Chicago. CBIT will be a commercial, shared-use food processing facility that will provide entrepreneurs, small businesses, the regional food manufacturing sector, and local community with the skills, resources, and tools they need for long-term wealth-creation. It will include a shared-use commercial kitchen and space for delivering training and technical assistance. CBIT is scheduled to open in 2-3 years. ■

For more information about Food Chicago, contact its Director Nicole Hanrahan at (e-mail) nhanrahan@clcr.org or (tel) 773-278-5418, ext. 29.

The High Road seeks family-supporting & fulfilling jobs for the employee; a sustainable society & economy; high performance companies; a high degree of participation & local ownership; & accountability to the broader community & the stakeholders of the enterprise.

A Partnership in the Making

What have Chicago, Illinois and Fanny Bay, B.C. got in common? Not a great deal, apart from a view of the water, you well might say – but you would be wrong.

Both are home to endeavours to keep food processing local, nutritious, and environmentally sustainable. Food Chicago is one and the Small Scale Food Processor Association is the other, respectively initiatives facilitated by the Center for Labor and Community Research (Dan Swinney) and by Community Venture Development Services (Sandra Mark and Frank Moreland).

The recent National CED Conference in Trois-Rivières was an opportunity for these three practitioners to meet and talk about a bigger vision still: that of small-scale food initiatives networked regionally, nationally, and internationally. Sustainable food systems is a common theme among CED

practitioners in the North and in the South. Sharing local strategies for food sustainability is one concrete way to begin building the global solidarity economy. As Dan proposed the Conference's International Panel,

"We need to add action to theory. We should invest in projects that link and show the growing similarity in conditions as well as shared strategy in the developed and developing world. In NANSE, let's start with our projects related to food – linking Chicago to B.C, and, hopefully soon, we could link these initiatives to similar projects in Senegal and South Africa. We must invest our time, money, and creativity in these joint projects – they have enormous significance."

The facilitators of Food Chicago and the Small Scale Food Processor Association have

already started the process. They have shared business plans and papers and have agreed to

- review these documents and exchange comments.
- explore opportunities for joint work and mutual assistance.
- continue our exchanges regarding these projects on a quarterly basis.

Stay tuned to Making Waves for more on this developing partnership. ■

The PowerPoint and other material relating to Frank and Sandra's workshop in Trois-Rivières "Food, Community and CED: Challenging Global Forces at Home" and Dan's "Early Warning Systems and Interventions for Business Retention and Development" are part of the National CED Conference documentation available at the CCEDNet website, ccednet-rcdec.ca.