

# Clarkson's Diplomatic *Faux Pas* with Mr. Tippenhauer

By Richard Sanders

After a year as president of the Haitian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCCI), Robert Hans Tippenhauer became Haiti's "ambassador" to Canada. Although Canada should never have accepted his "Letters of Credence," Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, welcomed him with smiles.<sup>1</sup>

Although Haiti's constitution states that only elected presidents can appoint ambassadors (with the approval by Haiti's senate), Tippenhauer was recognized as ambassador at an officious Rideau-Hall event on June 29, 2005.<sup>2</sup> The regime he represented was unlawful and could not therefore legally appoint him as Haiti's ambassador.

While trying to slip away from the ceremony, Tippenhauer was buttonholed by St. Vil who questioned him about the legitimacy of his ambassadorship. Caught off guard, he replied, "this is an exceptional case because we do not have a government—at that time. We did not have an elected government." St. Vil then pressed the case further by flashing a highlighted copy of Haiti's constitution, to which Tippenhauer stuttered: "As it now stands, the Constitution is somewhat ...uh! An exception was made."<sup>4</sup>

Besides heading an elitist Haitian-Canadian business association, what actually qualified Tippenhauer to be the illegal regime's "ambassador" to one of its occupying powers? Writer/activist Anthony Fenton fills in some aspects of Tippenhauer's background and the pedigree that made him more than acceptable to the Canadian government:

"Prior to the February 29, 2004, ouster of democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide, Tippenhauer was Jamaica's honorary consul in Haiti. His ideological leanings were apparent on March 15, 2004, when he 'resigned in protest against the decision by the Jamaican government to host...Aristide, which he reportedly described as a 'slap in the face' to the Haitian people.'" (*Radio Galaxie*, March 17, 2004.)<sup>4</sup>

Jamaica's affront, in Tippen-



hauer's view, was to allow Haiti's legitimate president to be reunited—on Jamaican soil—with his two, young daughters.<sup>5</sup> Aristide had not seen them since he was kidnapped and flown to the Central African Republic by U.S. Marines in late February 2004.

Such posturing reveals Tippenhauer's ideological kinship with his well-known nephew and namesake, Hans Tippenhauer, a Haitian "sweatshop magnate" who was spokesman for the U.S.-funded Group of 184 which played a central role in rallying Haiti's business class (and their foreign allies) against Aristide prior to the coup. (See pages 47-49.) The Group 184 was "prominently led by two other white businessmen operating sweatshops in Haiti, Charles Henri Baker and the American Andre Apaid."<sup>5</sup>

During the 2006 presidential campaign, Hans Tippenhauer was "working with the campaign of Charles Henri Baker,"<sup>6</sup> an industrialist widely "considered the main candidate of the wealthy elite," who reportedly won "7.9 percent of the vote."<sup>7</sup>

Along with Baker and Apaid, Hans Tippenhauer led Haiti's so-called "Democratic Convergence." He was also a member of the right-wing, Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies' "Caribbean Leadership group," and the National Association of Producers and the Manufacturers' Association of Haiti.<sup>8</sup> and a major investor in the first joint U.S.-Haitian investment bank, PromoCapital.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these elitist credentials, the *Washington Post* passed him off as a spokesman for Haiti's masses. In late February 2004, as the U.S.-armed and trained rebel force ran roughshod over Haiti thereby creating a pretext for the U.S./Canada/France-led invasion and

coup, Tippenhauer was quoted as saying, "The Haitian people's voice today is very clear; they want Aristide to leave." And, according to Tippenhauer, Haitians greeted the death-squad-linked rebels as "freedom fighters."<sup>10</sup>

This catchphrase, which President Reagan used to great effect two decades ago to describe counter-revolutionary (*contra*) terrorists in Nicaragua and Afghanistan, was soon being applied to Haitian rebels by none other than Haiti's *de facto* Prime Minister Latortue, who echoed Tippenhauer's choice of terms "in front of then Canadian Ambassador to the Organization of American States, David Lee."<sup>11</sup>

## References

1. Letters of Credence. <[www.gg.ca](http://www.gg.ca)>
2. "Presentation of Credentials at Rideau Hall," June 24, 2005. <[www.gg.ca](http://www.gg.ca)>
3. St. Vil, Haiti's 'Ambassador' to Canada," *ZNet*, July 9, 2005. <[www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org)>
4. Ibid
5. Patrick Moser, "Furious at Jamaica welcoming Aristide, Haiti freezes diplomatic ties," *Caribbean Net News*, Mar. 16, 2004.
5. Anthony Fenton, "The Canadian Corporate Nexus in Haiti," *Haiti Progres*, June 16, 2005.
5. St. Vil, op cit
6. Jacqueline Charles, "For Haiti's Peasants, Democracy Measured in Steps," *Miami Herald*, Feb. 7, 2006,
7. Joseph Guyler Delva and Jim Loney, "Haiti names Preval president, enraging rival," *Reuters*, Feb 16, 2006.
8. Rob Lyon, "Haiti: Growing struggle against UN occupation." <[www.marxist.com](http://www.marxist.com)>
9. Profile: PromoCapital. <[www.cooperativeresearch.org](http://www.cooperativeresearch.org)>
10. Kevin Sullivan, "U.S. Marines Fortify Haiti Embassy," *Washington Post*, Feb. 23, 2004.
11. Fenton, op cit.