CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of "Justice":

Shills and Scam Artists in the Deadly Con Game of Haiti's 2004 Coup

By Richard Sanders, editor, *Press for Conversion!*

Ithough the coup regime's Deputy Minister of Justice, Philippe Vixamar, was "a political appointee" of that unconstitutional government, it was the "Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) [that] assigned him to this position and...[was] his direct employer." This is an example of what the Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) (see pp.15-16) described as the "key roles play[ed]" by "the United States and Canadian governments...in the justice system in Haiti, including paying high-level government officials."

During an interview with Vixamar, CSHR researchers learned that the Deputy Minister was in "his fourth consecutive year of employment for CIDA," and that he had previously spent 10 years working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and three years with the U.S. Department of Justice.²

One of Vixamar's previous CIDA assignments in Haiti was with the Canadian Human Rights Fund in Haiti, of which he was the coordinator.³

At the time of the coup that overthrew Aristide's elected government in the spring of 2004, Vixamar was working for CIDA's Cooperation Program Support Unit in Haiti (UAPC), which is said to "increase the effectiveness of Canada's official development aid" in that country. A few weeks after the Canadian-backed coup, in his role as an "Expert in Justice and Human Rights" at the UAPC, Vixamar reviewed the first phase of a \$100,000 CIDA grant that had just been awarded to NCHR-Haiti.

This "Special Victim Support and Assistance Project" was a highly-politicised and partisan effort, designed in part, to frame top Aristide officials. In particular, NCHR-Haiti made unfounded accusations blaming Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, for what it provocatively called the "genocide in la Sciere" (a town near St. Marc). This incident was, in fact, part of the struggle



Many protests, like this one at Haiti's Ministry of "Justice," called for the release of political prisoners. But their cries fell on deaf ears. Philippe Vixamar, a long-time CIDA bureaucrat, denied that there were any such prisoners in Haiti. However, as the dictatorship's Deputy Minister of "Justice," Vixamar himself oversaw their illegal arrest and incarceration. Curiously, he was assigned to this position in the coup regime by CIDA, which remained his direct employer.

between the Aristide government's police and heavily-armed, U.S.-backed rebel forces that were trying to violently overthrow Haiti's democracy. NCHR-Haiti took this incident—in which a handful were killed, on both sides of the struggle—and, without any corroborating evidence, claimed that 50 had been "massacred." (See "Faking Genocide in Haiti," pp.23-28.)

When Vixamar reviewed NCHR-Haiti's progress on this blatant propaganda campaign, he concluded by saying: "The project has been effectively launched. NCHR is demonstrating a lot of professionalism."

By July 2004, NCHR-Haiti's had helped create an "Association of the Victims of Genocide in la Sciere" (AVIGES) and Vixamar signed a CIDA review of this "special project" which concluded that "NCHR is performing well and the partnership between AVIGES and NCHR seems perfect."

Soon thereafter, CIDA promoted Vixamar to the penultimate position in Haiti's Ministry of "Justice," thus giving him considerable power in the coup regime's frontal assault against Haiti's pro-democracy activists, especially those linked to the recently-ousted Lavalas government. However, when interviewed by CSHR's human rights

investigators, Vixamar denied that Haiti's police, its courts or prison system were being used in the repression of Lavalas. To prove this, Vixamar expressed his utter confidence in the coup-installed regime's "exclusive reliance" upon NCHR-Haiti:

- (1) "to alert it when the Police or the Courts commit human rights abuses," 10 and
- (2) to evaluate the human rights records of "former soldiers" that were quickly being integrated into Haiti's police force. ¹¹ (See p.16.)

Vixamar's blind faith in the reliability of NCHR-Haiti as a neutral human rights monitor, suggests close parallels with the role of a "shill" in what is often called a "confidence trick." As defined in Wikipedia:

"The confidence trickster, con man, swindler, grifter, scam artist or con artist often works with one or more accomplices called shills, who help manipulate the mark into the con man's trick or dishonest plan." ¹²

And, as Wikipedia correctly points out, con artists and their shills are employed in political applications of the confidence game:

"A shill is an associate of a person selling goods or services or a political group, who pretends no association to the seller/group and assumes the air of an enthusiastic customer. The intention of the shill is, using crowd psychology, to encourage others unaware of the set-up to purchase said goods or services or support the political group's ideological claims. Shills are often employed by confidence artists and governments."¹³

If Vixamar was one of the shills, who were the con men running this scam?

Although Vixamar's presence in the illegal government's so-called "Ministry of Justice" shows that CIDA was playing a key part in the broader con game known in polite circles as the "Interim Government of Haiti," the CSHR human rights report makes it clear that it was U.S. government agencies that had taken the lead and were running this whole operation from behind the scenes. Both Vixamar and his boss, Haiti's Justice Minister Bernard Gousse, had previously worked for USAID and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). These U.S. agencies were instrumental in orchestrating the 2004 coup. This is amply documented in the research of Anthony Fenton¹⁴ and it was also revealed in CSHR interviews with "two Haitian administrators of IFES' projects in Portau-Prince."15 These IFES staff people stated that although the

"ouster of Aristide 'was not the objective of the IFES program,...it was the result.' They further stated that IFES/USAID workers in Haiti want to take credit for the ouster of Aristide, but cannot 'out of respect for the wishes of the U.S. government.'"16

Another powerful U.S. government agency, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) was also involved in the coup-regime's so-called "justice" ministry. Vixamar noted that the NDI was advising his ministry and that its objective was "to work with local groups throughout Haiti and create liaisons with the Political Section at the U.S. Embassy." ¹⁷

Vixamar's vision of Haitian justice was, of course, perfectly aligned with the virulently anti-Aristide position of the coup regime, its foreign backers and the elitist Haitian organizations



The cartoon above, from the cover of Ronald St. Jean's book exposing the lies of NCHR-Haiti (see p.18) shows a reporter saying: "The press says there were 3 to 5 dead. You, of the NCHR, say 50. Where are the 45 others?" NCHR-Haiti's spokesperson, Pierre Espérance, then exclaims: "Uhh! They might have been eaten by wild dogs."

Unbelievable as it may seem, this was his actual response when confronted with the lack of evidence for NCHR-Hait's outrageous claims. The Haiti Action Committee described his excuse as:

"the equivalent of a young child claiming his dog ate his homework."

that they funded. For example, in his interview with CSHR investigators, Vixamar denied outright that there were any "human rights and constitutional abuses within the criminal justice system." He also repeatedly insinuated that the Lavalas Party and its "chimères" were the real source of violence in Haiti. When asked why Lavalas leader, Father Gérard Jean-Juste "who remained in jail after a warrantless arrest.... Vixamar's only comment was 'he [Jean-Juste] was providing asylum to 'chimères." (See "Chimère: The 'N' word of Haiti," pp.50-51.)

In early 2005, Stuart Trew of the weekly community paper, *The Ottawa XPress*, did something that Canada's mainstream, corporate dailies were unwilling to do—he exposed CIDA's role in supporting the illegal regime's persecution of members and supporters of Lavalas. Trew confronted Yves Petillon, the director of CIDA's Haiti Program, with the fact that the CIDA-payrolled Deputy Minister of Justice in Haiti, Philippe Vixamar, was

"denying that human rights abuses were being carried out by anyone but an alleged pack of pro-Lavalas 'thugs,' despite evidence the police were arresting without warrants and executing Lavalas supporters in the street."20

Petillon responded that Vixamar was "not speaking for CIDA. And we don't endorse anything of what he said. I cannot comment on his personal point of view."²¹

However, as Kevin Skerrett—a Canada Haiti Action Network activist and researcher with the Canadian Union of Public Employees—pointed out:

"it was not Vixamar's personal point of view that was under discussion, it was Vixamar's professional point of view as a representative of Haiti's Ministry of Justice."²²

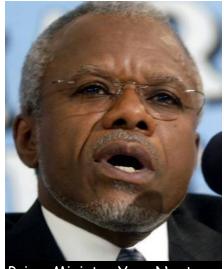
But despite being exposed in the CSHR report as a totally partisan opponent of Lavalas, and any slight irritation that may have momentarily been caused by coverage in alternative media, Vixamar continued to carry out the kind of abusive carriage of justice that the Canadian government apparently wanted in Haiti. In fact, notwithstanding Petillon's attempt to publicly distance CIDA from Vixamar's enthusiasm for the coup regime's peculiar vision of "justice," Vixamar remained in his influential position until July of 2005.23 That's when he was replaced by Dilia Lemaire, another long-time employee of CIDA²⁴ who had been listed, next to Vixamar, as an "Expert in Justice and Human Rights" by CIDA's UAPC.25

Both Petillon and Vixamar appear to have been shills for the coup regime in general and for NCHR-Haiti in particular. Certainly both were intimately connected to the NCHR's "special project" that, with CIDA funding, had so artfully fabricated a "genocide" using nonexistent victims. According to documents obtained by Anthony Fenton through Access to Information, Petillon was the CIDA officer who made the initial recommendation, on March 11, 2004, that CIDA should approve about \$100,000 in funding to NCHR-Haiti for this project.²⁶ Later that day, Petillon co-signed that CIDA contract with NCHR-Haiti's Executive Director, Pierre Espérance.²⁷

Those were heady times for CIDA, and for the coup regime in Haiti. On the very next day, March 12, Gérard Latortue was sworn in as prime minister for the coup-installed dictatorship, thus replacing the country's legitimate prime minister, Yvon Neptune. After Neptune's unceremonious exit from office, he was subjected to libellous accusations of criminal responsibility for the phony "genocide" that had been concocted, with CIDA's financial support, by NCHR-Haiti.

Remarkably, NCHR-Haiti's second progress report to CIDA on its "special project" took direct credit for the putting Neptune behind bars. Under the subheading "Assessment of progress towards projected results," NCHR-Haiti's prmary "result" was described with these unambiguous words: "Arrest of former Prime Minister, Yvon NEPTUNE, on June 24, 2004."²⁸

It was perhaps unfair of NCHR-Haiti to give sole credit to their CIDA project for the arrest of Neptune. Yes, NCHR-Haiti was certainly the strongest and loudest voice crying out for Neptune's detention. And yes, NCHR-Haiti had essentially concocted a fictitious event used to justify his illegal internment for the next two-years. And yes, NCHR-Haiti did champion the campaign to pursue those responsible for the phony "genocide." And yes, NCHR -Haiti did lead the way in spinning this incredibly valuable piece of anti-Aristide propaganda that resulted in the illegal arrests of other Lavalas leaders. And yes, NCHR-Haiti's bogus example



Prime Minister Yvon Neptune

of "genocide" was used as a pretext for justifying the overthrow Haiti's democratic system.

However, despite all this, it would still seem unfair to give all of the credit to NCHR-Haiti for the crime of arresting Neptune. In all fairness, there are other important institutions and actors to be acknowledged. For example, Neptune's incarceration could not have been executed without the efforts of Haiti's RCMP-trained national police. And, let's not forget the infamously overcrowded and unsanitary Haitian prison system which, like the police, was administered by the coup regime's CIDA-funded Ministry of "Justice."

And, in particular, how can we forget to credit the dictatorship's very own CIDA-paid Deputy Minister of "Justice," Jean-Philippe Vixamar, and his CIDA boss, Yves Petillon. These Canadian government officials were, afterall, responsible for securing NCHR-Haiti's CIDA financing and for giving it glowing appraisals for accomplishing its CIDA-authorized mission in Haiti.

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Vixamar praised NCHR-Haiti for their \$100,000 "special project" which helped nonexistent victims of a faked "genocide in la Sciere." NCHR-Haiti's CIDA-funded campaign pinned the blame for this phony incident on top Lavalas politicians such as Aristide's Prime Minister Neptune. In their "Assessment of progress towards projected results," NCHR-Haiti reported to CIDA that the primary "result" was: "Arrest of former Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, on June 24, 2004."

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