

## Using "Aid" as a Weapon Against Haiti's Poor

By Kevin Skerrett

Unfortunately, fond recollections of some of the original, redistributive ideals attached to international development programs have blinded some progressives to the true function of "development" and development agencies within the current international system. As a result, we have the social democratic NDP, and many well-intentioned progressives, following the lead of Bono, Bob Geldof, and the recent "Live 8" show-biz against world poverty concerts that call—more or less blindly—for "more aid." Progressive critics of the Liberal government point to their failure to reach the hallowed development aid target of 0.7% of GDP—and often just stop there.

Canada's relationship with Haiti is a stark indicator of the simplicity of these calls. When the Canadian government hosted a secret meeting in early 2003 to plot the overthrow of Haiti's elected government, they invited representatives of the U.S. and France, and brought along senior staff from Canada's International Development Agency (CIDA). A careful examination of CIDA's recent programming in Haiti reveals that in politically-sensitive areas (human rights, women's rights, media, etc.), the Haitian NGOs and agencies that CIDA was funding were, without exception, active players within the elite, minority political opposition to Haiti's government.

While CIDA continued to boast publicly that it was providing substantial assistance to Haiti, the reality was that in the several years leading up to the coup, it was quietly supporting the U.S.-led embargo on aid to the highly-dependent, Haitian government, in an effort to destabilize it through financial strangulation. A look at recent international aid flows to Haiti—coming primarily from Canada, the U.S. and France—clarifies the severity of this murderous embargo.

With the election of George W. Bush in the U.S. in 2000, U.S. aid to Haiti's government actually stopped altogether, leaving the nearly-bankrupt Haitian government defenceless and in-

*In the years leading up to the 2004 coup that ousted Aristide, Canada and the U.S. greatly reduced aid to his government's social programs. This fostered the conditions of a "failed state" that provided the pretext used to justify a regime change and occupation that were disguised as a "humanitarian intervention." Canadian and U.S. aid went to right-wing, opposition groups linked to Haiti's elite that helped stir up domestic and international opposition to Aristide's government. Once Aristide was removed, Canadian aid quickly increased to support the coup-regime that illegally took over.*

### External Aid to Haiti

(in \$US millions)

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| 1994-1995 | 611 |
| 1995-1996 | 427 |
| 1996-1997 | 378 |
| 1997-1998 | 371 |
| 1998-1999 | 330 |
| 1999-2000 | 266 |
| 2000-2001 | 170 |
| 2001-2002 | 136 |

Source: World Bank, July 2004.



During the June 2004 federal leadership debates, then-Prime Minister Paul Martin pointed to Haiti as his main foreign policy "success story" (to no response from NDP leader Jack Layton, or anyone else for that matter).

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capacitated. It is telling that the thousands of Haitians who surely died or suffered badly as a result of these "aid sanctions" have never even been counted—they were "unworthy victims" of an aid policy turned policy sledgehammer.

What must be realized is that this result was intentional. It was the design and intended consequence of a program in which CIDA, and its American equivalent USAID, participated directly. The question of why this destabilization was carried out continues to be debated, but many have argued persuasively that while President Aristide accepted some of the dictates of Canadian and American neoliberal program, he also resisted some, such as the demand for wholesale privatiza-

tion of state enterprises.

Of course, none of this has ever been reported in any detail in the Canadian media, and in fact, then-Prime Minister Paul Martin was able to point to Haiti as his main foreign policy "success story" during the June 2004 federal leadership debates (to no response from NDP leader Jack Layton, or anyone else for that matter). In this sense, the con—disguising an utterly cynical and self-interested imperial game as a humanitarian intervention led by CIDA—has worked quite well. It has shown that "international aid" can do more than just feed and dig wells: it can provoke (and legitimize) regime change.

Source: "Haiti is 'fixed,'" *New Socialist*, December 1, 2005.

## Haitian Doctors in Canada?

Jacmel businessman, Eric Denis, wondered how Canada could claim it was helping Haiti when it was the ultimate destination for so much of Haiti's human resources. There are more Haitian medical doctors in Canada than there are in Haiti, he said. If Canada wanted to help, why not hand over money for those doctors to work in Haiti itself?

**Source:** Justin Podur, "Canada - power and roads," *ZNet*, Sept. 26, 2005.

Over one million [Haitians] live in North America. The largest communities are in Florida, New York and Montréal. This has created a significant brain drain exemplified by the frequently cited statistic that more Haitian doctors live in Montreal than in Haiti.

**Source:** Don Peters, "Intercultural Learning About Mediation in Haiti," *Rutgers Conflict Resolution Law Journal*, Spring 2004. <pegasus.rutgers.edu>

Thousands of young men and women ...since the Duvalier dictatorship, have left the country.... Often, well-educated and trained, they have, by way of this exodus, contributed to the chronic lack of an enterprising middle class in this country. For example, there are more Haitian doctors and nurses in Canada than there are here in Haiti.

**Source:** "Haiti - Part of the Global Village," Peace Brigades International April 1998. <www.peacebrigades.org>

The Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad (AHME) was founded in 1972. It has six chapters in the U.S.. Its Montreal chapter was founded in 1974.

(In May 2005, AHME's NY chapter joined forces with the Haitian consulate to organize a US\$250-a-plate gala "Fundraising Ball." Because this grand event honoured Haiti's de facto Prime Minister, Gérard Latortue—who gained power after the 2004 coup—hundreds of Haitians protested outside.)

**Source:** "Haitian Community to Demonstrate Against Visit of Haiti's De Facto Prime Minister," International Action Cener, May 5, 2005.



Estrella Torres, one of 600 Cuban doctors in Haiti (Aug. 2006).

## Cuban Doctors in Haiti

By Felipe Pérez Roque, Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister

♥ This Cuban medical brigade had 75% of Haiti's 8.3 million population under their care. (Haiti had fewer than 2,000 doctors, and 90% of them were in the capital.)

♥ Over the past five years, Cuban doctors in Haiti did five million medical consultations, attended 45,000 births and performed 59,000 operations.

♥ In the areas covered by Cuban doctors, the mortality rate for infants under one year dropped from 80 to 28 per 1,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate dropped from 523 to 259 deaths per 100,000 live births.

♥ During those five years, more than 370,000 Haitians—80% of them children—were vaccinated.

♥ Nearly 86,000 Haitian lives were saved by Cuban health workers.

♥ Cuban technicians repaired 2,169 damaged pieces of medical equipment.

♥ 247 Haitians study at the School of Medicine founded in Haiti by Cuban professors. 372 Haitians study medicine as scholarship students in Cuba.

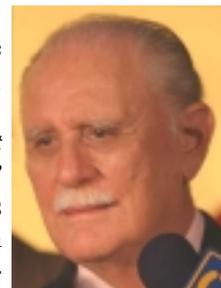
**Source:** "The International community cannot abandon Haiti," *Granma International*, Feb. 13 2004.

## Operation Miracle

Operation Miracle, is a Cuban-Venezuelan project that gives free treatment for eye problems to low-income people from the Third World. It has provided almost 700 Haitians with treatment for glaucoma, cataracts and other conditions.

As [then-] vice president of Venezuela, José Vicente Rangel said: "Solidarity is not just words, but concrete acts."

How different is Cuban and Venezuelan solidarity from the so-called "development assistance" that Haiti re-



José Rangel



Ben Dupuy

ceives from the U.S., France and Canada? Imperialist aid usually benefits the contractors or NGOs from the donor country. It is usually in the form of a loan, thereby enriching international banks and impoverishing people.

**Source:** Ben Dupuy, Sec. Gen., Parti Populaire National, cited in "PPN Message May 20, Rally Washington," *Haiti Progres*, May 24, 2006.

## Canadian Aid Projects "done for the rich"



"A lot of the [Canadian aid] projects that are done here are done for the rich people, and they make money off of them and it looks good and everyone smiles for the cameras, but the poor people are still poor and they have no influence in Parliament, and they're not so happy with it."

**Source:** Stephen Puddicombe, interview on *The Current*, CBC radio, May 15, 2006. <www.cbc.ca>