
CONAP and ENFOFANM: CIDA funds the “REAL Women” of Haiti

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

Haiti’s National Coordination for Advocacy on Women’s Rights (CONAP) and ENFOFANM (Women’s info) are two stridently anti-Aristide women’s organizations—funded by CIDA—that actively participated in destabilizing the popularly-elected Lavalas government. Even after the coup, when Aristide supporters were being persecuted with impunity, these organizations kept firing off virulent press statements blaming Lavalas for Haiti’s ills. This helped to successfully draw attention away from the foreign-backed regime’s brutal witch-hunt against pro-democracy supporters.

One of the key officials of both CONAP and ENFOFANM, Danielle Magloire, played a central role in selecting Haiti’s illegal junta, thereby giving it a veneer of legitimacy. Within days of Aristide’s kidnapping, a “Tripartite Council”—representing Aristide’s domestic and foreign opponents—chose what they called a “Council of Sages.” This hand-picked group of seven “wise” Haitians, including Magloire, appointed long-time Florida resident Gérard Latortue as “interim” prime minister. He selected a cabinet¹ which dismantled the country’s entire democratically elected government.

Co-authors of *Canada in Haiti*, Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton, have remarked that Magloire’s

“status as a ‘wise’ person came largely from her positions at ENFOFANM ...and CONAP, ...which were/are CIDA-funded feminist organizations that would not have grown to prominence without international funding.”²

After thus playing midwife to the coup regime, Magloire and fellow appointees to the “Council of Sages” continued to advise their illegal spawn: “On July 16, [2005,] the Council of Sages, the Western-backed body that has overseen Haiti’s political affairs since the February 2004 ouster of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, made a startling recommendation. Blaming the exiled Aristide and his

Lavalas party for ‘continu[ing] to promote and tolerate violence,’ the council urged the interim regime that it appointed to ‘make the bold political and beneficial decision to disqualify the Lavalas Family Party from the electoral process.’”³

This was remarkably elitist and antidemocratic counsel since Lavalas was by far the most widely-supported political party in Haiti. Furthermore, it was exactly the kind of sage advice one could expect from CONAP which

“took a leadership role among civil society organizations mobilizing against Aristide that created the climate that made it possible for the Americans to come into Haiti.”⁴

When asked why CONAP began organizing to rid Haiti of Aristide, Peggy Antrobus, the past general coordinator of a Third-World feminist network—Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era—explained that “it comes back to class. In my opinion, they represent the privilege[d] few.”⁵

Engler and Fenton reached the same conclusion saying CONAP is

“a virulently anti-Lavalas feminist organization that has shunned the language of class struggle in a country where a tiny percent of the population own nearly everything.”⁶

Tom Reeves—a U.S. professor who organized nine delegations to Haiti during the 1991-1994 coup period—also critiqued CONAP and ENFOFANM, saying that “based on their record and the evidence of their growing lack of connection to the base,” they and other CIDA-funded Haitian elite groups, such as NCHR-Haiti, PAPDA and SOFA—“do not represent the poor people of Haiti.” He points out that in April 2004, “ignoring the massive wave of repression against Lavalas,” these privileged groups rallied to demand “the immediate arrest of... Aristide officials.”⁷ (See “QC Denounces NCHR-Haiti,” p.8.)

Such partisan politics typifies the CONAP coalition, which includes ENFOFANM and at least two CIDA-funded members of the G-184—SOFA and Fanm Yo La. (See p.39.) On February 2, 2004, CONAP issued a hyperbolic



CONAP and ENFOFANM played major roles in creating the political climate that ousted Aristide’s government. Then, a top official in both organizations, Danielle Magloire, was hand-picked for the so-called “Council of Sages,” which had the dubious honour of choosing the dictatorship’s prime minister.

diatribe accusing the “Lavalas Government and Mr. Aristide of treason against the Haitian people.” Claiming that “Aristide has built an apparatus of state terrorism,” CONAP ominously declared that the “Lavalas government is at war with the Haitian people.”⁸ Three days later, U.S.-armed rebels began their terror campaign which created a pretext for the foreign invasion and the coup.

CONAP also revealed its class bias by using the slur *chimère* to invoke the spectre of the Haitian elite’s favourite bogeyman.⁹ (See “*Chimère*: The ‘N’ word of Haiti,” pp.50-51.)

A week after the U.S., Canadian and French troops finalized the coup process, CONAP announced it was “celebrating” the “victory” of Aristide’s “resignation” and bragged of its leading role in his government’s demise:

“In October 2003, women’s organizations led by CONAP denounced the Lavalas regime and labeled it an outlaw and rogue regime. The notion of an outlaw regime, devoid of legitimacy and authority to act on behalf

of the Haitian people, was then appropriated by a broad coalition of other civil society actors in Haiti.”¹⁰

Although this supposedly “broad coalition” was largely funded and led by foreign governments—and egged on by most regressive forces of Haiti’s business elite—and although its efforts paved the way for an unconstitutional regime change, CONAP professed that it was “a major contribution to democracy in Haiti.”

These self-serving celebrations of Haiti’s 2004 coup are found in CONAP’s vitriolic response to what it called a “fallacious and racist” declaration against the coup. CONAP’s outlandish statement said it was “shocked and outraged” at a declaration signed by dozens of feminists, called “Caribbean Women Denounce the U.S.-backed coup in Haiti.”¹¹ One of those who signed this denunciation of the 2004 coup was the aforementioned Peggy Antrobus. In an interview called “Race, gender and class: Why a group of Caribbean women have spoken out against the coup in Haiti,” she discussed some key lessons to be learned from CONAP’s role in the coup:

“This...highlighted for me how vulnerable civil society organizations are to political manipulation. Although I...understand civil society...includes very right-winged people, I never understood how vulnerable civil society is to political manipulation....

“Many...NGOs...involved in the anti-Aristide mobilization have been getting a lot of U.S. government money.... (It is not just the Americans that do this...) This trend is very disconcerting because many...women’s organizations depend on funding from government.... [I]t is very problematic...we really need to be alert to... how easily we can be co-opted....

“If women’s organizations in Haiti want to break out of CONAP because they see the American’s intentions, it would be very difficult.... They would be threatened in all sorts of ways. Taking away their money would be the simplest thing, but... there are all sorts of ways to destroy people and organizations.”¹²

Despite the extremely partisan roles played by CONAP and ENFOFANM—or more likely, *because* of their

Among its “partners” in Haiti, a Canadian government agency (Rights & Democracy), still lists: CONAP, Forum Citoyen, POHDH and RNDDH (formerly called NCHR-Haiti)

anti-Lavalas biases—these organizations enjoyed the perquisites of “partnering” with the Canadian government:

“Both CONAP and ENFOFANM received substantial funding from CIDA during the years 2000-2004, along with numerous other anti-Lavalas political organizations, despite the fact that Haiti’s government was under an aid embargo.”¹³

For example, ENFOFANM received at least two Canadian government grants totalling \$141,944.¹⁴

And, in 2005, with the illegal coup regime firmly in place, Canada began a \$415,000 CIDA-funded project in Haiti, administered through Rights and Democracy (R&D), an agency created by Canada’s parliament. This project, run by CONAP and another anti-Aristide group, the Forum citoyen,¹⁵ was, paradoxically, supposed to

“support Haitian civil society organizations in their efforts to identify and initiate strategies for ensuring Haiti’s democratic development takes their interests into account.”¹⁶

During the coup regime, CIDA-funded aid groups in Canada flew Magloire and NCHR-Haiti’s Yolene Gilles (see pp.14-15,17) to Ottawa and Montreal where they promoted the government’s pro-coup propaganda.¹⁷

Through R&D, the Canadian government is still proudly partnered with CONAP. Speaking of CONAP and the Forum citoyen, R&D’s president, Jean-Louis Roy, said his agency was:

“joining efforts with these organizations to determine the most effective methods of intervention and advocacy in the current Haitian context. Our long-term goal is to help them assess and structure their experiences ...to create...training programs that promote all human rights.”¹⁸

Demolishing an elected government and then imposing a brutal coup regime is indeed a strange way to train groups how to promote democracy and human rights. With the help of partners like CONAP and ENFOFANM, the Canadian government is learning to perfect such Orwellian regime changes.

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