



Just In Time

CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee

July 2007, Volume 1, Number 3

APPEC- Asia Pacific People for Environment and Community

Putting People into APEC

In September this year Sydney will be holding one of the most significant events Australia has ever hosted. Despite the grand scale of this event, very few people truly know what the APEC summit involves and how it affects our community, our country and our Earth.

This issue of Just In Time aims to provide readers with a better understanding of APEC and the steps we, as a community with strong social justice principles, can take to positively impact on the process.

APEC- Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

APEC was established in 1989, its member economies being; Australia, Brunei, Darussalam, Canada, Chile, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, the United States of America and Vietnam.

For many Sydney-siders the greatest concern regarding the APEC forum is how it will affect traffic and whether or not they get a day off work! However this coming together of 21 world leaders will not only impact the everyday lives of Sydney-siders, but of all those within the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

APEC is concerned with achieving a free trade agreement throughout the Asia Pacific. This involves removing tariffs (taxes on imports) and also means that regulations and policies protecting human rights and the environment will be abolished, all this in the name of economic growth and profit.

Free trade objectives often go hand-in-hand with privatisation, the values of 'user pays', and the stripping of protection for vulnerable workers and farmers, particularly those in rural areas. This principle places the rights of corporations above human and environmental rights.

The Cost of APEC

Despite the government's attempts to appease Australian citizens with bus shelter ads about the APEC summit, and talk of the positive media exposure Sydney will receive, there is no hiding the financial costs of APEC.

The cost of hosting the APEC summit is now reaching \$330 million, money that is supplied by taxpayers. Of this \$330 million sum, \$170 million is dedicated to security arrangements throughout the event.

It is important to note that the losses to taxpayers and citizens are not only monetary, as this event will also bring costs to democratic rights and liberties. Throughout APEC there will be areas subject to public lockdown, including several train stations, where police will be afforded increased powers to detain and search people who enter these zones. SAS troops will also be on stand by, with 'shoot to kill powers'. This high level of security is shocking, but not surprising, given that issues of security and terrorism will also be on the agenda for the APEC conference.



APEC and Climate Change

Along with free trade, climate change has been of great concern, both within Australia and globally for some time now; however the environmental discussions which will be taking place at APEC are unlikely to result in any significant environmental gains. This is of particular concern as the 21 APEC countries constitute 60% of global energy demand.

The APEC Energy Working Group which meets twice annually not only lacks consultation with environmental and community groups but also rejects the UN Kyoto Protocol, believing that 'clean' coal and nuclear energy are solutions to the global warming crisis.

At this point you may be asking yourself what is being done to address the issues which APEC will no doubt fail to acknowledge? Issues such as human rights and the environment? This is where the work of APPEC comes into play and provides an alternative to the APEC conference, one that 'puts people into APEC'.

What can you do?

More than 20 community groups, trade unions and environmental groups have band together to form the Asia Pacific People for Environment and Community (APPEC). APPEC aims to create a forum in which community members can participate in discussions surrounding human rights and environmental issues, ones which have been neglected within the APEC summit.

In response to the lack of democratic involvement in APEC several alternate events have been established and will take place over the next few months. Along with attending these events there are other actions that can be taken to support fair trade along with human and environmental rights.

Purchasing fair trade products is an essential step in promoting fair, as opposed to free, trade. Fair trade products can be purchased from stores such as Oxfam and keep an eye out because several cafes and coffee shops are now using fair trade coffee.

The Trading Circle also specialises in fair trade products, ranging from pottery, children's toys and Christmas products, to bags, cushion covers and cards. For more information about The Trading Circle you can visit their Sydney store, 78 Victoria Street Ashfield, or their website, www.thetradingcircle.com.au

Along with attending alternate APEC events and trying to buy fair trade products, we cannot forget the power of talking and writing about our concerns and advocating for those who will be most affected by the proposed free trade proposal. Spread the word.

Alternate APEC Events

APEC 2007: Is it Worth it?
Monday 13th August 2007, 6pm
Sydney Mechanics Institute Building, Level 1, 280 Pitt St Sydney

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APPEC Public Forum
Friday August 31, 2007
5.30 for 6.30pm start
Guthrie Theatre
UTS Design Building
Building 6, Harris St, Ultimo

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APPEC Conference
Saturday September 1, 2007
9.30am-4pm
Guthrie Theatre
UTS Design Building
Building 6, Harris St, Ultimo



Just in Time is an occasional publication of the Social Justice Committee of CLRI(NSW). Members of the committee are: Jan Barnett rsj, Suzette Clark rsc, Ms Sandie Cornish, Steve Cram cfc, Grace Ellul sm, Ms Jill Finnane, Margaret Hinchey rsm, Anne Lane pbvm, Mary Lea osu, Mr Pedro Moreira, Kath O'Connor rsj, Libby Rogerson ibvm, Ms Liz Snell, Sharon Price rsm. Please address comments or queries to CLRI(NSW) PO Box 259, Rosebery NSW 1445 or clrinsw@ozemail.com.au