

Cologne summit & analysis

A delegation of 16 Canadians from the Anglican, Catholic, Christian Reformed, and United Churches attended the Jubilee events during the G-7 economic summit in Cologne, Germany. They carried boxes containing petitions with the signatures of over 635,000 Canadians. They joined people from around the world, meeting and demonstrating to urge the leaders of the world's most powerful nations to take a bold step by cancelling the debts of the 50 poorest nations.

"We heard voices from Asia, Africa, and Latin America... There were cries of pain and loss from those who have paid too long the price of accumulation of wealth by the few. There were also calls to resistance, recognizing that this Cologne campaign represents but one step in a much longer process: 'In the final analysis, it is not the banks or the G-7 that will deliver liberation—it will be the people themselves.'" (Gail Allen, United Church of Canada)

On June 19, petitions with over 17 million signatures collected from around the world were presented to the summit leaders. At the same time, a human chain of 50,000 people was formed around the city of Cologne. Unfortunately, the G-7 proposal for debt relief fell far short of what was being demanded. An analysis issued by CEJI notes:

"In light of the potential in Cologne to make a substantive, creative and definitive response to the debt crisis, the initiative released [by the G-7 leaders] can only be viewed as unacceptable—a lost opportunity to seize the day... Not only does it fail to solve the debt crisis through total and immediate cancellation, it continues in the tradition of its failed predecessor—the Highly Indebted Poor Countries' Initiative—to condition debt relief on austerity measures referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs. In addition, the Cologne initiative reinforces the power and authority of the International Monetary Fund, an institution viewed, at best, with skepticism and suspicion."∞ (M. Hathaway)



IN CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT

Catholics are urged to participate positively in support of the following principles:

1. *The dignity of every person is to be respected at all times.*
2. *Respect for human dignity requires a vigorous pursuit of the common good.*
3. *Governments must balance the rights, obligations, and opportunities of various segments of society.*
4. *Governments must demonstrate a grasp of the concept of stewardship.*
5. *Governments must support the right to private property but at the same time recognize that that right is not absolute.*
6. *Governments must recognize that human beings derive identity and self-esteem, as well as economic survival, from the use of their God given talents in useful work and, therefore, have the right to employment.*
7. *Governments must support the rights of workers to unite in order to protect the quality of their lives, their safety, and their security.*
8. *Governments must protect those who are on the margins of society.*
9. *Governments must support life.*
10. *Governments must encourage and facilitate involvement in the process of political decision-making.*
11. *Governments worthy of support must respect other governments and non-governmental bodies with respect to appropriate decision-making.*

From the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1998 pastoral letter on Participation in the Democratic Process

"Christians who take an active part in present-day socio-economic development, and fight for justice and charity should be convinced that they can make a great contribution to the prosperity of mankind and to the peace of the world."

"The Church in the Modern World," Vatican II