

Canadian "unite the right" conference adopts revealing resolutions

A reporter
3 March 1999

Media reports of the Reform Party-sponsored United Alternative to the Liberals Conference have said little, if anything, about the policy debates at the conference. Certainly, Reform Party leader Preston Manning and other UA conference organizers were determined to tightly control all policy discussions. A clash between so-called fiscal and social conservatives over abortion or capital punishment would have called into question the conference's professed objective of uniting the right and undermined Manning's efforts to counter the public perception of Reform as the political voice of intolerant Christian fundamentalism.

Nonetheless, the five resolutions that the conference did adopt and the debates surrounding them were revealing. Although seemingly couched in innocuous language, the resolutions on closer inspection prove to be chock-full of the code words of big business, the right and extreme right.

Resolution Two affirmed the conference's support for the Reform Party's right-wing economic agenda, which aims to redistribute wealth from the working and middle classes to the rich, by slashing taxes and the social and public spending that they finance. Specifically, the resolution called for lower personal and business taxes and for the paying down of the national debt to be made a government priority. These policies are designed to ensure that the federal government is fiscally compelled to further slash social spending.

A call for the government to support "effective job-training and retraining" was deleted from the resolution by what one news report described as "a massive show of hands." Also deleted from Resolution Two was any reference to environmental protection, the delegates apparently believing that even the business buzzword of "sustainable development" represented an

impermissible pandering to left-wing sentiments and an undue restraint on "a thriving entrepreneurial sector."

The opening passage of Resolution Three was a clear nod to the anti-abortion lobby and a fulsome embrace of the prerogatives of capital. It affirmed that the delegates "recognize that all human beings possess the fundamental rights of life, freedom and the right to own and enjoy property." According to right-wing *National Post* columnist Terence Corcoran, "given a chance, the delegates would have inserted" property rights into every resolution, "as an economic measure, a social measure and as an overarching principle."

In Resolution Three, UA conference delegates also called for social policies based on "individual responsibility"--a euphemism for allowing the unemployed to fend for themselves--and for the criminal justice system to reflect greater "respect and support for law and order."

On a motion from a past president of the anti-feminist group REAL Women, Resolution Three was amended to state that the family is " *the*"--not just "an"--"essential building block for a healthy society." A second motion from the floor to delete the word "genuine" from a commitment to support "genuine refugees and immigration" but only when they contribute to "economic growth," was overwhelmingly rejected.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact