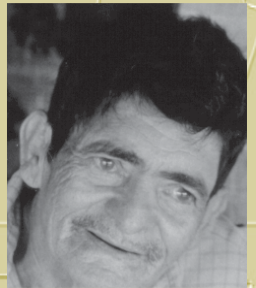


annual report

2002 - 2003

Spinning a Web



OF SOLIDARITY

 **Alternatives**

... for a different world

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Foreword

This report covers the period since the last two general meetings in March and August 2002. We actually had two general meetings in 2002, with the August meeting scheduled to reflect the new timetable adopted at the March meeting.

As you may recall, a general program was adopted at the March general meeting, and has been put into effect. The August meeting focused above all on funding strategies, which we have also implemented. This report will give you an idea of what has actually been accomplished.

Happy reading!

Photo : Mickey Bhuyan





Some notes on the context

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING that the year 2003 was marked by the war in Iraq, long prepared by the United States and heralding a new era of violence and war in various parts of the world. The world citizen's movement developed apace. It continued to oppose imperialism and propose economic, social and political alternatives. The huge success of the World Social Forum was an indication of this development.

THE WAR

After months of military preparation, and of going through the motions of observing international law, Washington finally launched its re-conquest of Iraq. The project is vast and ambitious, as the “ideologues” of American “neo-conservatism” (*The New American Century*) tell it, since the point is not only to lock down the Middle East, but the rest of the world as well. The outlines of future conflicts (Iran, Syria, Philippines, Colombia, Nepal, etc.) are already showing through in a war that, as U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld has announced, will be “endless”.

It is obvious that the re-conquest has claimed many victims, starting with the people involved. There is talk of at least 10 000 civilian deaths in Iraq, not to mention the countless poor soldiers massacred by American missiles and planes. The “low-intensity” wars that the United States wages with its allies are also deadly, notably in Palestine, Colombia and the Philippines.

Medical-aid worker treating displaced Iraqis



Photo : Interaction

But the fallout extends even further. The principle of an “international community” governed by the United Nations is on its deathbed, leaving the world scene wide open to all sorts of risks. Powers like the countries of the European Union, Russia and China are targeted outright, particularly since the United States feels threatened by the competition of countries that are performing better economically. Secondary powers, like Canada, are up against the ropes: *“you are either with us (under our control), or against us...”*

THE FORAYS OF THE GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

Last February and March, tens of millions of us demonstrated against the war. Various movements managed to channel all sensibilities, against war, against neo-liberalism, and for democratic, grassroots alternatives. The “rainbow” coalition included grassroots organizations, unions, progressive church groups, women’s movements, immigrants, the radical and moderate left... in other words, a critical mass representing the majority of the population in several countries, namely Canada, Italy, Spain and Germany. It would have been the same in many other countries if it hadn’t been for pro-American dictatorships that at least partially prevented the people from expressing their views, such as Egypt, Pakistan, and others.

Photo: John Donoghue



Luis Inacio Lula da Silva ex-metallurgist and Union Leader, brought to power by two thirds of Brazilians in January 2003.

Not only did the grassroots movement say no, it also said “yes” to alternatives, particularly in South America, where widespread networks came together behind important electoral victories, notably in Brazil. Beyond Lula’s success, the fact remains that gigantic grassroots mobilizations are picking up speed in many countries. This phenomenon may seem localized at the moment, with the Right having won several elections in Europe, not to mention in Quebec! But in most cases, it is not because the Right is stronger (or has more votes), but rather because the political and social Left are cut off from one another.

There are huge challenges ahead. The Brazilian lab experiment must prove itself and “spread” to the rest of the world. The various sectors of the progressive movement must reconnect. Finally, we must make a vast, permanent, united stand against U.S. imperialism.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

As mentioned above, the realignment of the world puts Canada in a precarious position. NAFTA already has us firmly integrated into the American empire at the economic level. But the situation could change dramatically in the coming years. The United States wants to impose “Fortress North America”, which would effectively mean the end of Canadian sovereignty over its borders, economy, social system and culture. As if that weren’t bad enough, foremost Canadian business circles, with the support of the Right (Canadian Alliance) are going along with it. Meanwhile, the opposition is wavering in the face of this insane plan, which would reduce us to the status of the State of Kansas. The historical advocate of canadianism is in transition, and its next leaders could accept the American plan in the interest of realpolitik.

It will therefore take a lot of pressure to change the course of events. That being said, the grassroots movement is not quite ready, despite its considerable reserves of strength. Rifts between the social movement in Quebec and the rest of Canada are starting to mend, but they have not disappeared, as with the problem arising from the break with the world of the indigenous nations. Quebec’s grassroots movement, which has historically been better organized and more cohesive, is likely to be on the defensive in the coming months, in the aftermath of an election that conceded victory to the Right.

It is also necessary to capitalize on existing networks, and the networks that must be built to develop a vast grassroots coalition, like what is being done at the local level in Quebec City and Toronto, and in the context of cross-sector groupings (the women’s movement, the education sector, the environment, etc.).

In the coming year, we intend to keep playing our role in this movement, just as we have in previous years.

Alternatives in the International Scene

ALTERNATIVES' INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM this past year was both intense and difficult, particularly at the financial level. We undertook many new projects and consolidated other initiatives that have been underway for several years.

NETWORKS

Our international program continued to give priority to supporting local grassroots organizations, women's groups, youth groups and environmental groups operating more and more within national and international networks. The spectacular development of the World Social Forum (WSF) testifies to the progress made in this area. The Forum has gone beyond a mere meeting to become a permanent process that brings together thousands of organizations from all over the world. In addition to the meeting in Porto Alegre last January (at which 100 000 people attended), millions of people became involved in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, with Alternatives and our partners present and active in all of those places.

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

- The third edition of the WSF took place in January, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Over 100 000 people participated, including approximately 400 from Quebec and Canada.
- Alternatives took an active part in national forums held in Quito, Buenos Aires, Bélem, Casablanca, Addis Ababa and Hyderabad.
- The WSF international committee, of which Alternatives is a member, is currently organizing the fourth WSF, which will be held in Mumbai, India, next January.

IN THE AMERICAS

In the Americas, Alternatives plays an important role in setting up networks to achieve several purposes: developing alternatives that tend toward sustainable development and social justice; setting up pilot projects that provide a practical example that "a different world is possible"; opposing projects inspired by the neo-liberal approach, particularly with respect to economic integration and free trade. We are currently working on these initiatives directly in Brazil, Argentina and Cuba and through solidarity relationships with organizations in Chile, Mexico and Ecuador.

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

In North Africa and the Middle East, we continued our activities, mainly in Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine. We maintained contacts in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Yemen and reached out to Iraqi democratic organizations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, we sustained our work with partners in Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Sudan and Angola. We also began to develop new programs in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Chad. Our work is aimed both at supporting NGOs and NGO networks, and at helping community organizations counter act the wars and crises that afflict the continent.

ASIA AND EURASIA

In Asia, we worked with our traditional partners in India and Pakistan. We also began new projects to support local organizations in Afghanistan and Indonesia, and maintained our ties of solidarity with groups in China, Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. In Eurasia, we continued to work with our union partners in Russia and Ukraine. We also inaugurated a major project in Central Europe to

support NGOs in Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Finally, we have maintain our presence in the former Yugoslavia and Southern Caucasia.

Photo: Michel Lambert/Alternatives



MONEY MATTERS

We have worked very hard since the last AGM to secure funding to support all of our projects. We renewed our partnership contract with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for three years, which covers our basic operations. However, we experienced difficulties with other CIDA departments, since several projects were only funded at the very end of the fiscal year. This created a financial gap for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. The good news is that we began the current fiscal year (2003-2004) with funds in hand for a large portion of our projects. In a parallel development, Industry-Canada has renewed its Surf the World program. We also con-

Main new projects underway

THE AMERICAS

- Project to support the campaign to fight hunger in Brazil.
- Project to build a solidarity economy network in Argentina.
- Project to support organizations in several countries to build their capacity to intervene in the plan to integrate the Americas
- Project (phase two) to support several Caribbean organizations to build their research and publication capacity.

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- Program to support Egyptian NGOs.
- Support for human rights organizations and women's organizations in Sudan and Morocco.
- Research into food security and urban agriculture in Morocco.
- Support for democratic organizations in Iraq.
- Emergency campaign for Palestine.
- Setting up a computer network for NGOs in DRC.
- Rehabilitating medical clinics in DRC.
- Rehabilitating villages in Burundi.
- Support for NGOs in Angola, Niger, South Africa, Senegal and Chad.

ASIA AND EURASIA

- Support for women's organizations helping to rebuild Afghanistan.
- Interventions to support community and human rights organizations in Pakistan

Photo: Paulo Pampolin



Photo: CIDA



- Support for Indian organizations working toward the next WSF.
- Support for community organizations in Vietnam.
- Support for indigenous people's groups and human rights defenders in West Papua, Indonesia
- Support for peaceful dialogues and displaced people resettlement in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia
- Support for and links with NGOs in China, Japan and the Philippines.
- Developing a worker's university project in cooperation with unions and universities in Russia.
- Support for unions in Ukraine.
- Program to support NGOs in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.
- Support for NGOs in former Yugoslavia and Southern Caucasias.

tinued to diversify our sources of funding to include private donors in Canada, and international funding agencies, mainly from Japan and Europe.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

We continued our international internships through three main programs: Surf the World (Internet use), Alternative Media (support for community media) and Quebec Without Borders (QWB) (support for local NGOs). The internships are more integrated into the programs underway, and better connected with our partners in the field, making them broader in scope. The internships also give young people a very hands-on introduction to international solidarity. It took long and arduous negotiations to obtain funding for the projects, particularly from CIDA. Uncertainty exists also with respect to the Quebec Government, with new funding cuts being announced each week. This could have negative fallout for QWB, in the short or long term, but for now two of our QWB projects were approved recently. With regard to our NetCorps internships (Surf the World), funded by Industry Canada, we should be able to continue our project for the next five years. Industry Canada has furthermore begun consultations with members of the coalition to identify major areas for additional support in the future. That might enable us to meet some of our partners' more pressing needs. Finally, we started a (small) new internship program in France.

Photo: Paula Allen/Amnistie Internationale



Alternatives in Quebec and Canada

SINCE THE LAST AGM, we have been working to consolidate the local grassroots movement's convergence around a number of issues: integration of the Americas, the World Social Forum, anti-war activities, solidarity with Palestine, local democracy, and respect for immigrants' rights.

ÉCHEC À LA GUERRE

As we have said before, a worldwide citizen's movement expressed a clear anti-War position.

As part of this, hundreds of thousands of us demonstrated throughout the cities and towns of

Quebec. The Alternatives members' forum of volunteer activists made this mobilization a priority in the context of the *Échec à la guerre* coalition. In a parallel initiative, we also worked hard as an organization to disseminate the Iraqi people's point of view on the struggle to democratize their country. The members of the Forum bolstered this initiative by organizing a conference on the issue.



FTAA

Alternatives continued to challenge trade liberalisation by cooperating with and mobilizing alongside grassroots organizations throughout the Americas, particularly in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Canada. In Quebec, we helped the *Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale* (RQIC) start the *consulta* to enable citizens to speak out on the process underway. The *consulta* will continue over the next six months and already several dozen presentations have been made involving grassroots organizations, mostly in Quebec and Ontario.

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Like last year, we mobilized a large number of people to participate in the World Social Forum (WSF), the third edition of which was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Meetings before, during and after the WSF enabled several grassroots organizations from Quebec and Canada to consult together and interact with the WSF which resulted in a number of concrete actions. Groups in Quebec - Chaudière Appalaches, Ottawa, Victoria, and Toronto were organized, and we partici-

pated in the process in Quebec City. This was followed by a national initiative involving grassroots organizations from Canada, Quebec and First Nations to plan the Canada, Quebec and Indigenous Nations' People's Social Forum, to be held in Montreal next June. Alternatives was at the heart of the process, both politically and technically, and is currently acting as secretary for the Forum's coordinating committee.

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

Working in solidarity with the Palestinian people continued throughout the year, through various interventions and support for a number of organizations, including Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR). Many people were mobilized, particularly among the student population.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

We had a new awareness-raising program aimed at informing and mobilizing people about and around the issue of local democracy. The program included promoting initiatives underway in Brazil, like the participatory budget of Porto Alegre. This work is linked to various coalitions and groups in Quebec City and Montreal, including the committee that is preparing the upcoming Citizen's Summit to be held in Quebec City this October.

DEFENDING IMMIGRANT'S RIGHTS

We continued our welcoming and referral service for recently arrived immigrants through workplace

Young Israeli soldier playing with a Palestinian child.

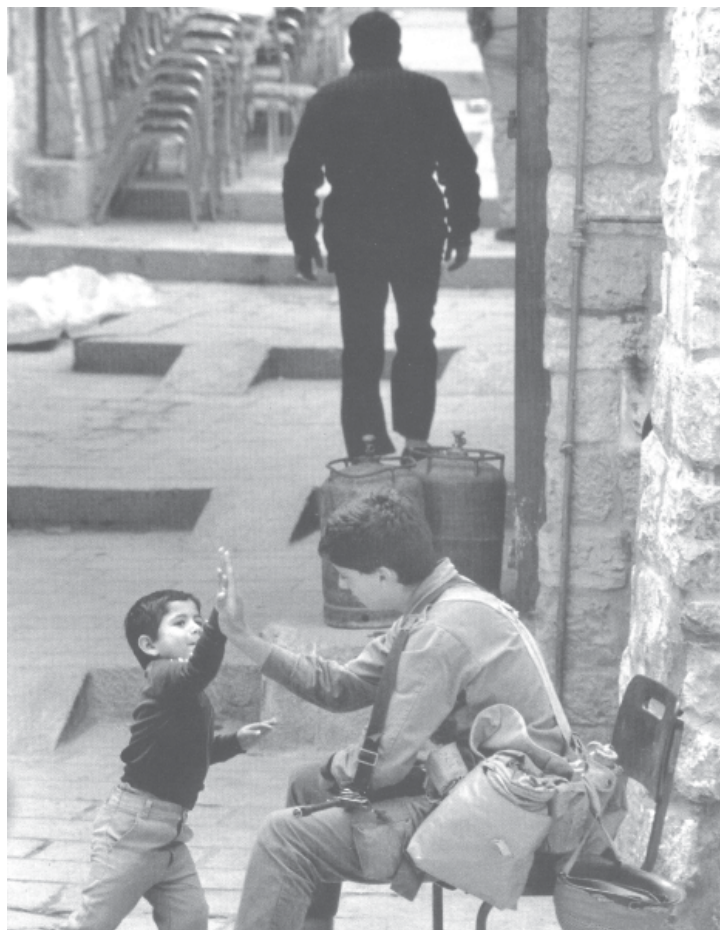


Photo: Jean-Claude Coutousse

internships and information dissemination. We cooperated with various coalitions, including the *Table de concertation sur les réfugiés*, to promote the rights of immigrants and oppose discriminatory new legislation and measures.

SOLIDARITY FAR AND WIDE

We organized and co-organized several information and awareness-raising campaigns to promote alternatives and a peoples' resistance to the rise of Right extremist, militaristic and imperialistic policies throughout the world: including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the DRC Burundi, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, Colombia, Cuba and Chile. We ended the season on a positive note with a very successful project for the New Brazil, in conjunction with our Brazilian partners, UQAM, the CSN and several other groups.

COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

We continued to produce our two monthly newspapers (in English and French), with a certain amount of growth in terms of independent distribution.¹ Our Web site underwent a considerable overhaul, which has dramatically increased its impact (according to the number of visitors and readers). We continued and revitalized the OneWorld project, while remaining the main partner (at the political and financial level) of rabble.ca, the most popular progressive news site in English Canada. We lent our ongoing support to community media here in Quebec (CMAQ, etc.) and around the world (development of alternative media centres in DRC, Afghanistan, the Caribbean, etc.).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Alternatives continued its commitment to promote and apply sustainable development around the world by bringing together and balancing the social, political, economic and environmental aspects in all our programming. One concrete example of our model is the "rooftop gardens" pilot project (supported by the International Development Research Centre), which addresses the issues of food security, gender equity, urban poverty and energy efficiency. Furthermore we cooperated with our partners around the world to influence the discussions at and around the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (September 2002).

¹ Due to financial limitations, the English language paper will appear as an electronic production on the Alternatives website in the future.

Alternatives in Quebec City

- Involvement in the organization of the Quebec - Chaudières Appalaches Social Forum (September 2002) and the Social Forum Network (SFN).
- Involvement in the massive mobilizations against the war and imperialism in Iraq and Palestine (which later became the "peace" commission of the SFN). Six demonstrations were held, bringing together more than 30,000 people.
- Organization of the *consulta* in Quebec City, in the context of the RQIC the SFN's FTAA Commission.
- Participatory Democracy project (workshops, conferences, publications) and involvement in the SFN's Democracy Commission.
- Public conferences on the rise of the Right, Palestine, Iraq, Algeria and the Great Lakes region of Africa.
- Support for five interns on their way to Chile.
- Organization of various funding activities, including the 100-metre golden sprint for solidarity (\$3450.00 raised).
- Production of a weekly radio show (CKIA-FM) and a page in Voir magazine.
- Activation of the radio and coordination committees. The latter committee is made up of two members of the Board of Directors from Quebec City (Mirlande Demers and Denis Côté), as well as Geneviève D'Avignon, Lucie Gosselin and Marie-Ève Monfette (members), and Sébastien Bouchard and Josée Desharnais (employees).
- Hosting interns from Central Europe.



Alternatives: the movement

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BD) continued to provide informed guidance and direction to the organization's activities, with the help of the Executive Committee (EC) and the Management Committee (five directors plus the Executive Director) and the Staff Collective (committee grouping all employees). Various other structured forums also facilitated member participation.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The BD met in October 2002, and in January, April and August 2003. The Executive Committee, made up of five people, met on a monthly basis. The foremost political issues developed by the BD dealt with the local political situation with respect to the war and the rise of militarism and the Right, the World Social Forum, the FTAA issue, coalitions and grassroots movements. A Compendium of resolutions updating the main resolutions adopted by the BD made it easier to follow progress. The BD also oversaw several very important technical issues, such as the development of a new wage policy (see below), the 2003-2004 budget, and an examination of the 2002-2003 financial statements, as well as the development of a European strategy for Alternatives. Finally, the BD supervised the preparation and setting up of the 2003 Retreat and General Meeting.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

- Eugénie Aw
- Philippe Boudreault
- Dorval Brunelle
- Yasmina Chouakri (Vice-Presidente)
- Denis Côté (Secretary)
- Mirlande Demers
- Lorraine Guay
- Gordon Lefebvre (Treasurer)
- Renato Martins
- Judy Rebick
- Monique Simard (President)

THE STAFF

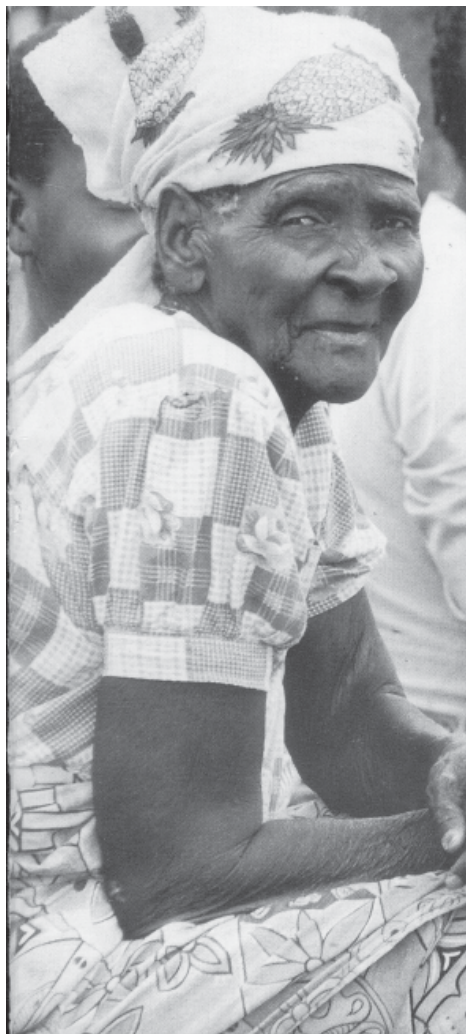
The staff, which now is over 35 people strong, continued to carry out the work coordinated by the Management Committee. More specifically, the staff developed a new wage policy, which required a lot of groundwork and a certain amount of internal discussion. Finally, the policy, which provides for an average wage increase of 10%, was adopted by the BD at the beginning of August. A number of new employees were recruited, either to replace people who left the organization, or to fill new positions. The staff also went into action to develop a training policy, much needed in the context of a young and growing team. The *Monday Morning Letter*, distributed to all BD and staff members, gives a report on how projects and activities are progressing. Between now and the fall, we will begin an assessment of the restructuring process begun two years ago.

THE MEMBERS

Member participation took the shape of committees, organized on a regional basis or by sector of common interest. In Quebec City, a coordinating committee spearheaded the activities of two other committees (radio and mobilization). In Montreal, it was mainly the Members' Forum that brought the people working on Alternatives activities together on a regular basis. An active training committee arose out of the Forum (there are also other committees, notably for publications and the Web site). Additionally, member participation has also mustered around the general meeting and retreat.

Photo: CIDA





TIES OF SOLIDARITY

Alternatives' vitality owes a lot to our special links with grassroots organizations and networks. Alternatives members and employees have focused their work in this area on the Quebec, Canada and Indigenous Nations' People's Forum, the *Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale*, the *Échec à la guerre* coalition, the Continental Social Alliance, the World Social Forum and other networks. Special bilateral relations have also been forged with unions and community, student, women's group and environmental groups, etc., making it possible to be at the heart of a social movement that is growing and fighting for alternatives.

FUNDING

Almost all of the recommendations proposed in the report to the General Meeting last August dealt with funding initiatives, notably:

- We broadened our mail-out operations: a new Canada-wide strategy was developed and put into practice.
- We secured the development of new alliances with local organizations, NGOs, universities and institutions: we have partnership and funding agreements with more NGOs, unions and universities.
- We strengthened ties with new CIDA departments and diversified our projects and programs: new contracts were signed, and a new three-year agreement was signed to cover basic funding.
- We have diversified funding sources to include other federal departments, particularly Industry Canada, Heritage Canada, The Secretary of State for the Status of Women, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.
- We also fought on behalf of a Canadian foreign policy not subordinated to that of the United States: our biggest success in that area was that we encouraged Canada's non-participation in the war against Iraq.

- We strengthened our relations with the DIR: however, the Liberal government's election last April has thrown a shadow over the DIR and that department's relations with international cooperation organizations.
- We have broadened our alliances with organizations in Europe, the United States and Japan: we entered into new contracts and partnerships with foundations, NGOs and institutions, mainly in Europe.

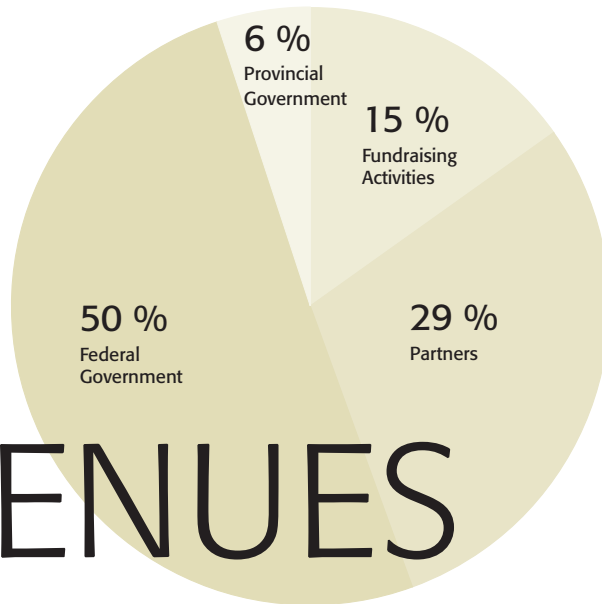
However, we have not yet managed to make much progress on the following issues:

- We have not broadened the range of "products" made available by Alternatives.
- We have not had time to explore opportunities with other government departments (communications, education), or with UN agencies.

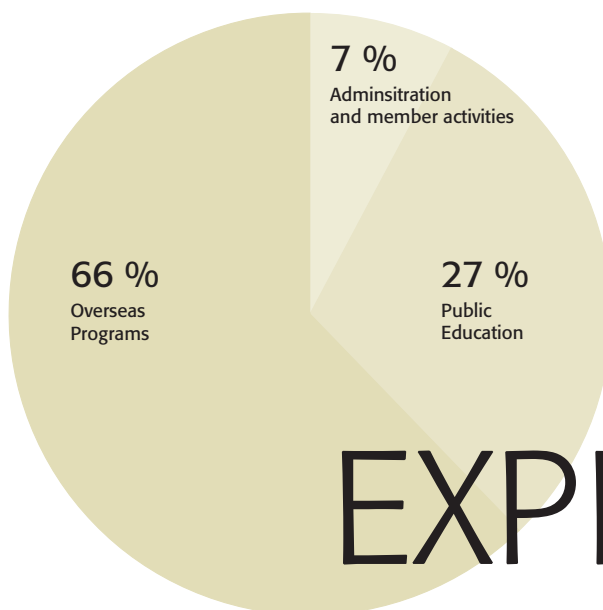
With regard to the controversial issue of the World Bank:

- We have strengthened our campaigns against the World Bank's SAL (structural adjustment lending) and policies, in cooperation with our partners here and around the world, notably in the context of the debate on Africa (NEPAD) and the G-8.
- We also participated with other movements in the drafting of proposals to rebuild the international cooperation system, to democratize it and make it better suited to the needs of social development: this work was mainly carried out in the context of the World Social Forum and other forums with which we associated.
- We negotiated two projects with an agency appointed by the Congolese Government (BCECO), which is now funded by the World Bank. The projects (rehabilitation of clinics in two low-income neighbourhoods Kinshasa) are underway and will be evaluated upon completion.

Revenues and expenses 2002-2003



REVENUES



EXPENSES

In Conclusion

We have had a difficult year. The war against Iraq, hypocritically portrayed as a “battle to liberate the Iraqi people” was a devastating attack on everything that our movement calls for in the world. And it does not look like our troubles are over. At a more prosaic and internal level, we have had disappointing results in terms of funding for our projects.

The good news is that we were able to maintain a high degree of activity and visibility for Alternatives throughout it all, both independently and in conjunction with the world social movement.

We therefore look to the coming year with a fair bit of optimism: our busy schedule will be a huge challenge!





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