

Bruce Cockburn's Statement on the G8

2002

I'm here as a concerned citizen, to lend my support to what I believe is a vital exercise of the democratic right of dissent. The silencing of dissent by various means - the attempted elimination of one whole side of the globalization debate is, to me, a worrisome sign of worse to come. I've done a fair amount of travelling in "developing" countries, much of it related to the work of various charitable organizations. I've seen what the kind of top-down aid advocated by the G8 has done to people. It doesn't look like development to me. The current fashion in the corridors of power, of reducing everything to the terms of the marketplace, is heart breaking for the poor of the world, for those of us committed to seeking something like justice in human affairs, for those of us concerned about the environment that gives us life. And for those of us who grew up in a Canada where freedom was a cherished value - where a government which was accountable provided some of the necessities of life for those in need. When a nation's government hands over the reins of all its functions to the private sector, what's left for it to run except the army and the police? I worry that the Canada I learned to love growing up will not be what my grandchildren, if I have them, are going to encounter.

There are other ways of doing things, and we must encourage our leaders to find those ways and pursue them. Otherwise we can look forward to a mobius strip of more inequity, more anger, more violence, more erosion of our civil liberties in the name of security, more anger, more violence...

Face it - the G8 leaders are facilitating the degradation of my country and my planet. I have to protest this!

So - I've taken a small role in the upcoming events in Calgary. Our plans for the week of the Kananaskis conference include a day-long teach-in, and a concert on the 26th featuring Chris Brown and Kate Fenner, myself, and other artists. We'll be offering people a non-violent, informative option which I think is going to be a lot of fun.

Globalization as currently understood is, to me, an evil thing - but that's not to suggest that all global connections are bad. There's so much we can all share to our mutual benefit. One important thing I learned in the early '80s hanging with dissidents in Pinochet's Chile, where dissent really meant risking your life, is that when you resist evil you are in fact celebrating life, and it's okay to have a good time!

With over 25 albums to his credit, Bruce Cockburn is a veteran of the music business. Primarily a folk/rock based singer/songwriter, his music has also encompassed many other styles, including jazz, blues, reggae, and other world musics. He is a keen interpreter of his environment, both external and internal. A skilled lyricist and musician, his music is always evolving.