

## 2000 - 2008

Eight years have gone by since the first issue of *Just News* was published. In fact, it was at the 1999 General Commission that the decision was taken to publish a liaison bulletin on social justice issues. The purpose of the Bulletin was to publish:

- news from provincial social justice committees;
- information on specific themes;
- articles that would be motivating and/or challenging and that would suggest ways of doing and provide sources of information
- articles for theological reflection;
- reports on meetings of the network.



**General Commission**  
November 12-20, 1999

The first *Just News*, published in October 2000, was in response to this mission. Since then, the bulletin has been published at least four times a year. Its purpose was to act as a link, to promote greater awareness concerning important issues in society and to suggest action guidelines adapted to the SSA.

Has the objective been reached? You be the judge. Remember the corner for readers where you were invited to express your opinions by sending comments, information, etc. As a result, more than 200 sisters answered the survey and here is what they said.

To start with, you evaluated the accessibility of the Bulletin

Accessible for the majority... YES...

Among other things, thanks to

- articles are brief
- style is simple
- presentation is attractive: colour and photos
- page layout

**BUT...**

we deplore

- transmission of the 2 or 3 copies in the community is slow
- insufficient number of copies for large communities
- copy received by Internet or WEB site is not printed
- fewer number of readers since it is transmitted by internet



Then, we were encouraged. More than 75% of those who responded said that they read it regularly and 90% of the readers underlined the relevancy of the information.

1. **Challenging themes;**
2. **Information leading to new forms of prayer;**
3. **Prophetic content bears hope:**
  - **promotes solidarity: creates links with those who experience injustice**
  - **encourages us to make commitments in favour of those in need so that life may grow**
  - **touches hearts**

### Suggestion

To receive more information regarding experiences in the provinces and in distant regions.

But...

not always easy to obtain!



Have we become more aware of situations of injustice?

More than 85% answered **YES**: mostly with regard to situations with which they were unfamiliar or which were unknown to them.

**Prophetic content bears hope because the Bulletin**

- **makes us become aware of unjust situations in the world;**
- **helps us to keep our two feet on the ground;**
- **helps us to apply concrete social justice values in daily life.**

15% do not share this opinion

because the situations referred to have been known for years and TV programs refer to them daily.

### Concrete actions

They wrote :

1. On the 22 of each month, I wear my badge to signify my commitment for the environment;
2. I thank the person who does not fill up my bathtub to the full;
3. I do not hesitate to defend companions and laypersons who are unjustly treated and who are defenceless;
4. During the night, when I wake up, I say a « Hail Mary » for the women and young girls caught up in the sex industry;
5. I transmit the information to the Social Justice Committee in my parish, to my sister who is a religious, to adult religious education candidates.

### Encouraging comments. . .

**Thank you**  
**for the many ways in which this Bulletin has helped me**  
**to become more conscious of social justice issues.**  
**As co-facilitator, the sisters of my community**  
**were able to put concrete actions into practice.**  
**They have become more aware of what is happening in the world**  
**and especially in our community.**

Sister Jocelyne LeBœuf  
 Esther-Blondin Province

**JUST NEWS**  
**is extremely informative, helping, instructive and inspiring;**  
**it evokes discussion and involment.**

**It stirs greater interest**  
**in the relevant social issues**  
**facing our society today.**

**It has involved me in adressing in a wider forum,**  
**the Trafficking of women, children,**  
**and the sex abuse of persons in general.**

**Thank you very much.**

Sister Rose Clarisse Gadoury  
 Saint Marie Province



This was made possible thanks to the collaboration of many people. We will not make an exhaustive list of names, for fear of forgetting to name a few but allow us to mention those that follow: translators, the printer, the person in charge of computer technology, the copy editors and finally those who sent in articles. Whether you may be among those who are reading these lines or have left for a better world, please accept our thanks.

*Merci !*



During the last eight years, we considered various themes: rights of women, non-violence, environment, water... and trafficking of human beings. During the last three years, the June issues have focussed on the commitment of provinces and the corporate responsibility. This is quite a challenge as these issues are very complex. May we be proud of the SSA who have acted as figureheads in this area.

The following is a testimony made by Sr. Ana Maria of Chile who substantiates this commitment. You may have read her article in the St. Marie Province bulletin, but we are pleased to repeat it here again because it speaks of the creativity of the SSA and of the new ways in which we are committing ourselves in social justice for the building of a more just and caring world. Here is the article written by Sister Ana Maria

*Dear Sisters and Associates,*

*"I want to share with you the experience that I have lived these past few weeks at the Center of Studies for Religious (Conferre), where I participate as a Junior Sister. In my group there were 34 men and women from 10 different countries.*

*A few days ago, all the students from the Center were invited to the Auditorium to see a video. We were postulants, novices, junior professed and professors.*

*Sister Nora Roco, who is our Juniorate Mistress, told me that thanks to the intervention of Sister Irene Riopel, SSA, in the General Assembly of Major Superiors, the decision was made to have all those in*

*the Center participate in Social Justice issues, especially those referring to Pascua-Lama, an area bordering Chile and Argentina, which has precious minerals. Barrick Gold, a Canadian company, has been awarded the contract to mine this area.*

*However, many environmental groups are protesting this, fearful that the glaciers will be destroyed and the water contaminated.*

*Sister Riopel spoke with such vehemence and passion in the assembly that all made a firm commitment to know about and participate in all the activities that try to impede this company. This passion also led the Sisters of Saint Anne in Canada to interview Barrick Company executives and managers. The Sisters also were interviewed on the radio and wrote articles for the newspapers.*

*Due to the efforts of Sr. Irene Riopel during a three-day workshop of Junior Sisters from Chile, a video was shown about the ecological gravity surrounding this mining.*

*..."*

Sister Ana Maria

NB: You will find in Annex, an interesting report on the evolution of the commitment of the SSA in social responsibility of enterprises during the last five years.

*It has been a pleasure to edit  
"Just News".  
Happy Holidays, and  
until the next publication...*

## ANNEX

**Corporate responsibility and commitment of the SSA  
with the collaboration of the Social Justice Office  
and the general and provincial finance offices**

Since the early beginnings of the Congregation, the Sisters of St. Anne have been actively involved in social responsibility. The facts are there whether it was with regard to the implantation of schools or caring for those in need. In today's context, social responsibility has broadened its horizons. It is now open to a whole new field of action as shareholders of companies: that of creating awareness, among business leaders and shareholders, of the social responsibility incumbent upon them in the operation of these companies.

There are, of course, different ways of approaching companies to invite them to assume greater social responsibility. The various corporations of the Congregation, at the general level as well as at the provincial level, know how to address these issues judiciously. When looking at the Congregation's commitment during the last six years, it is obvious that our involvement has grown and become more solid.

One of the ways of exercising social responsibility is to learn how to manage the voting of proxies. This requires time and research. At the level of the general administration, the voting of proxies for all corporations is done by the personnel of the finance office. This requires a great deal of work because most companies hold their annual meetings in the spring, not to mention that in order to avoid financial risks the portfolios accumulate equities from many companies. But the cost is worth it. If the votes are significant in percentage, this encourages and stimulates companies to promote sustainable development, respect of human rights and good governance.

The St. Marie Province contracted



a managing firm known for its social commitment, to manage its investments. The provincial financial administration knows that the voting of proxies will be based on criteria respectful of SSA values. It is reasonable to believe that the investments take these norms into consideration.

**Esther Blondin** Province and **St. Joseph** Province leave their administrators vote on proposals unless they are asked to vote in a certain way on certain proposals. These requests may come from the Congregation and/or other associations of which the provinces are members: the RRSE (Regroupement pour la Responsabilité sociale des Entreprises), Kairos, Development and Peace or partners of these associations. The firm Boston Common Asset Management is very involved in ICCR (Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, an ecumenical group dedicated to responsible investment), and it depends on the orientations given by this association when voting.

However, SSA social responsibility does not stop here! The SSA are not afraid of engaging in a dialogue with companies to congratulate them for their efforts towards greater responsible management or to question them, give them suggestions or confront their ways of doing. These exchanges sometimes lead these companies to present or endorse proposals made by shareholders. Here are some of the issues raised since the last general chapter.

**2003**

In the year 2003, the interventions were rather limited and timid.

## 2004

### IMPERIAL OIL

The **Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne** presented a proposal requesting that Imperial provide them with a report of the researches they made regarding renewable energies. It endorsed the Elisabeth Bergeron Fund (Sisters of St. Joseph of Saint-Hyacinthe) and asked for the report made by Imperial on greenhouse gas emissions. The Congregation also endorsed two proposals presented by APEIQ regarding the setting up of a process that favours the application of good corporate governance principles.

### SEARS CANADA

A representative of **Esther Bondin Fund** intervened at Sears annual meeting to endorse a proposal presented by Real Assets requesting that the posts of general director and president of the administrative council not be filled by the same person. The delegate also questioned Sears regarding its code of conduct in relation to the norms of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and on the independent verification of its enforcement.

These two interventions were given media coverage because of the high visibility of the members of the RRSE in the fall of 2003 when they took a stand facing Hydro-Quebec with regards to the Suroît project.

## 2005

### IMPERIAL OIL

A representative of the **Congregation** met with delegates of Imperial Oil to discuss issues related to proposals presented the year before. The Congregation once again formulated and endorsed the proposals presented in 2004. The final percentage did not make it possible to pursue this issue further because the head office of Imperial was transferred from Montreal to Calgary...

### SEARS

The **Esther Blondin Fund** co-signed with the national union committee of Batirente, a shareholder resolution asking the Administration Council of Sears Canada to produce and diffuse, by April 2006 at the latest, a report on sustainable development in keeping with the guiding principles of *Global Reporting Initiative* (1).



### ALCAN

All the **corporations of the Sisters of St. Anne, whose headquarters are situated in Québec** have given their voting of proxies to RRSE to support the intervention of shareholders at the annual meeting of Alcan. Although Alcan was known for having a sense of social responsibility, it became a partner with a local company in India to set up an aluminium plant and a project for the extraction of bauxite. The project which had been developed for more than 10 years was highly controversial. It is precisely because of this controversy that NorksHydro, which had been an associate partner since the beginning, withdrew from the project.

Problems arose at various levels: indigenous peoples, whose survival depended on their natural habitat, were displaced, environmental studies were non conclusive, there was a lack of consultation among populations affected by the development of the project, excessive security measures were set up, violence arose between partisans who were for and against the project. The RRSE entered into dialogue with representatives of this company for more than 4 years and saw that the situation was very complex. Groups of people asked Alcan to leave the region. The RRSE, believing that this was not THE solution, intervened and asked Alcan and its Indian partner to be more transparent. RRSE suggested that Alcan set up an independent advisory committee that would demonstrate that there were more advantages than disadvantages for the local population in this

1. The Global Reporting Initiative - [www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org) - is a multi-stakeholder governed institution made up of representatives of businesses, labour and the environment whose mandate is to diffuse global standards in sustainability reporting.

project. This proposal was not accepted because the studies were never completed or brought up to date.

The purpose of the intervention at the annual meeting was to make other shareholders aware of the situation and to question Alcan regarding the financial risk related to its bad reputation that was growing. The project became so controversial that Alcan had to take special security measures at this general meeting.

2006

### **ALCAN**

As in 2005, the **corporations of the General Administration** allocated the voting of proxies to shareholders to allow various participants to attend the annual meeting. A member of RRSE presented a shareholder resolution in favour of setting up an independent committee to confirm previous studies on the social and environmental consequences of building a manufacturing plant of bauxite in India. The vote in favour was more than 36%. Alcan could not remain insensitive. Later during the year it withdrew from the project.

36 %

### **BOMBARDIER**

The **Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne** co-signed, with the Franciscans, a shareholder resolution at Bombardier. This proposal requested that the “administration council develop and adopt a policy on human rights and to produce an independent report on the progress accomplished by November 2006”. This meeting held in December provided an update on the work accomplished and met the deadline set by the company. A follow-up will have to be ensured.

### **BANQUE TD**

Two shareholder proposals filed by the Bâtirente National Retirement Union Council, and endorsed by the **Esther Blondin Fund**, were done in dialogue with the company. The first proposal created a fruitful dialogue between Bâtirente and the TD Bank, so much so that the company made a commitment to accept the demand and to adhere to the Principles of Equateur<sup>1</sup>.

The second proposal demanded that criteria of durability be taken into consideration with regard to salaries of top executives; it was maintained. It was submitted to the vote of shareholders at the annual meeting and received the support of 12,8%. The Bank leaders got involved to put in place such a process.

### **TRANSCONTINENTAL**

The **Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne** presented a shareholder resolution asking Transcontinental to make a commitment to increase its offer for certified paper FSC<sup>2</sup> (Forest Stewardship Council). The proposal was withdrawn following the company’s commitment to meet representatives of RRSE and of the shareholder, in January, to discuss ways in which it could meet this demand. A meeting between the company and the paper manufacturer was held in April: this meeting gave convincing results with regard to the certification of forests FSC. In a communiqué, Transcontinental announced that it would improve its offer of paper in the near future.

1. Principles (10) to determine, to evaluate and to manage the social and environmental risks in financing projects. These principles, used by the World Bank are applied on a voluntary basis by companies that support it.

2. The certification of the FSC is recognized worldwide and it rests on sustainable development principles, on various international agreements and on the best practices of the forest sector to guarantee methods used for the exploitation of the forest and the manufacturing and production of paper would respect the local communities, the First Nations and the boreal forest.

2007

**CANADIAN NATURAL RESSOURCES LTD**

The **Esther's Dream Foundation** accepted to endorse a letter sent to Canadian Natural Resources Ltd to solicit this company to change its decision by publishing the two proposals presented by the Ethical Funds on climate change and the respect of human rights in the circular letter of the annual meeting. The name of the **Esther's Dream Foundation** was not mentioned as such, but it is included in the name "Catholic religious congregations", shareholders of the company.

**ENCANA**

The RRSE, through Diane Boudreault, asked **St. Joseph** Province to endorse a proposal at ENCANA, which they did. The resolution asked that the administration council join EITI<sup>1</sup> and implement this policy in the countries where the company has activities or interests at a reasonable cost and within a reasonable delay. The resolution has not yet been presented at the annual meeting because of an error in procedures but a telephone conference was held with the representatives of the company and corporations involved in the presentation of the proposal, and the RRSE.

**BARRICK GOLD**

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne and the Esther Blondin Fund gave up their proxies to members of the RRSE so that they could attend the annual shareholders meeting and question, in their name, data produced in the Barrick Gold report to calm worries of shareholders who, in 2006, had presented and withdrawn a proposal regarding the Pascua Lama project. The Sisters of St. Anne of Quebec accepted that the participants speak on their behalf. The discussions with the company continued throughout the year with representatives of the two parties involved: the Sisters of St. Anne of Quebec and the Bâtirente National Retirement Union Council.

1.EITI - The purpose of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is to increase transparency of payments made by societies to governments and entities having links with the government, as well as transparency of revenues by the governments of the host countries

2008

**TRANSCONTINENTAL** (voir 2007)

Bravo! The enterprise now offers and promotes certified paper FSC (Forest Stewardship Council, norm recognized worldwide).

**BARRICK GOLD**

The Sisters of St. Anne of Québec presented a shareholder resolution asking the company to set up a



committee of independent experts to ensure that the norms to set up such projects and which are well-known internationally be respected. This refers to Pascua Lama that has made many people talk! Delegates of the RRSE will present the proposal of the Sisters of St. Anne of Quebec, endorsed by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and of Mary and by the Bâtirente National Union Retirement Council. The corporation The Sisters of St. Anne (St. Joseph Province) was also solicited to ensure that there would be a larger number of participants at the annual meeting of the corporation. The vote obtained more than 7.5%. It will therefore be possible to present the same proposal again by getting other shareholders to endorse it.

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**Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours** Province does not have a portfolio of equities. The investments made in Canada constitute a bondholder portfolio

Everything is not perfect and major challenges have to be met to ensure the follow-up of share which have already been made and to consolidate the collaboration of the investment managers, while underlining the scope of the guidelines given to them. In this annex, you found the marvellous work already being accomplished.

... to be continued...