

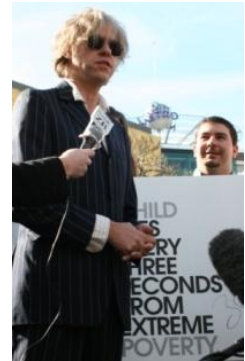
MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

SIR BOB GELDOLF ADDRESSES THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT

14 July 2006

Sir Bob Geldof: It's nice to be back in Auckland, New Zealand almost to the day 20 years since Live Aid, and I wish I was playing here again this time, but I'm not. But I want to come back and play.

Make Poverty History New Zealand isn't a stand-alone group – it's part of probably the greatest civic lobby movement ever created. It's far bigger than the anti-apartheid movement, it's bigger than the civil rights movement in the 60's and a measure of it's strength is that in the last 14 months the United States, not known for it's knowledge of the world outside of it's own borders, Make Poverty History, under the banner of the ONE campaign has grown to 2.3 million members, it's on it's way to beating the national rifle association, which as you know is the most powerful political lobby in the United States, and that is our target, to overwhelm the NRA.



Make Poverty History is part of that. Indeed it's power was illustrated by what was achieved this time last year at the G8 where the seven richest countries in the world agreed to double aid to Africa, to more or less 0.5% by 2010, moving on to 0.7% by at least 2015, and to finally cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries. So that today because of MPH New Zealand and elsewhere around the world 290 million people are free for the first time of debt slavery, that means you're not born owing money, and you're not dying owing five times as much as you were born to pass onto your children. It's an intolerable situation, and finally they've accepted that their economic theories hitherto are so much economic sophistry – that's been destroyed. Tangible benefits since last year – 3.8 million people in Tanzania were fed this year because of debt cancellation. Zambia on March 31st initiated for the first time a national free health service, 98% of children in Uganda are going to school for the first time with free meals, 1.6 million children in Tanzania because of what Make Poverty History and Live 8 achieved last year.

This is not an intangible wish-list. This is an attack on something that is so intellectually absurd, and morally repulsive, it will happen. And the great shame of New Zealand is that it is at the second lowest in the world with their generosity. And this surely does not represent the spirit of the electorate. And in a democracy we're able to insist that our wishes are made manifest. And they are not being made manifest by the pathetic 0.27% that this government gives to the poorest people on the planet. That is a great disgrace. And famously Kiwi's go out to the world and make themselves available to it, and there isn't a single New Zealander that I've ever met that if you said to them do you understand how little you give – I mean look at this place, look around you, look what you've achieved together with the indigenous population in a couple of hundred years. And you don't feel you owe anything to what I believe is the greatest political problem of our age?

Because I insist that if we don't deal with extreme poverty in Africa you are looking at a continent of 900 million people, 50% of them are under 15, you are looking at a continent where the great natural resources of the world reside, so that now in your sphere of influence, China is moving all over Africa, and the situation in Darfur is perpetrated by their need to have oil. China takes 6% of their oil from Sudan, 6% of Chinese requirement is 60% of Sudanese oil production. And the Chinese have told the security council that if Darfur and the West of Sudan ever comes before the Security Council they will veto it, because their requirement for oil is far too important to allow the genocide in Darfur to stop. So this is one of the great political problems of our age. If you have a continent of which 50% are children and they have no future at all, no jobs, and the life expectancy of 32, what are they going to do? What if they are voiceless? What options do you leave them? We do not require a continent of Al Queda.

So this is nothing to do with feeling sorry for people, or trying to finally stop the pornography of poverty that trawls across our dinner time television channels. This isn't what this is about, this is an enlightened self-interest.

New Zealand seriously must come to grips with this problem, whether it's in it's own sphere of influence in Asia, or indeed where I believe it's most chronic evidence is, and that's in the continent of Africa.

This campaign is not some notion of feel-good or we wear a white band and we join in this world thing – it's got fuck all to do with that. It's got to do with the most profound, political, economic crisis we face. And it is empirical, and it can be dealt with. And it will not be dealt with by one individual wanting to help another

person – that's critical – that idea of charity is critical – if we do not do that we curdle our spirits. But this can be done, empirically through our governments working together. 0.27% is absolutely not even getting to the starting line, in fact it's well outside the OECD norm. And the New Zealand Government, frankly must up their game.

Good luck.

Question: Have you ever directly addressed the NZ government on how pathetic its aid is?

Bob: No I haven't, but I think I just have.

Question: Their defence is that there is a lot of private aid, that New Zealanders give aid through organisations like Oxfam.

Bob: That's not the government's business. The government's business is to behave in concert with other governments. Private individuals behave in concert with each other – it's called Make Poverty History. Private individuals donate to charities. This is an empirical problem, it can be resolved.

It is wholly absurd that when the world has never been healthier or wealthier, that individuals die of starvation or want, or conflict, all these are symptoms of a singular condition. That condition is poverty. We don't die of drought in the South Island, Queensland or Kent – they die of drought in Africa – why because they're poor. We don't, thank god, die of AIDS any longer in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, wherever, or London. They die of AIDS in Africa – why because they are poor.

These are really empirical logics. They're not bleeding hearts stuff, it is an intellectual and economic absurdity that as globalisation pulls people out of poverty – for example China – a net recipient of foreign aid until four years ago, will take 1% of its people out of extreme poverty this year – 1% of the Chinese population, it's astounding and incredible, in the backwash of this economic phenomenon, the very poor are being devastated. It should not happen, it need not happen, it requires multi-lateral concerted action and all we're asking is that you do that and meanwhile private individuals, please keep continuing helping people come through the symptoms of dire, extreme poverty, but the structures of extreme poverty are political and economic, they must be dealt with at the multi-lateral governmental level.