



*A Cooperative Coffees Newsletter for and about FAIR TRADE*

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## **Fair Trade Forum at Carter Center: A Success Story from North to South**

by Bill Harris and Monika Firl

A Fair Trade Forum following the SCAA Annual Conference brought together mission-driven fair trade coffee companies, producer representatives and NGO allies to discuss and clarify the intentions behind emerging new directions in our ever-evolving world of Fair Trade. More than 30 people attended the session including producer representatives from Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Peru, and Tanzania. Allies included representatives from Oxfam, International Federation of Alternative Traders, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief and Ecologic Finance.

The forum, sponsored by Cooperative Coffees, Equal Exchange and the Fair Trade Resource Network, and supported by the Presbyterian Hunger Fund, provided an excellent opportunity to consult with our partners and allies for feedback, suggestions and concrete proposals for future activities around issues such as: the proliferation of product certification labels in the coffee industry, leveraging our networks for better public and consumer awareness, changes within the international Fair Trade monitoring system and shared concerns among small-scale farmers and our organizations about the long-term consequences of plantations in Fair Trade systems. It was a very positive experience and a great way to bring perspective and closure to the often-frenetic SCAA conference.

“I take a great impression back to the 115,000 families I work with in Peru,” said Teodorio Melendes, CENFROCAFE in Peru. “I will bring this information back to them.”

“We have discovered that we hold many points and concerns in common,” added Jeronimo Bollen of Manos Campesinas. “That has been very interesting for us. We are committed to following up on next steps.”

We acknowledged that the Fair Trade movement is facing lots of controversial issues. But our intentions were to not to be divisive, rather through sincere internal discussion amongst a variety of actors to create a stronger and more united movement.



Following the forum, participants had the chance to discuss the promise of Fair Trade in a delightful exchange directly with President Jimmy Carter.

“These are business leaders in the United States who are not only interested in having financial gain for themselves, but are eager to see someone, these farmers, get a fair price for their product,” Carter said. “The cooperative’s efforts to maintain quality from planting to roasting to the consumer is to be admired.”

“Each actor has a role to play and we have to positively interact with each other and share ideas and visions on regional and international levels,” said Pedro Haslam of CECOCAFEN, Nicaragua. “Pre-financing also plays a fundamental role in Fair Trade and contributes to a solid movement. But we need to remember that Fair Trade is not a price: the price doesn’t provide the answer for all things – it’s a solution for life itself. In Nicaragua, Fair Trade has meant an opportunity to change peoples’ lives, and the lives of their families.”

But still, many participants expressed the need to better understand where the movement is heading.

“When we started it was all about small producers,” said Raymond Kimaro of KNCU, Tanzania. “Over the years, it has shifted, and we are getting to plantations, actually we are already there. If we are in plantations with tea and mango, why not coffee as well? It is a logical next step for the system. But where does this take us? Are we trying under the FLO umbrella to solve all the world’s problems? Today we are talking about the problems of small farmers, then farm workers. Tomorrow will we be talking about the problems of all workers? Miners? What else??”

There was general concern about the way the Fair Trade movement is evolving in North America and recognition of the need to create common strategies and design plans for specific actions.

“It has been great to have everybody here and sharing,” said Rink Dickinson, co-director of Equal Exchange. “We are creating a space and building energy. We know that there are many other people out there who could be sitting at this same table. Some may be tied to the SCAA and EE and CC, but there are also many others. I would like to see us create another space with workshops and even deeper discussion.”

“I appreciate the enormous respect and commitment to the small producer that I sensed in this room today,” added Sarah Ford of Lutheran World Relief. “We have a strong common denominator. There are other allies trying to understand trade justice in their own work; there is definitely a value to bringing this discussion out to a wider circle.”

We discussed the kinds of efforts and collaboration it will take to strengthen our voice, and to maintain the highest standards for Fair Trade: list serves, campaigns, broader coordination amongst our allies, conferences and joint projects are all on the table. Our first collaborative step: a public conference that night at Agnes Scott College!

The next morning, we were back at the Carter Center bright and early for a delightful exchange with President Carter. Raymond Kimaro from Tanzania’s KNCU and Pedro Haslam from Nicaragua’s CECOCAFEN talked about the coffee crisis and how historically low prices are affecting communities and families in their countries. We then discussed the Fair Trade model with President Carter – including the role of the importer and roaster, the critical need for pre-financing of coffee contracts, and how non-profits are engaging their constituents in the Fair Trade movement. We were all touched by the interest that President Carter expressed in the challenges faced by the farmers and his desire to learn more about Fair Trade system.



At the end of a long journey, and still smiling at Café Campesino

After photos and goodbyes, a smaller group of 15 hopped in the van for a tour of scenic southwest Georgia, a visit to Café Campesino and Habitat for Humanity and another public event at Georgia Southwestern University. The tour began with ice cream cones at the local café in downtown Plains, before visiting President Carter’s boyhood home. President Carter was raised on a farm and the home and grounds are the latest addition to the National Park Service facilities in Sumter County, GA. All of the producer representatives seemed quite interested in President Carter’s farming roots and were impressed by his friendly, small town.

At the end of three days together, we were grateful to this impressive group of cooperative leaders from all over the world were willing to have taken this time with us. From a Fair Trade perspective, perhaps

the most important aspect of visits like this is the quality time talking with one another as friends and partners!

For a complete report of the Georgia meetings and updates on the Mission-Based Fair Trade Forums, visit the Cooperative Coffees web site listed below!

## Cooperative Coffees joins Witness for Peace in Colombia, March/April 2004

by T.J. Semanchin – Peace Coffee

A few years ago I met John Peg, the regional director for Witness for Peace (WFP). We discussed teaming up by leading a delegation to Latin America and exploring issues through both a sociopolitical and economic lens. Witness for Peace leads delegations in many of the same countries that Peace Coffee buys from; but I was especially interested in one country. Colombia was the only trading partner we had never visited (primarily because of safety concerns). John told me WFP could provide the security blanket I needed to make the trip. So this past March, John Myrick of Los Armadillos and I met our fellow travelers in Miami to embark on a 10-day visit to Colombia.

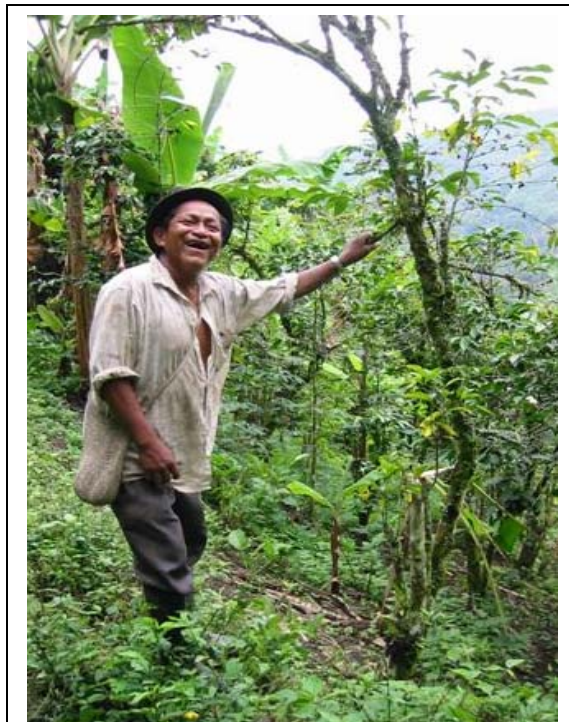
Witness for Peace has been "giving a voice to the voiceless" in Latin America since the early eighties. Traveling to countries to meet with people affected by U.S. foreign policy, delegates return motivated to work for change. Going to the land of Juan Valdez, I obviously wanted to learn as much as possible about the coffee industry, meet the producers and explore potential relationships with new groups. But I also expected to learn about Colombia's conflict and the role the United States has played, especially regarding the impact of Plan Colombia in the countryside.

Our first coffee visit was in downtown Bogotá at the headquarters of the Federation of Colombian Coffee Growers - the true creators of the ubiquitous Juan Valdez ad campaign. This is Big Coffee; very sophisticated and light-years away from my typical coffee trip experience, which is hanging out with the farmers in remote corners of the world. The Federation has helped producers receive higher prices in Colombia than in most other countries. But to do so, they have created an enormous bureaucracy that is difficult to maintain in these times of price crisis. To their credit, the Federation is recognizing Fair Trade and organic coffees, a very important step for the sustainability of Colombian coffee and a sign that the Federation is taking the concerns of small-scale producer groups into account.

At Peace Coffee and Cooperative Coffees, we believe that the small-scale producer is the future for sustainability, in every sense of the word. The visit to Fondo Paez, our newest new producer partner, proved once again the wisdom of that belief. We spent three days in the Paez Indigenous reserve, meeting with farmers and seeing some of the most beautiful agriculture imaginable. The Paez have a holistic approach to farming, built on self-sufficiency. Coffee is a key component, but we also saw corn, bean, fruit trees, medicinal herbs and many other plants and trees growing in the diverse fields (more forest-like than farm-like). Fondo Paez was founded in 1992, with the primary goal of recuperating traditional indigenous agricultural knowledge. They became more organized and by 2000 they were selling coffee through the Coffee Federation's Specialty Coffee program. In 2003 they produced 7 containers of coffee, both conventional and organic certified. They are governed democratically and extraordinarily well organized.

To get an overview of the political situation, our delegation met with dozens of Colombian organizations: community groups, elected officials, campesino and indigenous organizations, unions, the Colombian military and others. It was a very wide spectrum of the society and we asked them all the same thing, "What are your thoughts on Plan Colombia". The overwhelming answer from the civil society was that our tax dollars should not be spent training and arming the Colombian military. I left Colombia both depressed and encouraged. The amount of violence in Colombia is staggering and I have never in my life been so exposed to that reality. The prospect for a short-term solution is hard to imagine. On the other hand it was empowering to see so many people continuing to struggle for a better society, especially the Paez coffee farmers. By buying Fair Trade coffee from groups like these we are not just ensuring economic success, but also helping to build a new society founded on justice, ecological harmony and peace.

For more information on Colombia, visit the Witness for Peace's website at: <http://www.witnessforpeace.org/sites/colombia.html>



Three days in the countryside convinced me that the Paez is a group we should be working with!

## Fair Trade Briefs:

### Café Rico Trains Roaster for Mut Vitz Coffee

The charming and delightful Bertha Cuautle Carreon. Spent nearly the month of April in Montreal learning the tricks of the trade with Stephane Kordahi, Cooperative Coffees Montreal member and owner of Café Rico.

The successful marketing experience Mano a Mano has facilitated for the farmers of Mut Vitz, one of our partner organizations in Mexico, is an example of the kinds of sustainable development alternatives we hope to continue supporting in the future. We hope that by refining local expertise in coffee roasting, this will facilitate their capacity to continue growing the local market for roasted and ground coffee in tourist regions of Mexico.

### Kenyan Coffee on the Fair Trade Radar Screen

Following a brief meeting during the SCAA between Cooperative Coffees and representatives of a Kenyan delegation including US-based representatives for Kenyan Fair Trade and advisors to the Kenyan government, Bill Harris and Larry Larson of Larry's Beans agreed to a follow-up meeting in May with Kenya's Minister of Cooperative Development, Hon Peter Njeru Ndwiga.

The meeting was coordinated and facilitated by Simon Nyagah, a coffee exporter hired by the Kenya government to promote Kenya coffee in the United States. He has a dealer 'A' coffee marketing license from the government of Kenya, which enables him to buy coffee from the Nairobi coffee auction. One of Simon's primary objectives is to meet and bring to the Minister's attention groups capable of getting fair prices to Kenya growers and promoting small-scale farmers. Over the course of the past six months, Simone has met with many groups. But it is the relationship between Kenya Fair Traders Inc and Cooperative Coffees that seems to have captured his imagination.

Kenya Fair Traders Inc. (KFT) is an exporter/importer of exclusively Fair Trade certified Kenyan products, based in Raleigh, NC. KFT works with farmer cooperatives in Kenya that are democratically managed and yearn to reach sustainable development in their communities through coffee and other subsistence farming. KFT will introduce, for the first time in Kenya, Fair Trade standards that will benefit the farmer and ensure sustainable growth to the Kenyan coffee industry.

KFT and C.C. have agreed to work together in initiating a pilot project to introduce Fair Trade to Kenyan coffee growers, as well as availing the much-awaited Fair Trade Kenyan coffee to North American consumers.



Bongo Java, Larry's Beans, Café Campesino and Cooperative Coffees showed creativity and style, displaying their wares during the 2004 SCAA Conference in Atlanta. Here, Cooperative Coffees representatives meet the Peru delegation during a tour of the back-to-back booths.

### CC Roasters visit Coffee Lab International

The Green Bean Committee coordinated the first-ever Cooperative Coffees roasting and cupping workshop June 10 and 11, with the support of Mané Alves at Coffee Lab International in Vermont. Attending was a lively blend of our experienced to most neophyte roasters. Participants included: TJ Semanchin, Peace Coffee; Larry Larson, Larry's Beans; Drew Park, Bongo Java; Lee Harris, Cafe Campesino; Chris Treter, Higher Grounds Trading; and Monika Firl, Cooperative Coffees.

Cupping exercises included blind tastes, grading and discussing how our beans compare to "typical" or "exceptional" coffees from same region.

We were able to experiment, looking at the affects of changing speed and temperatures, and to discuss the ideal roast profiles for our stock varieties.

"You want to find the sweet spot of every coffee," Mané Alves recommended. "Drive out the moisture, get to the first pop, then work the characteristics of the bean."

We discussed how different green processing techniques affect cup quality, and we were able to take a close look at some promising new sources.

"The class was great!" said Café Campesino roaster, Lee Harris. "I was thoroughly impressed with Mané, his facility and his staff. I feel that I have a much better understanding of the cupping process and the SCAA form, and a better understanding of how to manipulate the roaster machine to get the coffee roast I want."

The experience was rich, rewarding and... a whole lot of fun!