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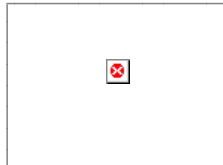
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**NEWS STORY**  
Fryer takes case to World Bank

Richard Watts  
Times Colonist

Monday, August 18, 2003

In years past, Victoria's John Fryer was more likely to carry a protest sign to the World Bank than a briefcase.



CREDIT: John McKay, Times Colonist

But beginning next month Fryer, an adjunct professor at the University of Victoria with a long history of service in the labour movement, could be carrying more than a briefcase. He may carry a bag lunch.

Fryer: to push for social and economic justice.

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The 63-year-old Fryer has accepted an offer from the World Bank to work in Washington D.C., as a labour-minded consultant on social and economic justice.

And the first thing he wants to do when he gets to Washington is to convince policy makers at the World Bank to change their minds about public sector industries.

Fryer said a policy that always bothered him is the World Bank's total commitment to the private sector. For example, if a developing country runs into financial problems and asks for help, the World Bank, as a precondition for giving aid, usually demands the ailing country sell off everything to the corporate sector, even utilities like power and water.

"What I am going to do is try and persuade the World Bank to take a different view of the public sector," said Fryer.

Fryer's commitment to the public sector and its unions is a long-standing one. He studied at the London School of Economics and later worked for The Economist, filing reports from Washington. In the 1960s, he worked for the American labour movement.

A milestone for Fryer came in 1969 when he helped turn the B.C.

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Government Employee's Association into the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union and became its first leader. Later, he helped create the National Union of Public and General Employees.

Fryer has worked as an advisor to governments all over the world on labour relations and the role of the public sector, including India, Japan and Australia. Most notably, he worked in South Africa in 1994 when the new government led by Nelson Mandela was writing its first labour code.

In 1994, Fryer was inducted into the Order of Canada for his negotiating skills and contributions to economic and social justice. Also in 1994, the Canadian Industrial Relations Association presented him with the Gerard Dion Award for his contributions to the field of industrial relations.

He said the posting to the World Bank arose when the bank's president held a meeting with officials of the Geneva-based Global Union Network. Protests and letter-writing campaigns weren't influencing the bank at all, said the president.

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Instead it was suggested the union organization find someone to carry the union viewpoint into the World Bank Organization itself. And Fryer was approached and offered the job.

As he prepares to leave, Fryer said he regards the job not only a flattering compliment but also one final chance to make a contribution before retirement.

It's also a fascinating chance to learn about the structure of the World Bank.

"Intellectually, that really gets my juices going," said Fryer.

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