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Investment In CRA Audit Capability Identifies Wrongly Granted Charity Status (Feat. Alternatives)

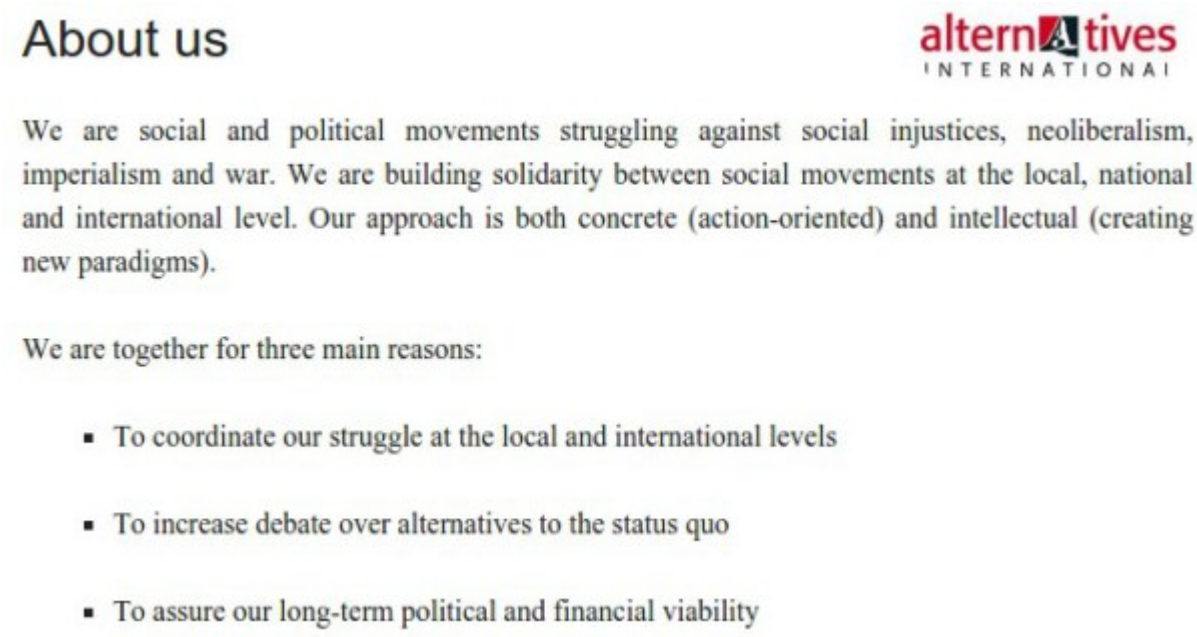
Is their black & red stylized “A” an anarchist symbol?

There was an uproar when the federal government increased the Canada Revenue Agency’s audit funding. Alarmist activists and CBC journalists shot out propaganda warning of an “advocacy chill”, claiming good people at good charities are feeling the screws of “the Harper Government”. Claims were made that Harper himself directly instructed the CRA which charities they should audit. Of course, nobody provided any evidence of this accusation.

The CRA doesn’t release the names of organizations it’s auditing, but several charities disclosed their audits to the media. Audited groups included the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the David Suzuki Foundation, TIDES Canada, Environmental Defence, and Equiterre. One thing the former five groups have in-common is that they’ve had working relationship with militant activists.

Not so surprisingly, one of the audited charities didn't add their name to the media's list until this week. Montreal based Alternatives International not only works with militant activists, they're at ground zero. You see, Alternatives is basically the Canadian arm of the World Social Forum- a militant social movement that's behind the anti-globalization movement. That doesn't sound very charitable- does it?

Well it turns out it isn't! Or at least, that's what the CRA has to say. It was announced this week that the CRA made a mistake assigning charitable status to Alternatives in 2004. Now, with their charitable status being revoked, Alternatives is warning the world that they may soon be out of business.



About us

alternatives INTERNATIONAL

We are social and political movements struggling against social injustices, neoliberalism, imperialism and war. We are building solidarity between social movements at the local, national and international level. Our approach is both concrete (action-oriented) and intellectual (creating new paradigms).

We are together for three main reasons:

- To coordinate our struggle at the local and international levels
- To increase debate over alternatives to the status quo
- To assure our long-term political and financial viability

If you've ever read Alternative's website, none of this will come to you as a surprise. Each of their "three main reasons" for existing is purely political. Alternatives exists to help push a global political movement, they admit this on their website- the rules clearly state that charities can only focus 10% of their work on advocacy, it's hard to see if Alternatives does anything but advocacy.

Alternatives was a major sponsor and organizer behind this summer's Peoples Social Forum, a revolutionary conference whose website called our country "so called Canada". One of the conference's goals was to come together with a "cohesive strategy to get Harper out of office". Once again, not political.

We should both congratulate the CRA for a job well done. It seems obvious that other charities being audited are in similar situations, let's hope they keep up the good work. But we should also question the CRA's competence- how could they made such an obvious mistake like they did at Alternatives? How many other mistakes have they made?

That said, when all is said and done, it's the charity's directors who have the responsibility to be compliant. If a corporate director made similar compliance violations, the people at Alternatives would no doubt be calling for their heads. What will happen to Alternative's heads?

Dodgy charities live in interesting times…