



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice, CCEJ (South Korea)

(2003)



...for its rigorous wide-ranging reform programme, based on economic and social justice, accountability and reconciliation with North Korea.

Soh Kyung-suk

The CCEJ is a Korean citizens' movement working for economic justice, environmental protection, democratic and social development and reunification of the divided Korean peninsula. Founded in 1989, it was Korea's first fully-fledged citizens' organization and is now one of its most influential. It has 35,000 members and 35 local branches, and its work is carried out by about 50 staff nationwide, with the guidance and support of about 150 specialists who serve on the 17 subcommittees of the Policy Research Committee. The subcommittees cover subjects such as Banking, Local Autonomy, Finance and Taxation and Welfare.

The founding principles of CCEJ were that it should 1) be led by ordinary citizens, 2) use legal and non-violent methods, 3) seek workable alternatives, 4) speak for the interests of all people regardless of economic standing, and 5) work to overcome greed and egoism in order to build a sharing society. Its methods consist of research and development of policy alternatives, and lobbying for their enactment into law; public education and consensus-building through seminars, conferences, public hearings and discussion meetings; keeping the media informed about citizens' concerns through press conferences, interviews and constant information-sharing; signature campaigns and rallies; publications; and organization of members for special activities. The most recent development is the establishment of CCEJ International to work for the realization of economic justice on the global level.

Despite the broad scope of this citizens' movement, it has been able to accomplish significant results in a relatively short time. Among other achievements it has:

- Successfully got a law enacted to prevent rampant real estate speculation and promote housing stability for renters and urban poor people (1989-90);
- Led a successful campaign for establishment of the 'real-name system' for all financial transactions and property registration (overturning the practice of using false names to avoid taxation) (1993);
- Proposed the following additional legislation for political and economic reform and got it passed by parliament:
 - a law to democratize government administration and make it more transparent;
 - a freedom of information act;
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- amendment of election laws related to political funds and political party operations.
- Organized a nationwide 'People's Coalition to Protect Agriculture', a network of 190 organizations, which pressured the government to slow its agricultural market opening in order to protect farmers' minimum survival (1993-94);
- Inaugurated and continuously leads a Citizens' Legislative Movement to monitor parliament and lobby for reform legislation;
- Successfully mediated civil society conflicts (for example, one between Korean traditional medicine practitioners and western-medicine pharmacists in 1993);
- Established the Right Farming Cooperative, a network of organic farmers, which aims to promote wider production and use of organic produce, by linking producers and consumers, compiling textbooks and other publications, launching a 'Save our soil and water' campaign and holding various special events;
- Established the Urban Reform Centre, which carries out a public education program for the purpose of creating sustainable cities;
- Worked continuously for economic reforms, especially for reform of the chaebol (giant family-owned business groups which dominate the Korean economy), tax reform, establishment of corporate ethics and improvement of labour rights;
- Played a key role in the establishment of the local autonomy system, i.e. the restoration of local democratic structures;
- Organized the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum ... for the purpose of identifying problems in the region ... and in particular to challenge the dominant development model and work to replace it with 'people-centered, community-centered and life-centered' development.

In addition it

- was the first organization to call public attention to the situation of foreign migrant workers in Korea and propose legislation for their protection;
- operates the Anti-Corruption Center, which investigates citizens' reports on business and government irregularities and has worked to clean up corruption in the judicial system;
- carries out a broad and active environmental protection movement through the local CCEJ branches and in cooperation with other Korean and international environmental organizations;
- works to educate the public for reunification of divided Korea, especially through the 'Reconciliation Academy', a lecture series on North Korean realities and desirable reunification policies;

In 1999 CCEJ also spun off its Center for Environment and Development to become the independent Citizen's Movement for Environment Justice. The CMEJ aims to bridge the gap between social and environmental groups in the Korean NGO movement; its rationale is that social and environmental problems must be treated as one continuum if real solutions are to be found. It is also setting up an 'Environmental Justice Forum' to conduct research, to work to get its findings adopted and to hold monthly meetings with other Korean environmental organisations.

In 2001 CCEJ established the 'Best Foreign Corporation Award', to be awarded to the trans-national corporation that scored highest on criteria of law observance, ethics and achievement.

On the Korean reunification, CCEJ's Position is as follows:

- North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons must not be allowed to be a reason for war.
- All peaceful means are required to solve the nuclear issue, but no military sanctions should be allowed.
- Humanitarian aid should go on.
- South Korea should maintain its policy of reconciliation and co-operation with the North and seek to persuade the North without abandoning talks.

Quotation

CCEJ's real strength, I think, lies in its spirit. Although it stresses the importance of structural reform, it fundamentally pursues reform of people's consciousness. CCEJ attempts to motivate the

good will in every one's mind and organize it into power to bring about change in society.

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