

Ogoni Plight

Continued from Page 1

"Once you're talking about the environment, the oil companies look bad and so you are not completely safe anywhere in the world," he says.

"They are a very powerful group but the quest for a clean environment and for human dignity is very important. We'll continue to speak out because silence would be a betrayal to those who've died."

Now out of reach of the Nigerian military, Wiwa is able to express his views. He hopes to alter the relationship between multi-national corporations and the resource-rich areas of the developing world.

Wiwa's dealings with Shell stand as reminders of the corruption within the Nigerian government and the corporation. His request that Shell use its influence with the government to stop the trial of Ken Saro-Wiwa was discouraged by Brian Anderson, the managing director of the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria.

The New York Times reported that Anderson told Wiwa it would be difficult to help. Something might be done, he is reported to have said, if a MOSOP protest campaign was called off, and if a press release were issued on the movement's letterhead, saying that there had been no environmental damage in Ogoniland.

This, of course, was not an option for the organisation.

Shell deny the proposition was ever made. They also deny any responsibility for the environmental devastation facing Ogoniland.

The corporation, in fact, claims "there has been no activity in the Ogoni area . . . since January 1993." In a request made public by The

Daily Times in Nigeria a year ago Shell applied to the Nigerian government for permission to take possession of and use the government's main pipelines in Ogoniland.

While MOSOP's activists, Wiwa explains, are mainly professionals, the military is targeting the poorer, less vocal population for reprisals.

"Over 2000 people have been killed, 27 villages destroyed," he explains. "The killings are the result of shooting on protesting crowds and from the use of grenades to destroy villages."

In particular Wiwa is concerned for the Ogoni women whom he feels are at the forefront of the struggle.

Wiwa is busy trying to change the situation. He has taken on a tour of 40 North American universities and institutions to educate students as to what can be done.

"Students are the future," he says. "They can make the change. In our country, especially in Ogoni, the National Union of Ogoni Students are very much in the forefront in making people aware of their environmental rights."

The purpose of his tour, explains Wiwa, is to raise awareness among North American students.

"I believe students everywhere can help make a change."

GST Rebate Does Little to Help Students

By Carey Frey

The Carillon, U of Regina

In a surprise move, the federal government announced last week that it will rebate the GST on books purchased by groups providing public services.

However, while the new policy means libraries, schools and universities will get larger refunds, students still have to pay the tax on textbooks.

"It's a nice step, but it's no help to students," said David Hunt, coordinator of the Don't Tax Reading Coalition -- a group of booksellers, publishers and student groups that want the tax removed from all reading materials.

Hunt says he is disappointed that the decision doesn't fulfill a Liberal promise to remove the GST from books.

"It's not as big a deal as the finance minister made it sound."

Resolutions passed at Liberal conventions in 1992 and 1994 stated that the government would remove the GST on reading materials.

Finance Minister Paul Martin told reporters that tax restructuring was aimed at supporting groups on "the front lines" of the fight against illiteracy.

However, Hunt says that the government is trying to duck out of their promise by only moving part of the way on the issue.

"They take a step and check the public response," Hunt said. "If there is further pressure then they may take a further step."

The Canadian Federation of Students echoed the same sentiments saying they would keep up the pressure on the government to remove the tax from books altogether.

The GST costs the average student as much as \$75 per year just on textbooks required for classes, the federation says.

According to Karene Vanderburg, a student advocate at the University of Regina, students are borrowing money that goes into government coffers instead of towards their educations.

Typical loan plans give students \$600-\$1000 to purchase books and supplies. However, factoring in sales taxes means there is less money to spend on actual texts, she says.

Even campus Liberal groups have lobbied to have the GST removed from books, magazines and newspapers. Although schools and universities will see more in rebates, Hunt states that the actual organizations probably won't see the direct funding. "There is nothing to ensure these funds actually go back to the schools and libraries. Most just goes into the general revenue streams of municipal governments and school boards."

The various organizations eligible for the rebate were already getting back 57-68 per cent of the GST spent on the books they purchased. The new policy changes the rebate amount to 100 per cent.

Panther Prints

550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PEI
C1A 4P3
(902)566-0629
Fax: 566-0979
E-mail:
newspaper@upeii.ca

The **Panther Prints** is the official newspaper of the students of UPEI.

It is published 10 times per semester. 2500 copies are distributed on and off campus on Tuesdays. Deadlines for advertisements and submissions are Thursdays at 4pm, without exception.

The **Panther Prints** is a member of the Canadian University Press (CUP), a cooperative of 50 university and college newspapers.

The opinions expressed within the **Panther Prints** do not necessarily represent the views of UPEI or UPEI Student Union Inc.

Staff

Managing Ed:
Aldera Chisholm
Copy Ed:
Jennifer Caseley
Production Ed:
Mike F. Beagan
Prod. Assistant:
Karen Rawlines
Ad Manager:
Finley Martin
Photographer:
Melissa Buote
Circulation:
Marko Peric
Typesetter:
Vinny the Fish

Thank you to all of our contributors



HERE IT IS!
SKI EXPEDITION 97

MONT SAINTE ANNE
QUEBEC

Robertson Library
Bulletin Board

DON'T DELAY - SIGN-UP TODAY!
STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER DETAILS

ONLY
\$459.00

5 Days/Nights Skiing
Transportation by Coach
Condominium Accommodations
Free Shuttle to and From Condos
Shopping & Party Trips to Quebec City

F-mail seancain@atcon.com or Call 569-4752

