

letters to the editor

This letter is in response to your editorial on Native disputes.

When I read your editorial I couldn't help but notice how biased it was. If your rights were being infringed upon, would you dispute that, or would you stand by and take the brunt of that offense? You stated that it was sad that Native Groups need to resort to blockades and other tactics. Are Native groups the only groups that have resorted to this?

The media (Panther Prints included) is having another field day at the expense of Aboriginal people. Instead of seeing the clashes and disputes for what they really are (the continued abuse of Aboriginal rights), the media has sensationalized the violence and trivialized the issues.

Once again, much of non-aboriginal society has branded the Aboriginal as militant, and could care less about the actual cause, symptoms and background associated with these issues. If you are going to form an opinion on the position of Aboriginal people in Canada, you should enlighten yourself in terms of legal and historical accuracy.

The Aboriginal groups in Canada that resort to stand-offs or blockades have been subject to 500 years of abuse as well as the fact that government elects to continue its neglect of Aboriginal Treaty Rights.

It's easy for you to sit back and state that violence is not the answer; that stand-offs and barricades are poor ways to draw attention to problems; that both sides are at fault for their unwillingness to talk instead of fight.

In response to violence not being the answer: A poll conducted by the Edmonton Sun asked, "Should the police use force to evict Native squatters in B.C.?", 85 percent said yes. It seems to me the same people who are supposedly against violence are the same people advocating it. That attitude goes back to the days of colonialism when it was fine for a white man to kill any Indian that got in his way. At the most they might get a slap on the wrist. On the other hand, if an Indian tried to protect himself from a white man and killed him, that Indian would be punished to the full extent of the law.

You don't think that barricades and stand-offs are the proper way to settle disputes. Well, is it proper for the government to ignore Aboriginal rights? Aboriginal issues have been up for negotiation and before the courts for years; but if the federal and provincial governments are ignoring and neglecting these issues, what other recourse do the Aboriginal people have?

Let me point out that these stand-offs and barricades did not start out with violence from the Aboriginal groups them-

selves. It started with the government, police, and rich individuals who wanted the disputed lands for their own profit -- in spite of attempts made by Aboriginal people to resolve these matters through negotiation.

The Gustafsen Lake conflict started months before the media sensationalized it, when approximately 15 rifle-toting ranch hands swooped down and threatened the personal safety of the Aboriginal people and their friends who were at the sacred site. This action caused them to resort to taking up arms which were on hand for hunting purposes. The police did not arrest the ranch hands for taking the law into their own hands, instead they branded the Aboriginal people as "terrorists". When push came to shove, the victims were not willing to idly stand by and take the brunt of the offense.

It is sad that these disputed issues turn to violence, but that is the case throughout the history of the world. If the government is not serving their people justly, revolutions break out.

Aboriginal people are human beings with the same rights and freedoms as other Canadians, but these rights and freedoms are not being recognized or respected. Maybe if the rest of Canada could see it that way and support their fellow human beings, these situations would not be present today.

Elijah Harper stated in a press release

that reconciliation is needed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, but, "we can't achieve reconciliation until the harm which has been done to our people is acknowledged. Lawyers and politicians aren't always willing to do that because they think it's an admission of liability."

As far as fighting over sacred land, a lot of it could be avoided if industry and large landowners would assess the land first. For example: The Alberta Historical Resource Preservation Act requires archaeological assessment of terrain. Since this Act has been in place, it has saved industry from blundering into fights over sacred land by making it look where it was going.

Stereotypes are still very prevalent in our society today, and your editorial attests to that fact. As usual the Aboriginal person is being portrayed in a negative light. These are still the facts today, in spite of the effort made by Aboriginal people to talk, negotiate, or share their culture.

Please publish this letter to the Editor. It is a subject that deeply concerns me, since I am an Aboriginal person who detests stereotypes!

Thank You,
Carol Tuplin
4th Year Anthropology

Students Urged to Find Their Voice

by Steve Ellis

The scheme for post-secondary education funding is about to change dramatically, and students should be doing something about it. Guy Caron, national chairperson for the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and Leo Broderick, former president of the PEI Teachers Federation (PEITF), addressed this fact in the Pit at Robertson Library last Wednesday.

As Broderick put it, "There is no more critical period in Canada's history and the history of this province than this very moment." As the governments struggle to make budget-cut requirements, education is being targeted. Education is becoming and will continue to become less affordable for the average student.

Aware of this, Caron warned, "We have to make sure the society of tomorrow will rely heavily on post-secondary education, education that is accessible..."

The only way for this to be done is for the students of today to speak out, trying to protect the access we have for the students of tomorrow, our children and grandchildren. CFS is the lobbying voice of Canadian students in Ottawa, but more must be done on the regional level. In an interview with Jennifer Caseley, Caron expressed his disappointment that UPEI was not involved in the CFS strike of last January. Lack of student action does more harm than good.

At the rally, Caron stressed that students really do have an influence in politics. "When you think about 420,000 [CFS] members who can demonstrate you are talking about half a million voters. That's our power." We can speak through our votes. We can speak through writing letters. We can speak to our local Members of Parliament.

This second installation in a series of Pit speakers was well received. The fifty students in attendance seemed interested in what the two speakers had to say. Congratulations to Fidel Murphy, Vice President External, and the rest of the Student Union, for the organization of this event.

Wen-Do Class Held at UPEI

by Coralie Gill

A Wen-Do (women's self defence), class was held at the UPEI Sports Centre on October 14th and 15th. Based on the ideas of awareness, avoidance and action, the class helped its participants to trust themselves and protect themselves. Some issues covered in the class were: safe places, assault, breathing, date rape, body language, choke releases, and other self-defence techniques. Interesting and informative, Wen-Do is a must for women worried about their safety. Another beginners Wen-Do class will be offered in the spring of 1996.