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MUGWUMP

The Brunswickan. Semi-confusion reigns and tempers, are getting shorter and shorter. Everyone's yelling in blame at everyone else, and of course, everyone who's being blamed for one thing or another is proclaiming for all to hear that it's not their fault. A loud discussion on Oka is going on at one end of the office, while a wrestling-match with a wet mop is going on at the other end of the office - the latter accompanied by shrill shrieks. But work is actually getting done, pages are being laid out and another week at work draws to a close.

Speaking of closures, it looks like the warm weather has packed up and headed south. Winter's on it's way, which means soon we'll be walking to school swaddled up in layers and layers of clothing, slipping on icy streets and just generally feeling miserable. I'm just not ready for cold weather again - I got little enough sunshine during the summer as it is. . . I spent the first seven weeks treeplanting in Northern Ontario - where it snowed on June 3rd. I couldn't believe it! And then when it finally warmed up (relatively speaking), I experienced in full the joys of the Canadian bush i.e. the flies, the flies, the flies.

Black flies are things I absolutely cannot understand. They travel "en masse", generally in a cloud around any animate being that's retarded enough to be out there i.e. treeplanters. They bite at any exposed skin, (again "en masse") which has the single positive effect of making treeplanters work faster. And they can and do drive people completely insane. I have just one significant question to ask: Why, oh why do these little buggers (literally) exist?!? What possible purpose could they serve in the great scheme of things?!?

Anyway. . . back to "the great scheme of things" in our hallowed halls of the learning. Tests already in the second week of classes? Classroom changes three times a week? Required texts that cannot be found in the black holes of the bookstore and the library? No wonder we're all suffering from "existential anxiety".

Note the words "existential anxiety". No one's simply worried because their lives seem slightly disorganized anymore - it's "existential anxiety". And no one's overworked anymore. They're afflicted with "chronic fatigue". It's all so delightfully pretentious. No one really needs to express intelligent ideas anymore. There are all these wonderful phrases that help people sound like they know, in depth, what they're talking about.

Here's a good one for people like me. It's not that I can't think of anything more to write for this column - I'm "creatively stagnant". So maybe next week I'll be lazy and find somebody else to write it . . . sorry, I mean I'll "authoritatively delegate" the duty .

Lynne

OPINION

The opinions found in Opinion are not necessarily the views of the Brunswickan

The Difference Between Militancy and Political Violence

By Rob Trifts

The events of Oka over the past summer, and indeed, the unfolding drama in that troubled area, compel the Canadian public to make some hard judgements. Have both the federal and provincial governments of Quebec acted improperly or without restraint? Are the natives justified in their militancy and violence? Is it possible for the Canadian public to approve of the cause and yet condemn the methods? The last question in particular is very germane, as it seems certain that those natives who are left in the treatment centre will bear the brunt of the criminal charges that will - and must - arise from the actions of the Mohawk Warriors Society.

The over-riding fact in the Oka drama is this: a policeman is dead. Some may assert that it is the justness of the native cause and the redress that the Canadian public must make to alleviate that injustice that should govern our reactions. Not so. In the long term, yes, but for the immediate moment, a policeman has been murdered.

The steps that the government of Quebec took to hide this fact in the immediate weeks after the killing are significant. It was asserted in July by the Warriors that the bullets which struck the QPP officer were fired by another QPP officer. Strangely, the coroner's report was "inconclusive". Only weeks after the killing did it surface in Maclean's and in the Toronto papers that the bullet wounds were inconsistent with the weapons carried by the QPP, and were in fact caused by rounds consistent with an AK-47. It seems probable that the Quebec government suppressed this finding, so as to avoid calls by the QPP and by the public to arrest the Warriors immediately, and in so doing, cause bloodshed. Such a conclusion supports the general observation that the governments of both Quebec and Canada have conducted themselves throughout the crisis in a manner which sought to avoid bloodshed.

But the "Native Cause" continues to overshadow any detached look at who the Warriors are and what they have done: a Warrior has committed first degree murder; they have intimidated fellow Mohawks; they have assaulted the Chief of the Reserve and fired shots at his home, occupied by children; the incredible array weapons used by the Warriors is enough in itself to permit lengthy prison terms; the majority of the hardcore radicals are Americans, and are alleged to be involved in smuggling and gambling. If convicted in the United States under RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) alone for these acts the penalty is 15 years. They have trespassed, blockaded, broken and entered, breached the peace, and have held repeated court injunctions in contempt. In addition, each is likely guilty of conspiracy to commit those same charges. They are not innocent victims in any sense.

And yet, it will be observed, they have done these acts out of desperation and political motivation. Are native Canadians justified in an adoption of a militant stance?

I think it must be admitted that they are. The list of crimes committed by the Warriors above is not exhaustive, but if an exhaustive account of the injustices that have been done to native Canadians by Europeans was to be chronicled in this paper, you would find little else to read - its length would prevent the inclusion of alternative material.

However, there is a difference between militancy and violence, political grievance and crime. It is a difficult distinction to make, and it is the very dilemma which confronts the world as it is forced to deal with political violence. The causes of the PLO and the PIRA are also political, and result also from historical injustice. Yet is the PLO justified in terroristic bombings, and the PIRA justified in shooting "legitimate targets" (ie. policemen)? No, most would fervently assert they are not.

I do not mean to reduce the natives of Canada to the moral equivalent of the PLO, or even to equate the Warriors with the PIRA. The means of the Warriors were, thankfully, less extreme than those of the terrorists. Yet, one must admit there is an analogy. Like the Palestinians, the natives are deprived of their land, and like the Catholics of the six counties, the natives are impoverished, ghettoized, and discriminated against.

The further unsettling analogy to the Palestinian situation is the recognition that political violence works. Would any of us know of (or care about even) the PLO if they had not resorted to violence? Would a broad mass of the Canadian public truly care - or even pay attention - to the native plight if not for the crisis at Oka? The answer again is no.

The dangers which confront the Israelis in an Arab world or the ever-present threat of civil war (in the native vs. European sense) that threatens the stability of the six counties are not excuses that the Canadian people can muster. We have no political necessity which negates the need to give native Canadians hope and justice. In order to avoid further crisis we must deal fairly and generously with the various native peoples, recognizing that each group has different needs, and that those within the individual First Nations are severely put amongst themselves as to what they need and how to attain it.

But for the Warriors (and indeed the whites who rioted in Chateaugai there must be no leniency. There is a line between civil disobedience and violence and they crossed it. Let the machinery of the criminal justice system mete out the just deserts, just as our governments must give justice to native Canadians. The proliferation of the crimes at Oka must be prevented if a realistic rational discourse is to prevail.

Ed.'s note: We would like to apologize to having omitted the name of the writer of last week's Opinion column. "What do English Canadians Want" was written by Wm. M. Stewart.