MUGWUMP

It happened. I've caught the cold that's winding its miserable way through every nook and cranny of UNB basically, I've had a ghastly week: hacking my lungs out (bent over in complete agony with each cough); and attempting to sniff innocuously in classes. Invariably. I forget my Kleenex, dribbled all over my notes, and spent the entire class trying in vain to hide my runny nose behind my hand, while also trying to impress my professors with my attentiveness by gazing at her/him directly in the eye. Of course, it was hard to be attentive anyway, considering that I was stuffed to the gills (whatever that means) with every single anti-cold drug I could find. Spaced out? I've felt high all week on Neo-Citran and Contact-C. By the way, these drugs did not work - they simply numbed my brain just enough to push me into that grey, undefined area of barely functional sleep-walking. Gruesome.

I finally got my laundry done on Sunday afternoon - after having let it sit for three weeks. Having nothing better to do, I sat in the laundromat waiting to move my clothes to the dryers, and then waiting for them to dry. There were quite a few other people in the laundromat doing the same thing, and I couldn't help observing that most of them had their eyes fixed to the rotating movement of the dryers. I pondered (what a word) on the possible reasons for this for a while and came to the conclusions that:

a) those who had been out the night before (i.e. the fabled Saturday night) were using the circular, tumbling movement of the clothes in the dryer as a metaphor for the way their stomachs must be churning "the morning after" great ingestions of alcoholic beverages.

b) the soporific influence of said movement induced a slack-faced, open-mouthed kind of drool that aided deep thought or meditation, which served as a subliminal replacement for that meditation that used to occur in more ancient Sunday rituals i.e. church.

Fortunately, my clothes were done before I could follow this vaguely philosophical (and vaguely pathetic) track any further.

I walked into the designated smoking room in Carleton Hall the other day, and was immediately surrounded by a foul cloud of cigarette-smoke. As if I'm going to sit down in that sort of miasma, surrounded by ashtrays overflowing with crushed cigarette butts and actually enjoy having a leisurely cigarette before class! It reminded me of the dingy smoking room they used to have in the Harriet Irving library. If smokers are going to be crammed together to indulge our socially-unacceptable and (yes, I admit it) socially-harmful habit, couldn't we at least be given an airy, well-ventilated, high-ceilinged room? What's the plan anyway? To trap us, our cigarettes, and all the smoke so there's no possible risk of contamination? Or is it simply to make us so repulsed that we stop smoking? I'm sorry, but I really don't enjoy feeling like a social-leper, which is how designated smoking rooms like the one I've just described make me feel. So I go stand outside and smoke in the fresh air (how ironic) - which is probably how I got my cold, seeing as the fresh air is now cold air.

Enough for this week.

Lynne

OPINION

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Unity of oppressed groups the Answer

The Oka Crisis

by Tony Johnson-Tracy

The armed standoff between militant Mohawks and the Quebec and Canadian governments, through their use of the armed forces and the Sureté du Québec (SQ), has continued since July 11. At that time, the SQ launched a military-style assault on a four month old roadblock on an out-of-the-way road leading to a golf course. This resulted in them being repulsed by a group of Mohawks much smaller in numbers and "fire-power" than the police.

The recent announcement that the armed forces is being replaced once again by the Sureté du Québec have inspired new fears that the end to this confrontation will certainly be violent. Although the SQ does not have the resources for a full-scale military assault, it's viciousness and violence on the issue have been well documented. It was the SQ which originally began the campaign of refusing to allow food and medicine to be sent to Kanesatake. Even the Quebec Human Rights Commission has pointed out that SQ officers are repeatedly breaking the law, imposing martial law conditions when martial law has supposedly not been declared. Although the role of the Canadian armed forces has certainly not been "progressive" in nature, the Natives at Oka have repeatedly expressed concerns that retribution at the hands of the SQ will certainly end in violence.

The attempts by Brian Mulroney and others to depict the Kanesatake Mohawks, and especially the Warriors Society, as a criminal organization have stirred up racism across the country. In actual fact the real criminals are the provincial and federal governments which have stolen traditional Native land and forced them to live on pathetic parcels of land called "reservations". The real criminals are the government that has smashed up the traditional societies of North American Natives in such a brutal way that in Canada, Natives lead the world in the rate of suicides. The real criminals are the police forces of Quebec and English Canada which have a long history of singling out the Native Indians and other minority groups for abuse. The real criminals are the leaders of this economic system which alienates minority groups from any possibility of economic self-determination.

Solidarity movements have been growing across the country, with over a thousand people marching in Montréal, a thousand in Kingston, Ontario, two thousand in Winnepeg, a thousand in Ottawa, over four hundred in Halifax and countless others in cities across the country. Civil rights groups and leaders such as Jesse Jackson have taken an interest in the standoff. A diverse group of other organizations have also expressed support for the Mohawks, such as the Pro-Choice Action Network, a nation-wide organization committed to abortion rights for women, which unanimously passed a motion of solidarity with the Oka Natives. Even the city council of Kingston, Ontario has expressed it's support in a concrete way by sending $2500 for food, medicine and supplies to the Natives.

One danger, however, within the Oka crisis has been the anti-Native backlash on the part of many Quebecois people, and similarly, the anti-Quebecois sentiment expressed by a minority of the Native spokespeople. While the leader of the Parti-Quebecois, Jacques Parizeau, publicly calls for the army and police to violently end the conflict, an anti-French element within the Native movement has seen representatives of racist, anti-French organizations, such as the COR Party and the National Citizens Coalition, speak at rallies organized by Native leaders in support of the Oka struggle.

At a recent march and rally in Halifax, Bill Lewis, a spokesperson for the Halifax Mohawk Solidarity Committee, pointed out the danger of the anti-French and anti-Quebecois sentiment. Acknowledging that both the Natives and the Quebecois are oppressed groups within the Canadian state, Lewis noted that one of the key weapons of the government is to divide different oppressed groups and pit them against each other. The vicious beatings which Quebecois protestors received at the hands of the police is but one indication of the common enemy which the Quebecois working class and the Native people share. It is imperative that both Natives and Quebecois look beyond narrow nationalism and towards unity of the oppressed. Only in this way can both the struggle of Native Canadians for just land claim settlements and the struggle of the Quebecois for national self-determination be won.