

STUDENT UNION ROUNDUP

by Kate Whitfield, VP Executive,
UNB Student Union

On March 17th, Scott Duguay and I will be joining fifty-plus fellow students for a week of lobbying the federal government on issues facing post-secondary education institutions in Ottawa. This is part of the March conference for CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations.

This annual event is part of what CASA is all about. As a member-driven organization it is up to everyone to come hit Parliament Hill together. The week involves a full schedule of two-on-one meetings with MPs as well as large group meetings with various government officials. At this conference last year CASA delegates met with the Finance Minister Paul Martin, with the head of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation Norm Riddell, Alexa McDonough as well as the head of the HRDC, for example.

The purpose of these meetings is not only to demonstrate the importance of post-secondary education in society, but to provide solutions to problems and be a part of the dialogue. At the last conference CASA delegates met with people from the Canadian Student Loan program where we discussed logistical issues such as communication problems with respect to the application process. We also discussed issues concerning disbursements of loans. This meeting was followed by one with Paul Martin where we discussed lowering interest rates on student loans.

A specific item on our agenda with respect to student loans will be current debt reduction initiatives. In the 1998 federal budget, this Debt Reduction and Repayment program was announced. A program that was promoted as something that would help over 12,000 students each year. Accordingly to the statistics that are available, the Debt Reduction only reached 0.4% of the target. The Standing

Committee on Finance has recommended that the program be reworked, however, this was ignored by the Department of Finance in the 2001 federal budget.

The CASA head office staff in Ottawa has been working hard to make this conference a success. Through member input, they have put together a collection of CASA policies that the delegates will present in the meetings, issues as deferred maintenance, interest rates on student loans and tax redemption initiatives. Head office has also worked to organize media events to help show Canada how important post-secondary education is to society. To those UNB students that had an opportunity to place their thumbprint on our section of the large map of Canada, there will be a press conference in Ottawa next week where the giant map will be assembled. Our section of Hudson Bay will come together with the 23 other pieces to show how 'Education Builds a Nation.'

One specific policy that we will be lobby for includes one focused on tax exemptions for scholarships and bursaries. CASA believes that it is the responsibility of the federal and provincial governments to ensure that no academically qualified student with the desire to pursue a post-secondary education should be denied access. Someone should not be penalized for academic excellence, or worse, have monies deducted from bursaries awarded on the basis of financial need. CASA does acknowledge the precedent set by the federal government to increase the tax exempt amount for scholarships from \$500-\$3000 with the advent of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, however this is still inadequate. Therefore, one of the policies that CASA delegates will advocate for at the conference is for all scholarship and bursary monies be made tax exempt.

For more information on the CASA conference, visit or e-mail unbsu@unb.ca.

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Genocide's children: fighting back

by John Ennis

"...conquest and terror were acts of self-defense against (among others) the 'merciless Indian savages', whose crimes are denounced in the Declaration of Independence in a remarkable inversion of the facts that is scarcely noticed after 200 years."

-Noam Chomsky, from *Perspective on Power; Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order*. The best reason for Canada to resume trade with Cuba is that the U.S. doesn't want us to...

First let me point out the fact that I took it upon myself to write this essay as almost an answer to questions which may be raised by my book (a collection of short fiction), some of which deals with racism.

It is self-evident that to be effective in the political arena groups must first agree on certain things. With regard to my people specifically we must agree on a collective thought structure before we can move toward any meaningful discussion of reclamation of lands and of cultural and individual dignity. We do this by changing word and connotation. First, some observations on the effect of the character of a people that can rationalize the attempted genocide of another population for the express purpose of theft.

Native Normericians as a people (at least in my narrow experience) are steeped in self-hate and frustration as a direct result of an inability to reconcile a glaring injustice done to them. Moreover, many haven't the internal resources to get to the root cause of their frustration, or, if they do, are unable to articulate it. This speaks directly to the inability to develop coping mechanisms as well as the resultant self-destructive behavior that we can see.

The present regimes which control this

Wabanaki Perspective

particular landmass have all played a role in the attempted genocide of the rightful owners of this land, but it is the distinctly merican* attitude that is the most virulent and most harmful to Native Normericians and indeed to all "literate minded" people, to use Chomsky's words. Oppression is inherent in any system of governance which was built on violence. The ghosts of the perpetrators of the violence are present in most of its archaic formality.

Distrust of the merican regime is not without merit if you've any common sense. This distrust occurs (a) something (like a global power with a gargantuan bureaucracy) is so large that it's character cannot be clearly defined with any practical ease. (b) the regime in question is so secretive and indeed exclusionary that private individuals are put off or discouraged outright from gaining any meaningful information about it.

The first duty of any power structure is to see to it's continued survival after all; surely it must "avoid the dangers of thought" and keep us from any "inappropriate fact", to use Chomsky's words once again. (c) the very fact of the attempted genocide is taken as fact (a serious doubt if we are to believe the revisionists or so called "exclusionists" (sic), it's obvious that, in the interest of maintaining popular support, the regime would have no choice but to vigorously suppress any meaningful discussion of such an embarrassing subject, especially when the party rhetoric is peppered with terms such as "truth", "justice" and "equality". The rhetoric doesn't hold water; one cannot address one injustice and simply ignore another.

The attempted genocide, while highly virulent, left much to be desired, at least as far as those who would 'sweep it under a rug' are concerned. The regime that instituted the program of systemic genocide (which was official policy if

the litany of the founding fathers is anything to go by) seemed not to have given any real thought to effectively covering their tracks. The official indoctrination of it's own people was and is one of denial through specific omission; which goes hand in hand with not letting any "inappropriate" questions enter the arena of discussion. This concept, a classic example of Chomsky's framing of an argument is used to great effectiveness to this day. The "masses" themselves are an important part of the mechanism of invasion, keeping them away from any discussion of the ethics of what they were doing to the rightful owners of this land was relatively easy.

One doesn't need a conspiracy when you have willing participants. The founding fathers were themselves 'the unwashed masses' before they came to power in this land.

Had they thought of it they would have crafted a comprehensive program for the complete irradiation of the very fact or awareness of the attempted genocide, and therefore any need to deal with it. I use the term 'attempted genocide' fully aware of the fact that there are numerous cases of the record of entire tribes and/or cultures that ceased to exist, victims of the program of mass ethnic extermination implemented by the founding fathers.

It is precisely this record that they (the founding fathers) would see erased.

I understand that it is difficult for many to recognize and effectively use semantics as weapons, but this is the very weapon that is used against them. The attitude must be fought at the level of the rhetoric used, inroads to change can be made if we recognize the lexicon of the present regime and make effective changes to our own.

For now, until we enter into a discussion as one unit, the most obvious change an individual can make is to take emphasis from the rhetoric of those in power while at the same time adding to one's own sense of autonomy. To that end I say that there is no such thing as a "native american" (if there were no america what would we call ourselves?). A clear definition of terms is a good starting point, and necessary for a change of perspective, namely from that of the victim to one possessed of clear purpose and direction. The word "america" is a concept that was agreed upon by men whose intent was to kill anyone they felt stood in the way of forming that republic. The very act of not capitalizing the word "america", or leaving the 'a' off altogether, is one place we can start. The very act of being of one mind is a form empowerment.

We are not a native american (or canadian), the term is untenable. If what we agree to call north america was, by definition, entirely ours, we are logically precluded from making any further distinctions.

You lose something of yourself when you "pledge your allegiance" to the very symbol of the attitude and method of men who (as stated by they themselves) would rather none of us exist to read these words. Interestingly, this is the same symbol these men of power would have us reflexively look to defend the unjust acts their government perpetrates on the rest of the planet.

The numbers speak volumes: there are many many more of 'the people' than there are those in power, and they don't want us to realize that we have autonomy, that we can choose to act as a unit against governments, or the more subtle control of corporate sector. I write this in the certain hope that my people will gain some understanding, both of their own sense of cultural identity (the fact that they're not americans or canadians), and of cultural cohesion. I could simply say that indians that fly the merican flag (the right way up) are misguided fools, but what they must do plainly is take a serious look at a subject that we are all afraid as a people to face.

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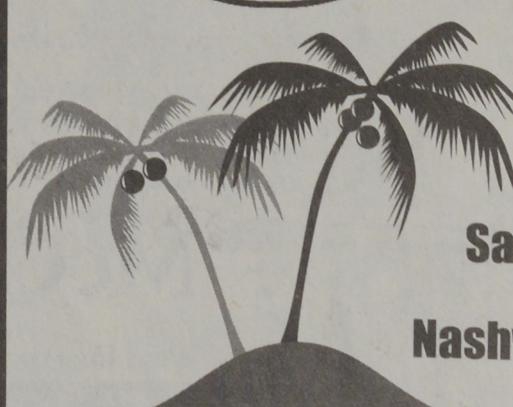
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