

Hard Lessons for New Democrats

New Maritimes

January/February 1989

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Elliott
Clarke's*

Weymouth Falls Suite

McKenna and the Constitution

Stewart Hyson

War, or Peace?

Walter Clare

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Should We Be Surprised?

There has been much well-deserved criticism of the New Democratic Party for its weakness in the recent federal election campaign. But was there, really, any reason to expect any better of them? There was nothing new in their strategy of attempting to replace the Liberals and create a two-party system. During the campaign's early stages the NDP's national leadership thought it saw a chance to become the official Opposition. Even after it became clear that free trade was *the* issue of the campaign and that the Liberals were not to be treated lightly, NDP strategists decided that the eclipse of Turner and the Liberals should remain the campaign's centrepiece.

New Democrats allowed John Turner and his Party to seize the initiative in opposing the free trade agreement. This deal represents a heightened effort to extend the right wing policies of Ronald Reagan into Canada, bringing more privatization and de-regulation to the economy and undermining existing social programs. In terms of progressive issues like, for instance, environmental protection or improved funding for day care, the defeat of the free trade deal would have been a great defensive victory for the left. But big business leapt to the attack — particularly in Ontario where millions were spent in the last days of the campaign — and assured a Tory triumph.

Big business is, in this, at least historically consistent in defending *its own* best interests. During the 1911 federal election it worked successfully to defeat a proposed free trade deal with the United States because it saw that the then-existing tariff barriers were the only thing that allowed it to keep the Canadian market to itself. But now, in 1988, the dominant forces of Canadian business are so closely integrated with American capitalism that the interests of the two are virtually identical.

Should we be surprised that the NDP's response to this assault was weak, given that the Party, in the 1970s, expelled the left nationalists in its midst who were making just these points about the growing convergence of interest between Canadian and American capital? That the NDP failed to make its long-awaited breakthrough in this election was certainly not due to the fact that it clung to much-cherished "principles."

Ed Broadbent told us that Mulroney represented Wall Street and that Turner represented Bay Street, while he stood for Main Street. It seems clear that Wall Street symbolized American capital and Bay Street was a metaphor for Canadian big business, but what was Main Street supposed to stand for? (A logical guess might be Canadian small business. Is this what Broadbent regards as his natural constituency?) Whatever the NDP leader may have meant, the election results seem to show that Wall Street and Bay Street (and, indeed, much of Main Street) supported Mulroney and free trade. The strongest opposition to the deal came from people on low incomes, trade unionists and other activists.

The NDP's leadership seems fixated on striving for

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Cover photo of George Elliott Clarke courtesy of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. Photography by Ivan Wright.

parliamentary power. It shows little interest in mass popular activity — only votes seem important. But to people in the Maritimes, or elsewhere in Canada, seeking real social change — socialists, feminists, environmentalists — broadly based and active movements of people are far more important than any number of successful electoral candidates. Politicians acting on behalf of Wall or Bay Streets (or, indeed, even of Main Street) defend the existing order of things and have powerful backers far beyond Parliament Hill. Politicians working for far-reaching reforms must have backers of their own — and these would inevitably be awakened and active movements of people.

The election we have just been through was something of a rarity. Because of the free trade deal, votes actually counted for something more than whether Tweedledee or Tweedledum would head the government. The Tory majority means that the free trade agreement will certainly go through, and the government now hopes that the movement against the deal and its effects on Canadian society will subside.

Whether or not we are surprised and disappointed by the NDP's performance in this election, this must not be the end of the fight against what the deal represents. Nor should we lose sight, in the defensive days to come, of a broader vision of social change. The defence, and extension, of social programs, of environmental protection and of women's and trade union rights will continue to depend, as has always been the case, on the activity of that great bulk of us who live and work outside the halls of Parliament.

—Mike Earle

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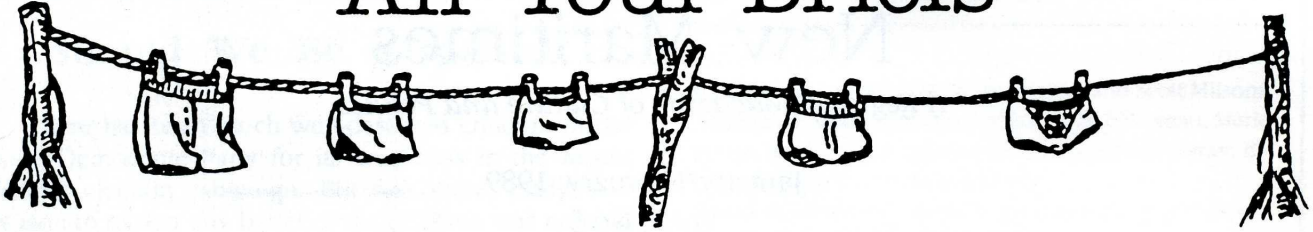
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Air Your Briefs



Welcomes Discussion

I am writing to comment on the article "Children and the Public Trust," which appeared in your November/December, 1988 edition.

I welcome any public discussion of the status of child welfare services in Nova Scotia, and congratulate the author, Ms. Currie, for taking up such an ambitious task. However, I must advise you that her analysis is weakened by inaccurate information and misleading conclusions.

There are numerous points in the article which invite reaction, however, I shall restrict my comments to references dealing with the Maritime School of Social Work at Dalhousie University:

- The class Ms. Brenda Thompson met with last year was comprised of mainly first-year students, not third year students as stated in the article;
- Lest your readers be left with the impression that the class Ms. Thompson met with was comprised of young, inexperienced, middle-class students please consider the following: as the class was an evening offering most of those attending were mature (average 29 years), working part-time students. All would have had some prior human service work experience, and many would have been employed in human service work while attending the School. Of the 20 students in the class, at least two were single mothers, three were minority students and many were of a working-class background.

Further, the course instructor does not recall student questions being hostile and does not recall the comment attributed to her in the article.

Given the class composition, our

criteria for selecting students, our curriculum emphasis which systematically requires students to examine and challenge values of the dominant culture, and the course instructor's recall of the visit, I frankly doubt the accuracy of this portion of the article and resent the implication painted for the reader;

- Ms. Currie's criticism of the School for failure to properly equip students to be sensitive to ethnic and minority issues is particularly reprehensible. The Maritime School of Social Work enjoys a reputation within Dalhousie and nationally among schools of social work as a leader in advancing the cause of minority issues. As a matter of official School policy we have had since 1973, a standing committee which monitors and provides advice on all facets of minority interests, including the place of minority content in the curriculum. We have a formal Affirmative Action policy in place at the admissions level for both the B.S.W. and M.S.W. programs. We have outreach programs to recruit minority students and modest educational supports to assist students while in the program. Finally, we are in the fourth year of delivering a specially mounted B.S.W. program for Micmac Indians which when completed next year will see 20 Nova Scotia Micmacs qualified at the B.S.W. level.

While one might argue that we still have a way to go to ensure that the total curriculum is culturally sensitive and appropriate, I suggest any criticism of the School's failure in this regard, without due mention of the very considerable strides taken and achievements gained over the years is patently unfair;

- Ms. Currie's allegation that the

School of Social Work inadequately prepares students for practice in the child welfare field is based on misinformation and requires special comment. All schools of social work in Canada follow national accreditation standards which dictate that first professional degree programs (B.S.W.) be generalized degrees. As such, we attempt to provide students with a general knowledge of social welfare and practice principles sufficient to warrant introductory-level competence in a variety of fields. Our graduates assume work responsibilities in diverse settings such as hospitals, correctional programs, social assistance, residential treatment facilities, child welfare, etc. We would be totally incapable of providing specific, in-depth field of practice linked knowledge to cover all occupational choices of students. We expect that the general knowledge and practice skills of graduates need specific and particularized "honing" in the work place.

We are able, however, to accommodate students' interest in obtaining specialized knowledge and advanced practice skills in Child Welfare at the M.S.W. level where Family and Child Welfare is a specialization option. As well, we are currently exploring the feasibility of offering through our Continuing Education Department, an intensive (90-110 hours) post-graduate certificate program in advanced Child Welfare Practice. We expect that graduates of these last two programs would be able to demonstrate advanced levels of competence and practice wisdom which Ms. Currie correctly identifies as vital to enlightened child welfare practice.

I apologize for the length of this

letter, however, given the importance of the topic addressed by Ms. Currie's article I felt compelled to offer clarification for your readers. For our part, and I know I speak for my colleagues, we shall continue to strive to improve our programs and to produce the most qualified graduates possible. We welcome community interest and comment on our programs but insist that it be based on accurate information and fair interpretation, ingredients woefully lacking in Ms. Currie's article.

**Daniel O'Brien, Director,
Maritime School of Social
Work,
Halifax, N.S.**

Excellent Job

I have just finished reading the article in your November/December issue by Andrea Currie, "Children and the Public Trust." As a law teacher and legal aid lawyer with experience in Children's Aid cases, I found that Ms. Currie has done an excellent job in portraying the many dimensions of this oft-ignored area of state-citizen interaction. Please let me know how I can obtain multiple copies of this issue, which I intend to use for teaching purposes.

**Richard L. Evans,
Associate Professor of Law,
Halifax, N.S.**

New Bars

In late summer, the federal government announced that a prison would be built at Carbonear, not far from St. John's, Newfoundland. The announcement followed much jostling among a number of Newfoundland communities, whose leaders saw placement of a prison in their areas as an at least partial response to appallingly high unemployment rates.

Claire Culhane has been an activist for prisoners' rights for many years.

Instead of battling over the site for

Newfoundland's prison construction "boost to the economy," why not let each Party have a piece of the pie and build one in each constituency—much more lucrative than affordable housing, hospitals or schools.

Ignore the Canadian Bar Association's complaint about the use of prisons as a first, instead of last, resort. What does it matter? If you build them you must fill them — to ensure their cost effectiveness. Forget the slight aberration when Mulroney ignored the \$40 million start at Drummondville in order to favour voters in his own constituency with a \$60 million Port Cartier prison..

And, there are no sure guarantees that prisoners do their time in, or near, their home province. Ask the women who are serving their long sentences in Kingston, no matter what province their children are growing up in.

When "boosting the economy" is the best reason advanced for building prisons, don't expect any thought about the people who constitute the essential merchandise — other than as part of a profitable increase to generate the "100 to 200 permanent jobs" that would be generated.

**Claire Culhane
Prisoners' Rights Group
Vancouver, B.C.**

Gutsy Career

I have followed with admiration the gutsy career of *New Maritimes*. The dedication required to sustain such a journalistic undertaking is substantial. Yours is an important voice, one which must continue to be heard in the Maritimes.

An example of *New Maritimes* at its best is the article "The Case of the Down-home Absentee," by Lorraine Begley, in the August issue. This is first-rate research, easily the best piece of writing to appear so far on the proposed Greenwich condominium development.

Keep up the good work.

**Harry Baglole,
Charlottetown, P.E.I.**



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Soundings

An Electoral Autopsy

In September the people of Nova Scotia gave John Buchanan and his fellow provincial Tories a mandate to pillage and plunder for four more years. If only for a change, they could have elected a Liberal government that would certainly have been no worse. They also could have elected several new and quite excellent NDP candidates so that there at least would be some effective opposition. Somehow, Nova Scotians chose neither of these options.

In November, the people of Canada gave Brian Mulroney and his fellow federal Tories a mandate to pillage and plunder for four more years. They also gave him what, in our multi-party parliamentary system, is a mandate to implement a free trade deal which will destroy life as we know it in this country within ten years.

These are major setbacks for what Ed Broadbent humbly described on election night as "the forces of truth, beauty and enlightenment." The universe is not unfolding as it should. Having been heavily involved in the

Broadbent in Nova Scotia. A bad campaign for "the forces of truth, beauty and enlightenment."

Rick Williams

federal campaign and active in the Nova Scotia election as well, I am still quite confused about what it all really means. The proliferation of instant theories in the media has sown even more confusion, and I'm hesitant to contribute to that. On the other hand, everyone else and their dog is doing it so why not?

The "Structures" Line

One perspective on what these elections signify focusses on political structures, and it holds that in our parliamentary system with three major parties, any seriously left party (or hard-line right party, for that matter) is permanently frozen out. The political struggle is always to capture the center, and you do that by articulating the "dominant ideology", i.e., the conventional wisdom. A left party can either move to the center to gain electoral

support, thus jeopardizing its political base in the working class and other popular groups, or it can stick to its guns and thus remain marginal to the real exercise of political power in the nation. Either way, the possibilities of achieving a genuinely left government, or of shifting the ideological ground of public policy, are seen as remote.

Supporters of this line suggest that electoral opposition to the free trade agreement was dicey from the start. Free trade should have been the NDP's issue, and initially it seemed to provide an historic opportunity to attract a much larger sector of the public over to a left position, where they might have stayed. But the traditional center party (the Liberals) saw the threat, and moved decisively to co-opt the left-nationalist position. In areas like the Maritimes, where the NDP does not have a strong base of traditional support, the anti-free trade vote went heavily Liberal. In the crucial swing areas in Quebec and Ontario, the Liberals and the NDP split the anti-free trade vote, and Mulroney slithered through with a



Michael Creagen

majority government.

Given these constraints, many commentators have called for changes in political structures. One much-discussed option during the election was a Liberal-NDP coalition to resolve the dilemma of the three party split. An agreement not to compete against each other in certain ridings might have headed off a Tory majority and thus blocked the trade deal. In the Atlantic region, for example, only one Tory (John Crosbie) instead of twelve might have been elected if the Liberals and the NDP had been able to pool their anti-free trade votes for coalition candidates.

Many anti-free traders, both within and outside the NDP, favoured this option. Others felt the Liberals could not be trusted, that they would opt for a slightly modified trade agreement themselves once the Tories were defeated. As a party, they opposed this particular deal, while the NDP opposed bilateral free trade with the U.S. in principle. That distinction would likely undermine the coalition, but, in any case, the NDP would lose a lot in the bargain. The trade deal would have been blocked (temporarily), but the NDP would have abandoned its claim to a distinctive left identity and would have had great difficulty building it back up.

Other commentators argue that the only real solution in the longer run is to move to a system of proportional representation whereby parties get a share of seats according to their share of the popular vote. This would result in more actual seats for the left party, and representation in all regions of the country. Under such a system, this past federal election would have resulted in a minority government.

While it has advantages, such a system would bring mixed blessings for Canada. It would likely engender a multiplicity of small regional or special interest parties, and encourage a style of coalition politics where the left agenda would be even more fragmented and dissipated. In any case, short of a revolution, there will never be such a system, given the virtual impossibility of radical reform under Canada's existing constitutional setup.

Realistically, this "structuralist" line of argument must conclude that, bar-

Halifax NDP candidate Ray Larkin (left): everywhere, people on the left were talking about voting Liberal to beat the trade deal.



Michael Creagen

ring a major shift in the whole political climate, a left political party simply can't break through to major-party status in Canada, and that opposition through the electoral process to the trade deal was doomed from the start.

The "Basic Change" Line

There have been some rather interesting commentaries on the election which suggest that there has, indeed, been a major shift in the Canadian political climate. Some observers argue that this election confirms that the political centre in Canada has moved significantly to the right in the 1980s, and that Mulroney has won a mandate not only for the trade deal but for the whole panoply of Reaganite-Thatcherite social and economic policies.

There are different angles to this idea. That urban Quebec and southern Ontario supported the trade deal and elected so many Tories is seen as an indication of a new conservatism taking root in the metropolitan areas of the country. The sustained boom in the Golden Horseshoe has engendered greed and economic expansionism. What happens to the rest of Canada may not be a matter of great concern for people caught up in the mystique of the boom.

The situation in Quebec is particularly critical. First with the Meech Lake

Accord and now with free trade, Premier Bourassa has, with the blessing of the federal government, laid the groundwork for the *de facto* independence of Quebec. This time, however, Quebec independence is not heralded as the liberation of an oppressed people, but rather as the coming of age of a nationalist capitalist class which will be free to realign the Quebec economy on a north-south grid for fun and profit. The Tory electoral success in Quebec is no longer seen as a freak event, but as a fundamental realignment based on the shared indifference of the Canadian and Quebec ruling classes to the independence of Canada as a whole.

That the rest of Canada (except Alberta) voted against free trade and against the Tories speaks of another kind of realignment. People in the Maritimes and Newfoundland clearly do not buy the line that the trade deal will benefit us, despite the heavy breathing of our own ruling class throughout the election. As evidenced by the anti-free trade vote and the broad opposition to Meech Lake, there seems to be a growing recognition of the necessity for concerted national action by a strong central government to deal with problems of poverty, unemployment, environmental crisis and economic underdevelopment.

Unlike western Canada, these atti-

tudes have not seemed to generate a distinctive left politics in our region. The strength of traditional voting patterns, the populist and often demagogic styles of the mainstream parties, and the insidious influence of economic dependency have together seemed to block any breakthrough for the NDP or any other left formations.

I am not convinced that there is any fundamental shift to the right in Canada as a whole. A cab driver recently told me that he voted Tory but he didn't support free trade. "Everybody I know didn't understand the deal," he said. "There was all this arguing back and forth, and everything that was said was denied by the other guy. I didn't trust Turner, and there was no way the NDP were going to win, so I voted for Mulroney."

I think this kind of thinking is typical of a lot of people. The polls show that upper income groups went solidly Tory right across the country but that middle and lower income voters were much more split. Outside of Quebec where some fundamental shifts seem apparent, the Tories won because of the quite remarkable and unprecedented political assertiveness of the business class, the two party split in the anti-free trade vote, and some key weaknesses in the opposition campaigns. That brings us to the third line of media argument.

The "They Blew It" Line

A third line of argument is that the anti-free trade electoral campaign was simply screwed up by the Liberals and the NDP. The Liberal campaign was impressive in terms of the effectiveness of its appeal to nationalist emotions and interests. It seemed — for a while — that the sleeping giant of Canadian nationalism was going to wake up, but Liberal leader John Turner peaked too early and had simply nothing left when the Tory counterattack was launched during the last three weeks.

The Tories trotted out every notable they could find, from Judge Emmett Hall on medicare to Christopher and Mary Pratt and Alex Colville on cultural industries, and they spent millions on media advertising. The Liberals had no more money and no more notables up their sleeve, and when push came to

shove they had not done their homework in terms of clear, concrete examples of how the trade deal would hurt ordinary people. They were simply not convincing in the last week, when it really counted.

The NDP national campaign was feeble and ill-conceived from the start. They had formed a strategy, based largely on U.S.-style electoral polling, and they stuck to it, despite the evident success of the Liberal campaign to co-opt the free trade issue during the summer. The NDP strategy assumed that traditional supporters would stay with the party no matter what, but that disaffected Liberal voters could be attracted with a soft-sell campaign centered on Broadbent and a populist line on "fairness" for "ordinary Canadians."

With a lot of silly comments about the Liberal Party being wiped out and the emergence of a two party, left-right system, NDP leaders underestimated traditional Liberal strength and arrogantly assumed that Canadians would automatically turn to the NDP on the free trade issue. Perhaps to cater to Quebec, where the trade deal was relatively popular, Broadbent failed to emphasize the issue in the early stages of the campaign. He seemed quite unprepared to deal with a fired-up John Turner in the national TV debates, and was thrown off by Turner's attack from the left.

Within a few days after the debates, it was apparent that the election had become a referendum on free trade. In that context, the assumption that the NDP's own base of support was solid went out the window. Everywhere you went you met people on the left who were talking about voting Liberal to beat the deal. In Halifax, despite an excellent candidate and a strong campaign, some 4,000 people who voted NDP in the provincial election in September deserted the party in November. By the time the national NDP campaign figured out what was happening after the debates, the ball game was pretty well over.

Whither the NDP?

The soft-sell NDP campaign — based on the leader and the "fairness for ordinary Canadians" line — had bombed in Nova Scotia in September,

but still the federal party stuck to it. They didn't talk hard issues, they didn't speak to their base constituencies, and they didn't seize the leadership on the trade deal fight. Yes, to a significant degree, the NDP blew it.

But there were larger forces operating, and the NDP wasn't, in any case, going to form the government, in Nova Scotia or in Canada, this time. Perhaps their greatest error was to abandon their own fight and their own turf to pursue an entirely premature dream of breaking through to major-party status.

It is still too early to draw out the real lessons, but one line of thought does seem to emerge from this analysis. The real basis for the anti-free trade fight was, and still is, the extra-parliamentary opposition — the labour movement, the women's movement, the peace and environmental movements, the churches, and so on. It was this opposition that made the trade deal an issue in the first place, but the election seemed to side-track that broad process of mobilization and political education into a dead-end street.

We need that extra-parliamentary opposition to keep the NDP honest, which it hasn't been on either Meech Lake or its basic election strategy. But most importantly, we need that opposition to keep the free trade fight alive because it is not clear that either the Liberals or the NDP will do it on their own.

If the deal is as bad as we believe it is, a lot of people are going to be hurt by it in the next five to ten years. That may well create the kind of political crisis in which real ideological shifts become possible. We need to monitor the deal, document every change in social and economic policies and in corporate investment behaviour that stems from it, and do powerful public education about it. If this is done, free trade will be the issue in the next federal election, and, if necessary, in the one after that.

And maybe one of these times we will be ready for it. •

Rick Williams is an Associate Editor of, and regular contributor to, New Maritimes. He was heavily involved in the recent NDP election campaigns, both federally, and provincially in Nova Scotia.

Labour Relations at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design:

Moving Back From the Brink?

The sight of university professors marching with picket signs seems more and more a normal part of the Maritime landscape. Almost unheard of in past years, acrimonious negotiations followed by bitter strikes or lockouts are today becoming commonplace on the region's campuses.

In this and upcoming issues, New Maritimes will be taking a closer look at some of these struggles, and will undertake to investigate what's gone wrong with higher education in the Maritimes in the 1980s, and perhaps look at possible ways out of the mess that so many of our universities have fallen into.

In February of 1985, faculty at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design formed their own union. But while the acronym FUNSCAD might crack a smile, labour relations at the College have been far from funny over the past four years.

It took a three-week strike by teachers to win a first collective agreement in the fall of 1986. Although morale soared in the aftermath of that initial agreement, the past two years have seen little improvement in relations between the union and the College's Board of Governors. When talks about a new contract began late last spring, the Board immediately set a deadline of June 30 for concluding an agreement; if there were no settlement by then, Board negotiators warned, they would have to take "extreme measures." The union, which was used to such talk from its adversary, ignored the bluster.

When the deadline passed without an agreement being reached, Board members proved true to their word. They promptly broke off negotiations and ordered College President Garry Neill Kennedy to send a letter to every enrolled student. Dated July 1, the letter advised recipients that "registration for the fall semester will not take place and

Jill Grant

classes will not begin as scheduled." This action, Kennedy explained in a press release, was in the best interests of the students and was designed to protect them from an atmosphere of uncertainty.

Needless to say, the letter provoked an uproar. Students protested that closing the College was *not* in their best interests and that they had not been consulted by the administrators about what *was* in their best interests. They subsequently sought an injunction to keep the College open. Some expressed their concern in political cartoons which appeared throughout the College. The union called the Board's behaviour "ill-considered," and, pointing out that they were not even in a position to legally strike, added "vindictive and irresponsible" to their description. Union President Cynthia Taylor called for bargaining to resume immediately. Even Edmund Morris, Minister of Advanced Education and Job Training, got involved. He found

the threat to close the College "unjustified" and publicly promised to investigate.

How did the Board decide on such a course of action? First of all, the decision to threaten closure of the College came, not from the full Board of Governors, but from only its seven-member Executive. In 1987, the Executive had proposed changes (which were eventually adopted) to the Board's bylaws that increased its power to act independently of the full Board. The Executive made the decision about threatening closure, and simply notified other Board members of the decision taken on their behalf. Although student, faculty and alumni representatives on the Board protested, the Executive persisted, and did not even seek full Board ratification of the decision.

A second factor that was almost certainly involved in the Executive's thinking was the experience of the 1986 strike. Then, the Executive had implicitly threatened to close the College, and, apparently firmly believed it had been a prime factor in forcing the union to settle. Now, it seems the Executive were using the same tactic

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again, this time in an effort to forestall a strike.

While Kennedy and the Executive back-pedaled to try to contain the crisis their decision had precipitated, many members of the College community began to wonder about the motivations of their senior administrators. Apparently caught up in the power politics of labour relations, they seemed to be allowing their animosity for the union (and perhaps a latent desire to crush it), to cloud their judgement and make them lose sight of their primary responsibility — to provide a sound education to students. Their actions suggested that they would threaten the future of the institution rather than bargain with faculty to resolve minor differences. (The two parties' positions differed in cost by \$34,000 — approximately 0.5% of the College's annual operating budget.)

In the hullabaloo that followed the release of the July 1 letter, the Board applied to the province for the services of a conciliator. Students organized rallies and information meetings. The union pondered its options. By mid-July, when the province appointed a conciliator, tempers had cooled somewhat and negotiations resumed.

After less than a week of mediation, the parties reached agreement. Both sides gave a little and worked out their differences, although not in face-to-face negotiations; relations had become so soured that neither team wanted direct dealings with the other, and it was left to the conciliator to act as go-between.

It's obvious that this latest round of bargaining hasn't healed the illness threatening the Art College. The sides have, if anything, drawn farther apart and grown more suspicious of each other than ever before. The Board Executive continues to believe that its bluffs to close the College lead to settlement — expect to hear more of the same in two year's time, when the next round of negotiations gets underway. The union remains convinced that the Executive has a secret agenda to break them at any cost, and that senior administrators don't respect the educational mandate given them. Students still worry about the future of the College and its ability to deliver the education they deserve. Technical and library

A cartoon drawn by an anonymous student last summer. Its caption reads, "What the Board Members failed to realize was that Garry had been 'Dead at the Wheel.'"



support staff have concerns too — they have yet to reach a collective agreement in their negotiations with the Board.

There are, though, glimmers of hope on the horizon. Two powerful members of the Executive have resigned and the Board's Chair has passed into new hands. With new members and new leadership the Board has an opportunity to chart a course for calmer waters in the future. Similarly, a new union executive has a chance to build a positive relationship with the Board. But it will take the concerted efforts of both sides to avoid the trauma and expense that have drained it over the past four years.

Garry Neill Kennedy has an-

nounced he will resign as President in 1990 and return to faculty ranks. The search for his successor will be a litmus test that will give an indication of the long term answer to the question being asked throughout the College community: can the Board and the union begin to cooperate together to fulfill the College's educational mandate and help it find its way back from the confrontational brink?•

Jill Grant is a former Vice-President and Negotiator for the faculty union at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and is currently a faculty representative on the College's Board of Governors.

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Illegitimate Legislators?

A Comment on Frank McKenna and the Constitution

By now, the 1987 New Brunswick election story is well known. The Liberals under Frank McKenna scored a shutout victory, taking all 58 legislative seats. There is no opposition in the legislature and that outside the Assembly has generally been disorganized, silent and ineffective. A sitting of the legislature is much the same as a normal caucus meeting of the Liberal Party.

For the scope of their success, the Liberals owe much to the workings of the plurality voting formula which allowed them to capture 100% of the seats with just 60% of the vote. The 40% of New Brunswick voters who voted for non-Liberal candidates gained no representation at all.

One aspect of the election story, however, has so far gone largely untold. The 1987 election results were, in fact, probably legally invalid, because of the large disparities in constituency size.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer's report, the largest constituency, Pettitcodiac, had 17,863 enumerated voters, while the smallest, Charlotte Centre, had only 3,968. With 501,646 enumerated voters in 1987, the average number of electors per constituency was 8,649. New Brunswick's constituencies deviate widely around this figure — on average by 30.5%.

These disparities are largely attributable to the way the constituencies were established. Historically, the province's 15 counties and the city of Saint John (plus the city of Moncton, after 1912) served as the electoral constituencies for the legislature. Traditionally, these were all multi-member constituencies, possessing three, four or five MLAs, roughly indicative of each constituency's population size.

When these multi-member constituencies were replaced with the current single-member system in 1974, the county format was maintained. The

Stewart Hyson

new constituencies were established within county boundaries and carved in statutory stone. There's no mechanism that would allow constituency boundaries to be adjusted periodically, so as to reflect population changes. Those areas of the province that have experienced population growth are now greatly under-represented in the legislature, while other areas that have remained stagnant, or have witnessed decline, are now over-represented.

The 1982 adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as a key component of the Canadian constitution gives this electoral tale an added twist. Section 15 of the Charter provides for the equal protection and equal benefit of the law. Yet there can't be such equality when one voter has so much more weight or value than another. Those living in less populated constituencies have more impact associated with their votes than people living in more densely populated regions.

The adoption of the Charter means that the 1987 election was conducted unconstitutionally. As a consequence, the current crop of Liberal MLAs hold power unconstitutionally.

Average Constituency Population Selected Ridings: 1987 (Provincial Average: 8,649)

Constituency	Population
Bathurst	10,422
Caraquet	11,124
Carleton Centre	5,579
Charlotte Fundy	4,989
Fredericton South	16,509
Kings West	17,402
Madawaska South	5,751
Queens South	4,211
Saint John West	11,476

Source: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer,
October 13, 1987

This may all sound rather far-fetched, but in not dissimilar cases in the United States, the courts have ruled regularly since the 1960s that large disparities in constituency size are sufficient grounds for ruling election results invalid.

It is one thing to establish that the legislature has no constitutional legitimacy, but where does this leave Mr. McKenna and his Cabinet? It would be unrealistic to expect the Premier to accept the logic of argument presented here, and to resign voluntarily. He has asserted that electoral reform is a low priority for his government, and even if there were a legal challenge and the Supreme Court ruled as has its American counterpart, the decision would probably not be reached until it was time for the next election anyway.

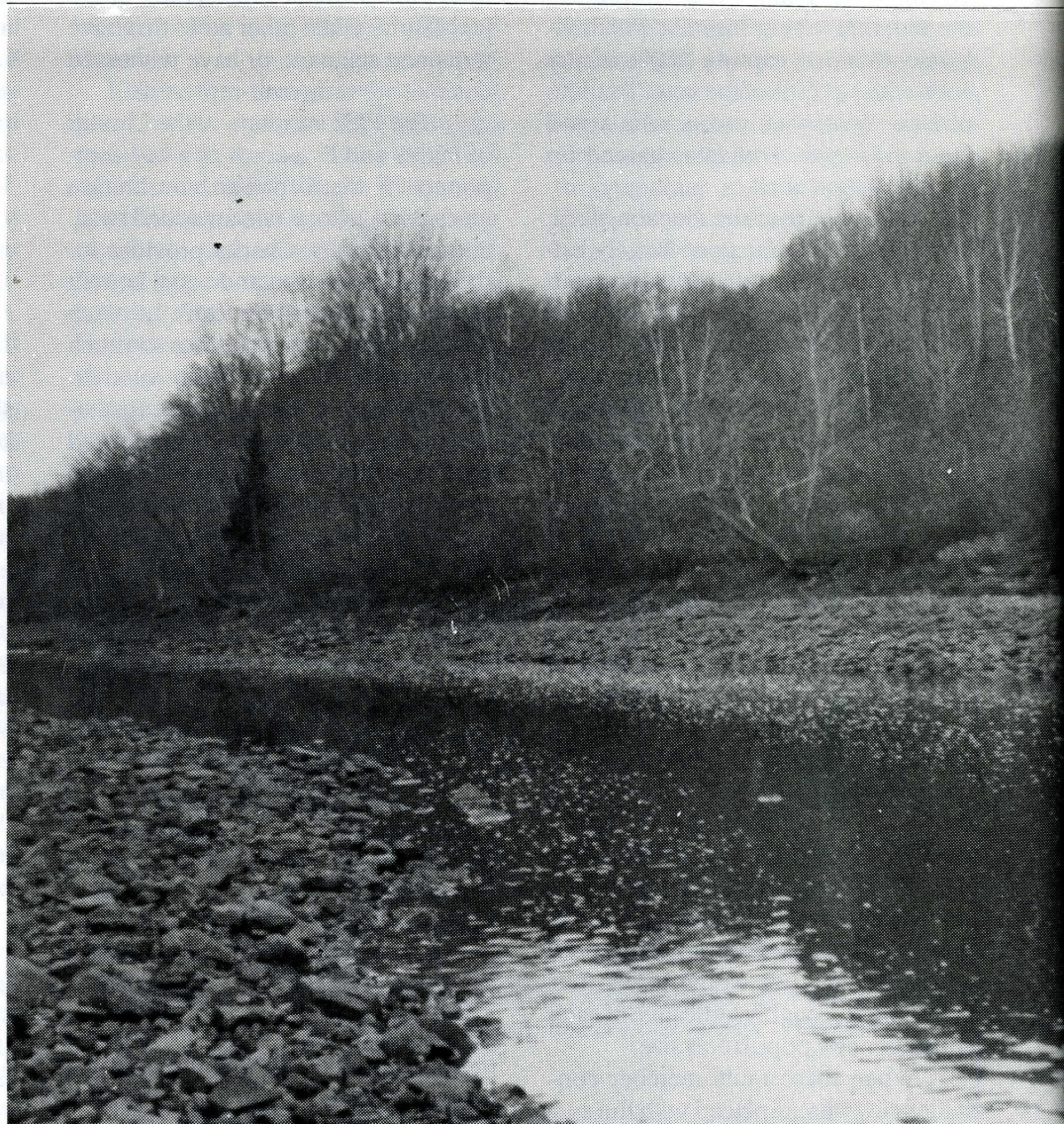
Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that the McKenna government establish a commission, not to study, but to re-draw, constituency boundaries in time for the next election. Rather than being made up of the usual collection of political and legal hacks, the commissioners should be experts; perhaps a surveyor skilled in map-drawing, a statistician acquainted with population trends, a political scientist schooled in electoral theory and law and the Chief Electoral Officer. Modern technology is sophisticated enough to make precise population measurements and projections, so there is really no reason that constituencies should vary significantly in population.

Such a reform would make the process of choosing legislators and governments constitutional. And who knows, it might even make their decisions and actions more responsive to the public interest.

Stewart Hyson is a political scientist living in Saint John.

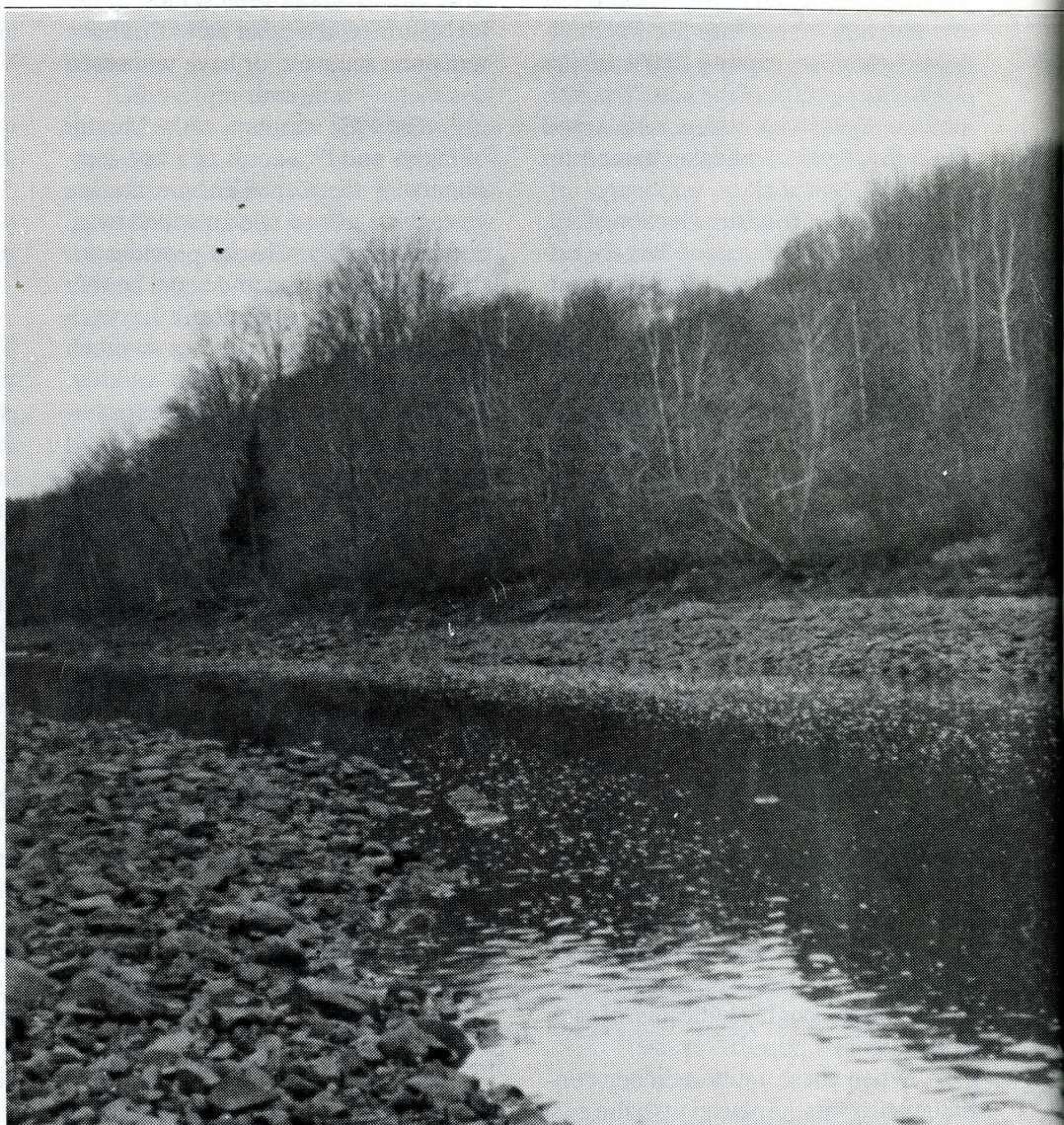
Weymouth Falls Suite

—Glorie Elliott



Weymouth Falls Suite

— George Elliott



Focus



Born in the Black Loyalist community of Windsor Plains, N.S., in 1960, George Elliott Clarke has emerged as a major voice of Black culture in the Maritimes. His first book of poetry, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues*, published by Pottersfield Press in 1983, was widely acclaimed as a landmark in regional literature. Richard Lemm, in a *New Maritimes* review (September, 1983) remarked, "His poems are about Blacks in Nova Scotia, the Black Loyalists and Refugees, the Black Baptist Movement, and his own vision and experience of Maritime landscape and life. There are poems of love and work, the hardship and raptures of our seacoasts and forests, spiritual struggles and ecstasies, poverty and survival with grace and dignity. It is an elegant book filled with detailed humanity rooted in a new soil and faith.... He writes from his indignation, and from his love, faith and honesty. His poems tell us of suffering and oppression, and... of his own hope and moral vision."

In Clarke's poetry, the profound needs of the human spirit are united with the daily struggle for community, dignity and harmony with the land. He refuses to divide politics from poetry, activism from art.

On June 8, 1985, Graham Cromwell, 32, of Weymouth Falls, N.S., was shot by Jeffrey Mullen, 29, of nearby Weaver Settlement. Cromwell, shot near Mullen's home on a sunny Saturday afternoon, crawled 82 feet to the middle of Highway 340 before he died. Although Mullen was initially charged with first-degree murder, Provincial Judge John Nichols ruled at the preliminary hearing that the evidence did not suggest a premeditated killing. Then, at Mullen's bail hearing, Mr. Justice Peter Richards granted his release on \$5,000 bail, without cash or property as security. He noted the background of the case, which in his view indicated that Graham Cromwell, a country and western tenor, father, woodsman, and *bon vivant*, had been "a mean drunk."

At Mullen's Supreme Court trial in October, defence counsel succeeded in putting the character of the deceased on trial. Mullen was acquitted on the grounds of self-defence.

The verdict unleashed a widespread protest in Weymouth Falls -- the Black Digby County community on the banks of the Sissiboo River -- and throughout the province. The Weymouth Falls Justice Committee collected 340 names on a petition demanding an appeal of the verdict. In November, 60 black and white demonstrators marched at Province House. The protest movement's claim that racism had been involved in the case was substantiated in December, 1985, when Alan Story of the Toronto *Star* reported that Digby Judge John Nichols had told him, "You know what happens when those Black guys start drinking."

Clarke played an important role in the protest. Although ultimately unsuccessful in overturning Mullen's acquittal, the protest, according to Clarke, was by no means a wasted effort. The struggle publicized the issue of racism, forced the state to respond by making the trial transcript available, and marked the first time that urban and rural Blacks made common cause. Of the women who spearheaded the campaign against the verdict, Clarke wrote in 1986: "These women, with their earthy eloquence, gave voice to Justice while silence whined in the legislature. They have taught that, to be free, we must make our own history, confronting the racist and sexist pinnacles of the vertical mosaic. They have ensured that Graham Cromwell's death has had consequences."

One of these consequences can be seen in the pages which follow -- "Weymouth Falls Suite," by George Elliott Clarke. This work has clearly been influenced by his work as an organizer of the 1985 protest. Yet, though the echoes of 1985, as transformed by the imagination of the poet, are powerfully present, Clarke also uses one man's death as a way of exploring Black spirituality, Black resistance, and Black cultural achievement in Nova Scotia.



Preface

These blooms of Weymouth Falls, the Black Mississippi village trapped in Digby County, Nova Scotia, since 1815, smell of words that refuse to love the world they enter. Scorched by country blues, drowned by liquor and tears, and torn from the stony earth, they flourish in native soil.

*Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus,
Steal away, steal away, steal away home....*

The Plot of His Book

I cry of rivers, stars, the moon, and pines,
Saltwater sorrow that descants in lines,
The *Long March* from Digby to Weymouth Falls,
A shotgunned man mouldering in petals,
His trialed mother who witnesses in cries
Over his corpse cankered white by lilies,
His cinnamon-scented sister who weeps
Into her cold Bible and no more sleeps,
My love naming my love an epic lie
(Because I claim stars barnacle the sky
And mackerel-silver birch circle her house
And cotton rain stuffs riverbeds and wells),
The history of love that could not be
Though every pencil sketches liberty.

A Preface to Spring

Langford pitches scarecrows on his roof
To shoo the gulls from drying smelts and fruit.
L'il Toof, cola-coloured, scrounges a man —
Makes him melt like popsickle in her hands.
Home after six suns, Liana scats blues,
Mumbles Nashville elegies while milkweed snows.
Lionel, his feet flipped up like a goat's,
Jigs with a bottle of chilled, Tory votes.

Missy, dressed nakedly in gold and black,
Presses night to stop my train in its tracks.
Gravity thirsts for dew; we thirst for us,
Tasting life in two, bright tumblers of scotch
By the Sissiboo, where Langford smelts, brings
Everything we ever wanted, everything.



How to Live in the Garden

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and not to keep it. — Gen. 2:15

Cora brings a rural nobility to making food, a solid love, staring into her huge, aluminum pot like a gardener glancing into a pot of lush earth, bright soil, glistening with newness, or tending a *bonsai* tree, the trunk of steam rooted in the pottage, the branches of steam wafting into nothingness. She salts her stored, miniature sea, churns it with a wooden spoon, then lifts goodness, like a kiss, to her lips while spicy smells green her kitchen into Eden.

Cooking is motherhood, faith. Cora opens her antique cookbook, a private bible, enumerating Imperial measures, English orders — pinches, pecks, cups, teaspoons, of this or that — and intones, "I create not food but love. The table is a community. Plates are round rooves; glasses, iced trees; cutlery, silver streams."

Her Digby County cuisine, mixing in the salty recipes of Fundy Acadians, the starchy diets of South Shore Loyalists, and the trout tastes of Coloured Refugees, includes rapure pie, impossible pie, baked cabbage, mackerel boiled in vinegar, and basic black-and-blue berries. For breakfast, Cora offers fried eggs, sausages, orange marmalade, and toast, washed down with rich coffee. Her tastes are eccentric, exotic, eclectic. Her carrot cake consists of whole carrots whose green, leafy tops sprout from brown, earthen icing and whose orange roots taper to the cake's floor. She bakes apple tree leaves, blossoms, seeds, and bark into her apple pies. Cora is the concrete poet of food.

This afternoon, she thawed a pound of cod filets, white flesh raw but succulent on the plate, and diced it into one-inch squares. Then, she sautéed a half cup of fileted onions in rich, yellow butter and poured the sizzling scents into a broth made from celery soup, a cup of water, and a cup of milk. Next, she stirred the mix and added the fish, Digby scallops, and Church Point clams, nursing the *mélange* to a boil. Cora simmered it for seven minutes, then sprinkled the smiling happiness with chopped parsley. *Voilà!* Perfection under gravity....

Cora's dandelion wine is a great agony of sunflowers. No, dandelions. It must be drunk to be believed. (One believes it when drunk.) It tastes like Russian or Chinese literature. It curls into a glass, snarls along the sides and bottom, doubling, tripling, quadrupling upon itself. (Watch the white curl of cream churn into clear, brown tea, touch bottom, then billow along the sides and up, muddying the water.)

can't move no stone

The Poisoning

For Paul Zemokhol

Chatting in a voice cold like winter wind
 Over corn, nails hammering wood across
 Windows, that his quilt is too warm for warmth,
 That she's in cahoots for Yarmouth this moon,
 With her hotcomb and six-foot-strong Eely,
 Missy 'mits, "I don't love ya no mo'," and
 Blue-black night pummels Saul's eyes with hard shade.
 His huge hands wrestle with slippery prayer.

The door groans shut. Missy's Ford moans. Saul slips
 To tremors, tears, the hurt of brandy, sips
 Anti-freeze, a brew sharpened like acid,
 Until his speech corrodes, blackens, to slurs,
 Drooled gasps, drawls, of lover runnin' lover,
 Until dumb desire froths at his mouth
 And he ceases amidst kindling and cold
 With no reason or good-bye for Missy,
 Only the openness of eyes after
 A final lunge at light, only gossip
 Passed like proverbs, grey folks wagging their heads,
 Crying, "All that for a black girl!"

can't move no stone
 to let my saviour out;
 can't move no stone
 to let my saviour out;
 can't move your heart
 if i start to doubt....
 can't move no stone
 if you won't help.

can't find no love;
 gotta find my Lord first.
 can't find no love;
 gotta find my Lord first.
 can't get your love:
 i damn well must be cursed!
 can't find no love.
 can things get worse?

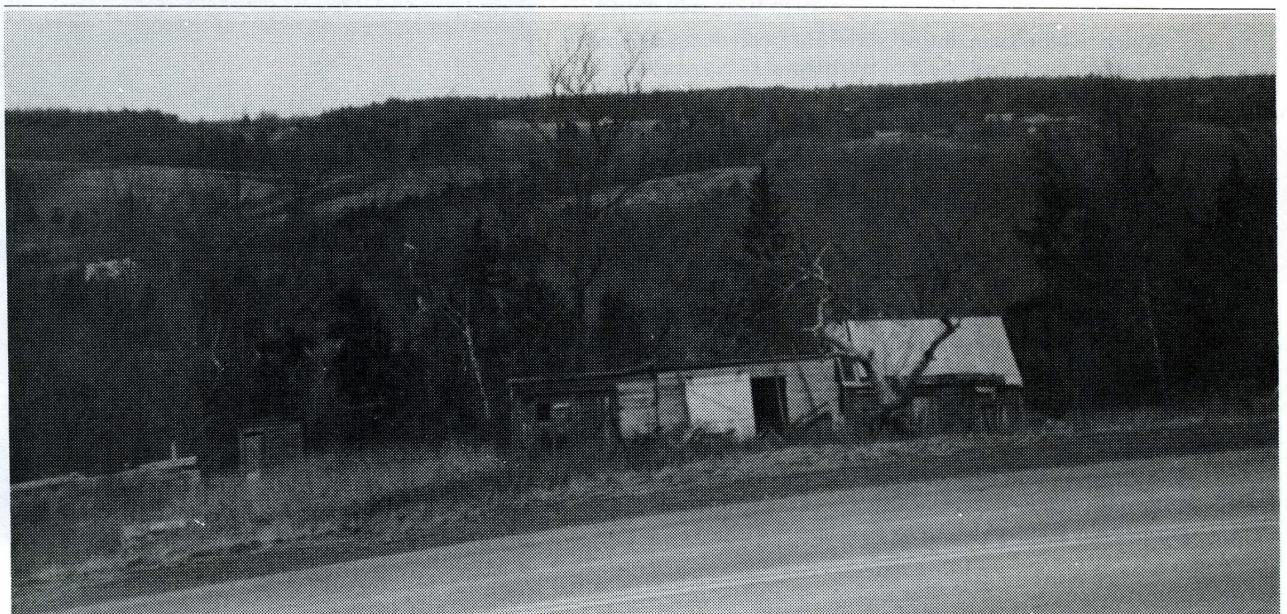
can't drink no wine
 without my saviour's bread;
 can't drink no wine
 without my saviour's bread.
 can't make no love
 without you in my bed.
 can't drink no wine:
 may as well be dead.

Blackberry Blues

Blackberry, blackberry, on the vine,
 Sweet, bittersweet, blackberry wine,
 When will you be mine, all mine?
 When will you be mine?

The Moon

A drowned man floats
 Face up
 In a jet-black sea.



A Sermon to the Undecided

For Walter Borden

Sinners, hear the loud sun cryin' awake with freight train howl, 'cos it'll be a bit like that when great Christ come cleavin' the cloudy air — and our common, foolish excuses — to thunder love all over His precious Creation. I wanna tell you, 'cos God don't lie, that Christ is gonna catch the scarlet and purple women and the prophesyin' drunkards by surprise! Yes, yes, yes. When they be playin' poker, grinnin' and tee-heenin' all night, they won't notice the sun glarin' at 'em 'til it's too late and they is proved palpable fools!

How you'll be, boy, when you spy the King of Glory, brighter than the high-noon river, through rum-yellowed eyes? Will you just stumble, mumble, pass out? King Jesus says "Woe unto you!" And how'll you be, girl? Will you be shoutin' "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" with some man's indecent kisses still stainin' your wine-purpled lips? King Jesus says "Woe unto you!"

Children of God, doncha know that your every breath drags through dirt and soil? Doncha know that death overshadows you? All you want are parties and barbecues and holidays! You don't want the House of God! You complain about this bitter, mouldy bread and watered-down wine. You say that this commandment is too hard, this commitment too much. I say: Dirty your knees in the worship of the Lord!

Little children, get right with King Jesus! Olive Christ can't be dreamt as lynched or nailed to stiff lumber or laid bloody and broken on a slab of rock. Christ is mighty! Sinners'll spy 'im by the Sissiboo tramlin' down the lumber kings. Thay'll spy 'im descendin', over the sawmill, inspiring holy horror. What good will runnin' do? You can run to them Boston States, you can run to China, but you can't run from your sinful self!

Preach out your Bible! God says, "Love one another." Love satisfies. When you're hungry, ask for love. When you're weak, ask for love. When you're poor, ask for love. And all of these other things will be added unto you.

Love is the outlandish power of Jesus Christ Almighty! Love is the only thing that can't be oppressed! If any try to deny love, why, that's when the stones would tear free from their graves and howl disgust at our implicit trusts! You gotta feel love, live it, and put it out. It's not enough to be in the right church, you gotta be in the right pew!

Watch out for Satan, the deceiver. He'll parade Jezebel before you, sons of God. Yes! She'll come drippin' sweet smells of cinnamon and myrrh; she'll purr until you fall upon her limbs smooth and sure like song. And Satan'll bring a sweet-talkin' trickster before you, daughters of God! Beware of that velvet-voiced player, Judas. He'll convince you that whispers and rumours build the House of God!

Sinners, run now to King Jesus! Run, run, run, to King Jesus! He'll save you! Come home! Remember gold streets, sweet pastures, and doves by the river of waters. Come home, little children, come home to that land of milk and honey, where you don't need no passport or money, come home.

*We're gonna shine in the fiery storm;
We're gonna dance on the starry shore;
We're gonna shout Christ's gloried name;
None of us will be the same;
Praise God! None of us will be the same!*





Death By Drowning

for Dr. John Fraser

The green outside floods, sweeps, surges within,
And drowns the furniture in pale petals,
Vague, sodden leaves, or bright, waterlogged bark.
Doomed children clutch desperately at chairs,
Feel stones scrape their throats raw, soil clog their mouths,
Rocks scour their vainly thrashing limbs to bone.
Worms taper now from their dumbfounded mouths.

I watch stones barnacle the bassinet,
A spray of maple rain down the window,
A downpour of bees and flies soak the couch,
A crow, gripping a tin spoon in its beak,
Circle, circle, circle the vine-choked fan.
My grass-gored bones should bob like cork. But, no,
I'm going down. Good God! I'm going down!

Selah's Elegant Blues

The fat moon is white
Sorta like your eyes;
The butter moon is bright, sugah,
Kinda like your eyes.
And it melts like I melted for you
As it coasts 'cross the sky.

The black highway unthreads
like your body do sometimes.
The long highway unwinds, baby,
Like your lovin' do sometimes.
I'm gonna swerve your curves
And ride your centre line.

Stars are drippin' like tears
The highway moves like a hymn;
Stars are drippin' like tears, mama,
The highway sways like a hymn.
And I reach for your love, beau'ful,
Like a cat burglar reaches for a gem.

Class Struggle

Brrrrnnnggg! Chilly 7 A.M. Stunned fingers find a slippery dial and slowly yank Annapolis Valley Radio, AVR, into a blinded room. First, however, one hears the crackling voices of weak, American poltergeists, whining hurt and disaster from forlorn cities along the eastern seaboard or from God-forsaken towns locked in the eternal droughts of the mid-west. Sluggish, Amarantha clammers from her covers, swings out, her feet rediscovering the hardwood floor after a night's absence. She showers in sunlight, letting the warmth heat her skin until it glows with a fine sweat. Then, she puts on her satin underwear of water, letting it ripple over her like a camisole. She applies her blue jeans and a cotton blouse like fine powder.

For breakfast, she plucks a pear from a wooden Wilfruit basket, pours out a box of Windsor wheat puffs that she sweetens with Lantic sugar and drowns in Farmers' 2% milk, toasts 60% whole wheat bread baked by Berwick's of Berwick, larding the slices with yellow, Enn-Ess butter and purple, Purity partridgeberry jam, and fills a tall glass with Scotian Gold apple juice, fresh from Canning, and brews coffee tinged with amaretto and topped with orange pineapple ice cream — the very flavour of Andalusia. She completes her repast with a Ganong chocolate and a piece of saltwater taffy.

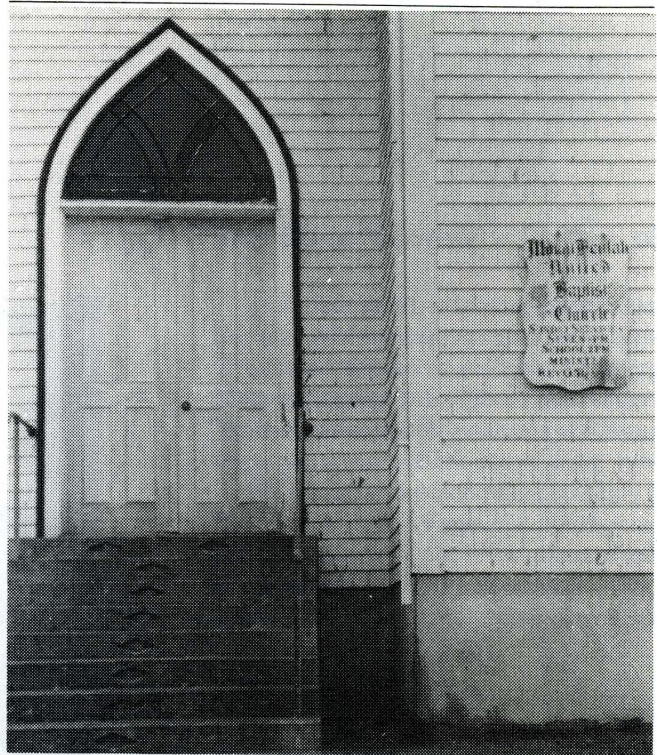
By 8:30 A.M., she is ready. To work in the fishplant. Jack Thomson brings his smelly pick-up truck to her door precisely at 8:35 A.M. So long as she accepts the Liberal Party campaign pamphlet that he hands her with a smile (always, always smiles), she can wriggle her way into the covered back of the truck, choose a seat beside the other fishplant workers, knowing them all by their distinctive morning smells of shaving lotion or cheap perfume or woodsmoke caught in rag-covered hair or by their work-ruined, gargoyle faces, and ride, jostling, to tough labour for minimal wage. That's all they get. But they go. Where else can they go?



Mark Simkins

In the Field

Selah glares at me
Impatiently, not seeing
The apple blossoms.



Amarantha/Marantha

Orange, jack-o-lantern moon glowers. I stumble this night-flooded road, wishing on Am. Her long, ebony hair glistens in twisting vines; her wrist's liquid curve tumbles darkly in clouds. The stream rushes over her voice.

She be freedom. Can I get a witness?

I'll dance the arc of corn, the leap of water, 'cos I spy Am in night's sharp plunge and pitch and roll of hay — mannerisms of creatures caught in the act, leaping for the privacy of bushes. Crickets crack a juicy tune and Am's hair tumbles like a nun's black habit and wild rose petals rain like blood on a wheatfield.

Why should I croon the blues of every lover since song began? To reach out and kiss Am even once would be the best life possible under the sun. When morning jumps....

Now this barbed-wire is a vine of dark grapes; the moon, a great bowl; the pines, bedposts. And I've sprouted giant wings and a long beard. And Am's words have become plums and chrysanthemums, and her pronunciation, gold butterflies.

I'm gonna drink the moon's milky *ouzo* and then sip a gold glass of the sun's scotch. And when Am awakes, we'll dance in each other.

To Pablo

In school, I hated poetry — those skinny,
Malnourished poems that professors love;
The bad grammar and dirty words that catch
In the mouth like fishhooks, tear holes in speech.
Pablo, your words are rain through which I run;
Naked, green grass in which I sleep.

Yours,
Amarantha

Before the Shot

"Rumours", Gregory?
The truth: Jack Thomson spied you,
Last night, meet my wife.



The Funeral

The highway stubs itself on stones;
The wind beats bushes senseless;
The river flip-flops over stones;
A killer calmly loads a grave.



The Blind Witness

Jack slumps in the kitchen, cusses mean words
Broken by biblical injunctions
Or gestures leaden as an axe dropping.
He promotes an Eden where men open
Their lives with bank accounts and die, taking
Their pensions with them.

His waxed moustache melts blackly into law:
"Love murderers. Vengeance belongs to God."
Then, in fishing boots, he stomps off to spend
His salvation across the Sissiboo,
To sniff around Am, get drunk, on cheque day.

From The Halifax Sun, August 6, 19__

Sealy granted bail

HALIFAX— Bail has been granted to Samuel Sealy, pending his trial on a charge of second degree murder in the June shotgun slaying of a 30-year-old man at Barton, Digby County.

Mr. Justice Pious Cuthroat of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court rejected a Crown request to keep Sealy, 33, in custody until he goes on trial this autumn for allegedly killing Gregory Clements.

Crown lawyer Fiskal Wyse opposed bail in a Halifax hearing, citing the "perception of the people" if an accused murderer were released. The police, he added, feared for Sullen's safety.

Mr. Justice Cuthroat granted Sealy's release on \$100 bail, without cash or property or security, noting the background of the case indicated the victim had been "an evil drunk."

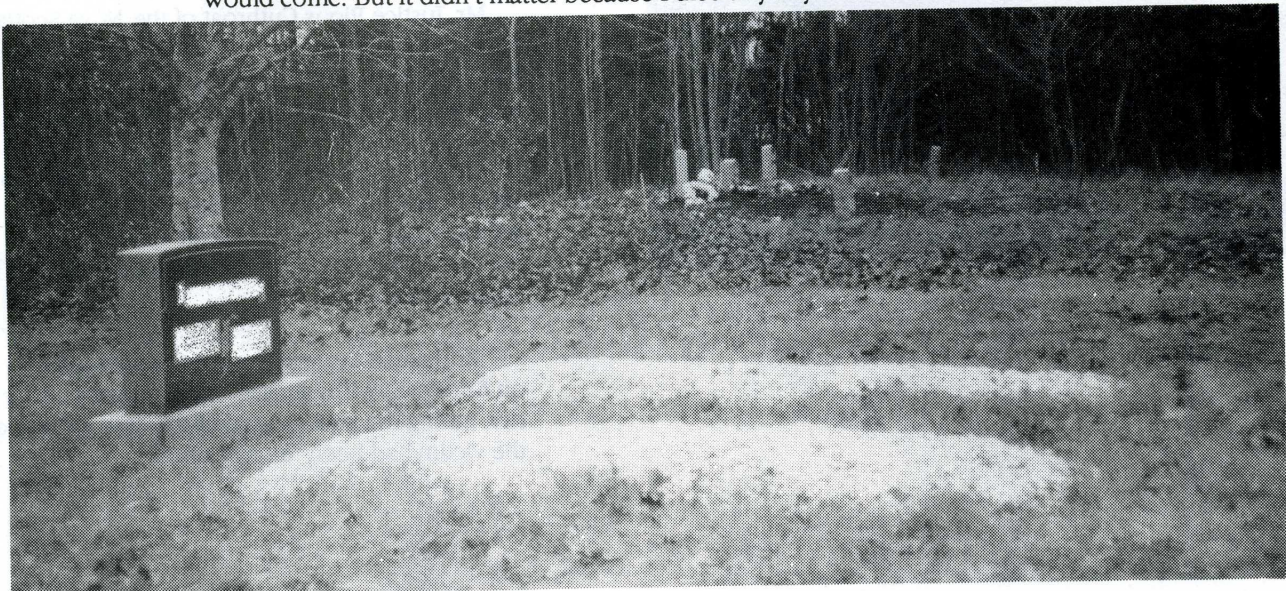
The Testimony of Othello Clements

When I felt the scream as the bullet smoked... and saw the hot, red pain as it tore my stomach, splashing me back through the cheap door that crumpled like thin ice, icy splinters gouging my back, and I flailed under air, I swore Sealy had drowned me. I was at peace. But that peace was riven by terror as I crawled down his thrashing driveway, wanting water. Water. I was leaking from a bullet hole in my stomach, my face busted, and the sight in my eyes crazy, blue, red, yellow, I wasn't much able to move, then I blurred Saul limping slow after me, cursing his fucked door, and looming over me (I ain't lyin') with his butterknife (I know, pretty funny, 'cept it wasn't very funny for me), and drove the cold blade into my gut so hard he bent the tip.

It seems funny but all I could think about was having surgery. I dreamt the bullet was removed, bone and metal fragments sifted from good tissue and organs, part of my left thigh bone, smashed by the weird bullet, removed and replaced with plastic, my severed spleen sewn, the holes in my stomach and bowel repaired, and a tube inserted in my chest to reinflate my lung which had collapsed when the chest cavity was pierced by the butterknife's upward twist. I could almost smell the clean linen, the perfumed white nurses; could almost see my friends visiting me, "Lazarus".

But it was just a dream. What happened was horror. Sealy, the simple-minded bastard, helped by goddamn Jack, that sleeveen (who was screwing Sealy's slut), did not, at any time, stop his attack on me that noon. It was quite the opposite. He broke my stomach at very close range. That was the only bullet in that shotgun, and he knew it. When he feared it had failed, he must have gone into his kitchen and gone directly to the knife drawer and got a butterknife, knowing it could follow the bullet into my gut and leave no trace. Does that really sound as though he killed in self-defence?

Make no mistake! Sealy used that knife to stab me. And when I whimpered, he stabbed me again. And when blood, instead of words, spilled from my mouth, he stabbed me again, and he would have gone on stabbing me until I was dead, 'cept he was scared someone would come. But it didn't matter because I died anyway.



From *The Milton Moon*, November 25, 19__

Off the cuff

By Mo Verbiage

Editor



Editor's Note:

The power of the press is a monument. Good journalism presents the facts, leading the reader to opinions and confusions.

Unfortunately, some journalists retort to sensations.

As 'New York Times' communist Tom Wicker once said, "This is one of the bed-sitting sins of journalism — sensations at the expense of truth."



The question has arisen, is there a ratio problem in the air.
I think not.

A Toronto repeater was in town seasonally and raised several questions. I do not know to whom he spoke but his questions appear to have gotten only half answered.

I wonder if anyone told the man that our town and municipal council are poorly elected. Not one I've spoken with can remember the last time that a member of any other than the caucus race has run for municipal council. You cannot eject people who do not exist.

If only a few blocks live in town, it is likely due to a shortage of hymns or appointments or because as one parson told me, "I prefer to love outside of town."

Should 'token' apartments be made, regardless of intelligents or capabilities?

As Christmas draws near, I hope that we can all show compassion, understaffing, and respect to the Humus Race.

Readings

1/Brian O'Neill: Remembering the Ocean Ranger

The governments and companies passed the buck

***But Who Cares Now? The Tragedy of the Ocean Ranger*, by Douglas House, edited by Cle Newhook. St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1987.**

The semi-submersible drilling rig Ocean Ranger sank during a violent storm off the east coast of Newfoundland on February 15, 1982, taking the lives of all of its 84 crew members. This disaster was the subject of two inquiries in the United States and of a two-year-long Royal Commission sponsored jointly by the Newfoundland and federal governments. Very briefly summarized, all these investigations concluded that the rig had serious design flaws, but that these did not, of their own accord, lead to the sinking. The lack of proper training of crew members, particularly those responsible for operating the ballast mechanisms, was, investigators determined, a critical augmenting factor in the sinking. Government regulation in these two areas — rig design and crew training — was found to be insufficient and largely unenforced.

In this work's Preface, the author makes the point that "the book is not about the Ocean Ranger disaster itself," because this had already been investigated and reported on by the Royal Commission. Rather, *But Who Cares Now?* is concerned with the manner in which victims' relatives responded to, and grieved over, the tragedy. At the same time, the book is intended "to preserve the memories of the men who died." Finally, the author expresses his wish to bring the human side of the disaster to the attention of government and industry so that both can work to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again.

The depth of emotion felt by some of the victims' relatives is poignantly conveyed in the first of the book's two sections, which is made up of conversations with relatives of those who perished. In fact, the very first "story," told by the widow of the rig's head steward, is incredibly moving, from her

description of eerie feelings and unsettling dreams on the night of the fateful storm (she was living in Ontario), to her calm acceptance of what ensued over the next two-and-a-half years: the initial shock of the tragedy itself; the strain of dealing with the media; her own sorrow and that of her husband's family; and, the long struggle for financial compensation.

The second section of the book is made up of comments, from families of the victims, about dealing with and analyzing the grieving process, and its resolution. What stands out clearly here is the importance, for most of those affected, of getting together to work out both the emotional and the practical aspects of straightening out their lives in the aftermath of the calamity. Even in the best of times, the weeks-on, weeks-off routine of offshore work is stressful to family life, but when death strikes suddenly, the situation is infinitely more difficult to bear. In the case of the sinking of the Ocean Ranger, the trauma and problems of victims' families were exacerbated by the fact that only 25% of the corpses were ever recovered and by the shoddy behaviour of both the government and the private companies involved. Right from the outset, these bodies passed the buck when it came to accepting responsibility, and even fudged about the status of the rig and the fate of the crew in the hours after the first distress calls were received. In fact, a smoldering anger about the way both business and government handled themselves throughout the affair seems a constant background throughout the book. And this anger underlines a major weakness of *But Who Cares Now?*: the failure, or apparent unwillingness, to express openly this underlying outrage, and to exert some analytical energy in the apportioning of blame.

Near the end of the book, the author does indicate that the families still retain a lingering hostility toward both government and industry over the loss of the Ocean

But Who Cares Now?

The Tragedy of the Ocean Ranger



Douglas House
Edited by Cle Newhook

Ranger. Indeed, the title *But Who Cares Now?* shows no effort to conceal the bitter edge of this residual collective sentiment. So why was this feeling not pursued, with a commensurate level of intellectual vigour, in apportioning blame? After all, as the author notes in the Preface, 84 men "were cheated of their lives by a senseless accident that should never have happened."

Perhaps this muting of the anger of the victims' families arises from the understandable need for the bereaved — many of whom contributed to this book — to put their grieving, and everything associated with it, to rest, and to try to get on with their lives. This was, of course, precisely the psychological and emotional predisposition that the companies' lawyers recognized and relied on: wearing the families down through years of litigation was a sure-fire way to guarantee an out-of-court settlement favourable to the companies. The brutal perplexity of choices that the victims' families had to face is aptly expressed by one father:

I felt that the companies had a charge to answer for and I was determined to stick it out. Even now, long after we have accepted a settlement, there is something in me which says that I didn't do the right thing. I can't really say that I'm sorry to have it over with because it weighed heavily on our family; it was always there reminding us of those terrible days.

It is not good enough to assume, as the premise of this book seems to, that justice was done by the Royal Commission. Its finger-waving at the rig's owners, Odeco, meant nothing to that company, whose arrogant behaviour before the disaster extended into almost unbelievable callousness afterwards. The \$86.5 million insurance payout which Odeco received for the loss of the rig was \$52.9 million more than the depreciated book value of the Ocean Ranger itself. Odeco reported \$45.2 million of the latter amount as profit in its 1984 income statement. A light knuckle-rapping by the commissioners was surely bearable for company executives, who probably felt guilty all the way to the bank.

Like Odeco, both the federal and Newfoundland governments emerged from the disaster punitively unscathed. In fact, Premier Brian Peckford called — and subsequently won — a provincial election just a month after the sinking, and focussed his campaign on the issue of Newfoundland's

right to ownership and control of the offshore. With the flag wrapped deftly around the Premier, not a word was mentioned about the province's negligence in the loss of the Ocean Ranger. Despite long-standing jurisdictional claims, the provincial government's Occupational Health and Safety Act had never been enforced in the offshore. When later asked why this had been so, the Department of Labour's Assistant Deputy Minister in charge of occupational health and safety replied, "I suppose it's an evolving thing and I guess it ties in with the direction in which the province intended to pursue this matter."

"This matter" was of critical importance. Morale was so low among workers because of accidents (they nicknamed the rig the "Ocean Danger") and company arrogance that the community relations officer from the province's Petroleum Directorate had scheduled a helicopter flight to the rig to talk with the crew about their problems. Bad weather that would brew into the fateful storm caused his flight to be cancelled. A few months later, he told me that he had been trying to respond to what he had learned, informally, about the situation aboard the rig, because, formally, there was "no avenue for the workers to voice their concerns."

The main flaw in this book is that it misses the central point of the Ocean Ranger tragedy: that the political and economic context in which the search for offshore oil and gas was pursued, by both government and private industry, off Canada's Atlantic coast had much to do with the demise of the rig and its crew. This is not to say that the assigning of culpability through the medium of such a book would have had any effect on the course of justice. It would, though, have pointed out that the parameters of supposedly thorough, government-appointed investigative tribunals are restricted by their own institutional biases.

And in presenting the truth along with the grief, a greater service might have been provided to those who might not otherwise question the regulatory integrity of governments in the future. •

Brian O'Neill recently completed a Masters thesis at Saint Mary's University in Halifax on the political economy of offshore oil and gas development. He has contributed articles to various publications (including past issues of New Maritimes) on this subject.

This book misses the essential point of the Ocean Ranger Tragedy

2/Walter Clare: Re-thinking the Defence of Canada

War is a completely unacceptable means of resolving conflicts between states

C.G. Gifford, D.F.C., and Captain (Ret.) R.A. Creery, *Towards A World Without War — The Defence Debate In Canada.* Halifax, The Defence Research and Education Centre, 1988.

The two authors of this work would appear, at first glance, to be unlikely collaborators. Although both are veterans of World War II, they have spent the past forty years pursuing markedly different careers.

Ray Creery comes from a traditional navy family. The son of an Admiral, he served as Captain in the Royal Canadian Navy where he commanded both air and marine squadrons during his long military career. He then spent ten years as a senior public servant in the Northwest Territories. He retired to the South Shore community of Mahone Bay, to build boats.

"Giff" Gifford was a Royal Canadian Air Force Squadron Leader during the war who flew 49 missions over enemy territory, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to wear with his other service decorations. At war's end, he embarked on a career in social work. He became Director of the University of Manitoba's School of Social Work and later came to Halifax to take the same position at the Maritime School of Social Work. He only recently retired from that post.

But, despite their differing post-war years, both men are active in Veterans Against Nuclear Arms (VANA). Gifford, in fact, currently serves as its National Chairman, and was one of the driving forces behind the formation of both VANA and its predecessor organization, Veterans for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament. Creery, too, devotes much effort to VANA tasks (he currently serves as its National President) and his work with the organization has most often kept him from the nautical pursuits he had hoped to undertake upon retirement.

VANA is a national organization of veterans and their families working to remove the threat of nuclear war. Members believe that, in the nuclear age, security lies in the preservation of life on the planet and that concerns for the integrity of nation

states, while important, are secondary.

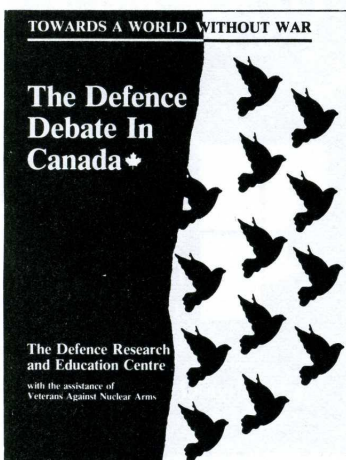
The Defence Research and Education Centre is a registered, non-profit, non-political corporation based in Halifax. Created in 1985, the Centre aims to apply the expertise of retired career and wartime military personnel to strengthen Canada's contribution to peace. Although the Centre stands for an effective Canadian defence force, it also contends that nuclear weapons have made war a completely unacceptable means of resolving conflicts between states. The Centre provides research, prepares educational materials and studies the effectiveness of defence expenditures and peace-making and peace-keeping initiatives. The relationship between VANA and the Centre is complementary.

The Defence Debate in Canada is the third in a series of *Towards a World Without War* booklets co-authored by Creery and Gifford. The first, *Towards a World Without War — Next Steps in Canada's Foreign Policy* (also co-authored by Hugh A. Taylor), was a response to the government's Green Paper on Canada's International Relations, entitled "Competitiveness and Security." It was tendered to the Special Committee on External Affairs and was later the basis for a discussion between the Committee and the authors.

The second booklet in the series, *Towards a World Without War — Next Steps in Canada's Defence Policy*, reflected VANA's approach to modern thinking about defence. This third booklet, *Towards a World Without War — The Defence Debate in Canada*, reflects VANA's response to the Mulroney government's White Paper on Defence, entitled "Challenge and Commitment — A Defence Policy for Canada."

Preliminary drafts of all three *Towards a World Without War* booklets were circulated to VANA members for comments and suggestions. In the case of the booklet under review, this process resulted in contributions toward the final manuscript from more than 140 VANA members.

In the preface to *The Defence Debate in Canada* the authors say that it is meant



to be a contribution to the increasingly widening public debate on defence policy that is taking place across the country. The authors then go on to make the argument that nuclear weapons, and all weapons of mass destruction, are too powerful and indiscriminate for military use. Because knowledge of them cannot be erased, it has become essential to replace the institution of war with other methods of conflict resolution that enhance national sovereignty and survival. The authors call for an examination of both NATO and Warsaw Pact members' foreign and defence positions, so that policies that have led to the arms race can be replaced with others designed to reverse it.

The Defence Debate in Canada questions the ideological underpinnings of the government's White Paper, and points out a number of highly questionable assumptions of its authors. Creery and Gifford assert that the White Paper exaggerates the power, and malice, of the Soviet Union, misrepresents the East/West military balance and overlooks many obvious questions about American military policies that fly in the face of international law. The White Paper's chapter on the Soviet Union, the authors observe, is based more on ideology than on reality and does the Department of Defence (DND) little credit. The detailed analysis contained in *The Defence Debate in Canada* refutes the assertions of the White Paper and, indeed, makes it difficult not to assume that the DND, in preparing its White Paper, was simply trying to generate parliamentary and public support for an overblown share of the federal budget.

Creery and Gifford examine the modern military concept of "stable deterrence." It is an established military wisdom that the United States and the Soviet Union are in a state of "stable deterrence." Traditionally, a belief in deterrence has represented a belief in military strength and can be summed up by the old adage, "If you want peace, prepare for war." This type of thinking is still current today, as evidenced by a 1986 statement by American Admiral James Watkins; "Preparation for global war is the critical element in ensuring deterrence."

The Defence Debate in Canada asserts that the current state of deterrence is, in fact, inherently *unstable* because of the massive number of air, sea, and ground launch missiles, advances in research on

war in space and violations of international treaties. The current state of nuclear deterrence, the authors suggest, is based on threats that by their vary nature are destabilizing.

Creery and Gifford maintain that a real stable deterrence could be based on mutual pledges of no-first-use (That is, both major power blocs would pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in any conflict. The Warsaw Pact has made such a pledge. NATO has consistently refused to do so.) and on the knowledge that a first strike would bring certain massive retaliation. They observe that it is a mathematical certainty that a nuclear accident will occur if the arms buildup continues, and are critical of NATO's "Flexible Response Strategy" that dictates the first use of nuclear weapons, if faced with the possibility of losing a conventional war.

On the subject of continental defence, the authors warn of our vulnerability to American dominance that our membership in NORAD entails. As well, they warn that we could become even more deeply involved in the United States' military plans if we join the nuclear powered submarine club.

The authors acknowledge that Canada's military forces have been allowed to decline in both numbers and equipment, but wonder if this has been because the "Soviet threat" that many pro-defence spenders continually warn us against is hardly credible. They contend that the White Paper is responding to this decline by looking backward to the concepts of the '50s; magnifying the Soviet menace, making NATO the keystone of the country's defence policy, viewing security as a product of expanded military force. They suggest we instead look ahead to the '90s; give priority to our own sovereignty and to United Nations forces, assist in the devolution of the military stalemate in Europe.

The conclusions of *The Defence Debate in Canada* can perhaps be best summarized by citing VANA's promotional pamphlet. "Canada can play a unique and very important part in the search for a peaceful future. We must:

- promote communications between West and East blocs;
- promote United Nations satellite inspection of armaments;
- end our own contribution to spread-

Nuclear weapons are too powerful for military use

Canada can
play a role in
building a
peaceful
future

ing nuclear weapons;

- strengthen the United Nations and the World Court;
- make Canada a true nuclear-free zone;
- work within NATO for demilitarized zones between hostile forces;
- work for a NATO-Warsaw Pact agreement on a nuclear weapons freeze and reduction in arms;
- join with the majority of Americans who are asking their government to negotiate an immediate nuclear weapons freeze;
- build on the distinguished role of our forces in UN peacekeeping by advocating and contributing to a global system of security."

It is a testament to the quality of all the booklets in the *Towards a World Without War* series that their authors have held discussions with high-level officials in the Canadian government, at the United Na-

tions, at NATO headquarters in Brussels and in the Soviet Union.

There is much more research and information packed into this slim booklet. *Towards a World Without War — The Defence Debate in Canada* is a thoughtful work of high quality. It should grace the shelves of our legislators and everyone else concerned with defence issues, for their ready reference. Indeed it is a valuable tool for every Canadian interested in the survival of mankind. •

Towards a World Without War — The Defence Debate in Canada is available from the Defence Research and Education Centre, 1223 Barrington Street, Halifax, N.S. B3J 1Y2, for \$3.50.

Walter Clare is a retired naval officer living in Lunenburg, N.S. and active in Veterans Against Nuclear War and Tools for Peace.

3/ Ellison Robertson: Circumstances Beyond Their Control

***The Time of Their Lives*, by Wayne Johnston, Oberon Press, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987; 194 pages; \$14.95 (paper), \$29.95 (hard bound).**

"At some point as Raymond lay dying, we began to think more of our own deaths than of his. In the end it was death itself we kept vigil over."

In 1921, Dad and Mom move inland from the fishing village of Harbour Deep to the Meadows, where they carve a farm out of the Newfoundland wilderness. With this commitment to work and hope, Wayne Johnston begins his chronicle of a family's 60-year vigil over failure and death.

Descended from survivors of the Irish Potato Famine, this family seems infected with a blight on the human soul which damns even the unborn generations. In their world, hope is found only in the sad and minute workings of survival. The characters of this novel manifest their hope through romantic dreams, religious faith, the exercise of petty power and the release of laughter.

In the beginning (in the untold early

history of Harbour Deep fishing families), and for the next two generations, lives are altered, and families made and unmade by forces beyond the immediate control of the inhabitants of Harbour Deep and the Meadows. In the years after World War I, with fishing unable to support them and the government offering land for homesteading, about 100 young men and women move inland. The parting leaves "a lasting bitterness between the settlers and those left behind." Mom, alone, amongst the farmers-to-be, receives a parental blessing of sorts as her mother tells her "Go Irene, go. Any place is better than this." Dad is disowned, and the break becomes permanent. He is absent for the death of his mother, and then refuses to go to his father's deathbed unless he is asked. He is not. These same circumstances are echoed later in the book, as Dad — whose obsession with farm and work has dominated his wife and children — dies without any real reconciliation with his own alienated sons.

Each generation of this family is heir to nothing more than a legacy of despair and failure. Far from being a comfort to their parents, children serve as a reminder of



poverty and failed hope. Early on, we read of Dad's conviction that "It was not the proud but the weak that would be damned... that the weak were sinful, that failure derived from weakness...." This faith cannot be matched by Mom's religious devotion, which Johnston sums up in the lines "My God how she suffered, her children would say, as if some impossible-to-match gift had been forced upon them." The parents Catholic versions of predestination contain and determine the lives of failure that await the children: Murcheson, Raymond, Hilda, Lew and the narrator's mother.

For all his efforts, Dad struggles in a world where family members are mocked by any presumption of control over their destinies. Caught in a necessarily complicated relationship with the environment — the poor soil, the bad weather, the harsh sea, the unyielding forces of an exploitative economy — the family can only work on, and, perhaps in an unconscious analogue to the "cargo cults" of the Pacific islands, decorate the unpromising natural surroundings with the unnatural detritus — hubcaps and javex jugs — of a distant society. Eventually, Dad becomes so obsessed with this artificial order that he won't allow even the dust of his storage bins to be disturbed.

The government's plan to encourage farming, which perhaps began as a serious wish to develop communities, ends in the absurdity of crops grown merely to satisfy bureaucratic quotas, as there are no possible markets or uses for the harvest itself. This sort of ludicrous outside intervention is repeated on and off in this book as it suits the purposes of business and government.

For Murcheson, the escape of "goin' down the road" is a persistent hope represented by a belief in "offbeat stories, stories about twists of fate or freakish accidents... that such things happened in Toronto all the time," as if the only possibility of avoiding the grip of fate were to find a place where, with so many alien lives colliding, one might simply be overlooked.

The Time of Their Lives is the sort of fictional work that has great potential for revealing the way power functions in a society, but Johnston only partially succeeds in this. The family's — and by implication, the community's — history is told in the inexorable amassing of personal quirks and experience which, in the end, gives no sense of dramatic growth, but only a long unwinding toward death. Even the ordinary heroism of endurance becomes nearly impossible (some of the characters, including

Dad, gain from each other a degree of sympathetic treatment and respect as they age, but the reader may wonder why, given their unregenerate histories).

The progress of the narrative often involves the description of a character's situation or personality, which is then pushed to the limit of its obsessive, neurotic potential. No one here is healthy-minded. The only consistent vision of creation is Dad's ambition to build a farm and pass it on to his children, but he is a monster who oppresses everyone in his narrow world. Various forms of escape from this poisonous community are attempted — alcohol, religion, music, career — but all with no success.

The outside world occasionally intrudes, in the form of furor over a war or a promised development scheme in the oil fields, but Johnston shows us only the victims of these events, and never the co-operative efforts at community survival, the political activists, the labour organizers or the resilient satirists who must surely abound there.

One of the pleasures of this book is the wealth of rich expression and description, but even this fails to hold back the gloom of characters constantly mocking the dreams of others while feeling their own betrayed. When his parents have taken to long, abusive arguments, the narrator tells us that "It seemed that everything that joined us, turned us toward each other, had not so much been broken as shown to have been a complete sham." Johnston conducts us through a world glimpsed, half remembered, exaggerated; a world of family hearsay, a casting back for the roots of family character; a world of oddball relatives seen in a humane light, yet with a sense, finally, that they could never have been "normal," never have been children of hope and potential, never imaginative, and only capable of self-deluding daydreams.

Depressing as they can be, there are many scenes and incidents which emerge like haunting shocks from the prevailing dark of this book. At one point, we read how Hilda, the unmarried daughter who stayed home to care for Dad after Mom's death, sings *Danny Boy* at every party, unaware of the whispered jokes and knowing winks of those who prompt her to sing. One night a recording is made without her knowledge and played back at the party. "There was Hilda, who had yet to have a date, screeching out a protestation of love. There was Hilda, laid bare, stripped of all fiction and pretense. There was Hilda, all alone." And so has Wayne Johnston left all his characters, stripped bare and all alone. •

Characters
constantly
mock the
dreams of
others while
feeling
their own
betrayed

4/Ellison Robserton: Workers and Art

Why are
workers not
well
portrayed in
our art?

***Industrial Images*, curated by Rosemary Donegan for the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Mount Saint Vincent Art Gallery, September 23 - October 23, 1988.**

***Hidden Work, Hidden Workers, Symposium*, October 1, 1988.**

This ambitious exhibit, presenting 120 paintings, drawings, prints, posters, sculptures, photographs and advertising materials is an examination of the way Canadian artists have represented the country's industrialization during the first half of this century. The works displayed range from a painting by millionaire industrialist William C. Van Horne to the Labour Day floats and satiric puppets of worker-political activist Murray Thomson. A close examination of the works, and a reading of the exhibit catalogue, reveal the contrasts of many of the individual images. Those produced with the determining patronage of industry (or, indeed, works inspired by the enthusiastic embrace of the symbols of a "progressive" industrial age by the artists themselves) contrast sharply with works produced with the much more limited patronage of unions, or inspired by artists' identification with political ideals and the working class experience.

As an artist who has tried to make some representation of my experience in working class Cape Breton and of labour history here, I was gratified to come away from the symposium *Hidden Work, Hidden Workers* with a sense that a tradition of such work exists, however tentatively.

As a complement to the exhibit, this symposium presented an informal exploration of the ways in which work, and workers, are portrayed in our society. The range of participation — by workers, educators and artists — was promising, although the dialogue that one might have hoped for never quite developed. Perhaps the most interesting contribution to that dialogue was made by representatives of the Halifax-Dartmouth and District Labour Council, who asked why work and workers were not adequately portrayed in our art and pointed out the extent to which a mystification of the

artist's specialized "aesthetic role" perpetuates this failure.

A survey of *Industrial Images* raises the question of how the roles of industry and corporate patronage, of cultural institutions, of the labour movement and of artists have changed since 1900. The title of art writer Charlotte Townsend-Gault's presentation, "Art and Work: Updating the Imagery to 1988," promised to address some of these issues, but her session was, sadly, shortened by earlier speakers who went slightly over their allotted time. Barry Lord, author of *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art*, offered, as concluding speaker, an overview of many of these issues. As well, he spoke of the work of contemporary artists Karl Beveridge and Carol Conde, who are working in Ontario in a direct creative dialogue with unions, women workers and others commonly marginalized by our dominant cultural representations.

On the question of what can be done in the art world to combat this marginalization, Lord offered a program of change that included: modifications in the systems of patronage, that would involve a much greater labour initiative and the participation of labour representatives on the boards of museums and other cultural institutions; an increased emphasis on public art — murals and other art forms — in areas where large numbers gather; the linking of art museums to historical and cultural museums; an insistence on the formative influence of economic factors on culture; and, the adoption of a "fight not plight" attitude in the representation of those excluded from full participation in our society.

Henry Orenstein, a Halifax artist who has two works in this exhibit, discussed his experience of making art about work, and about painting a mural in 1955 for the union hall in Sudbury of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. The painting, *Self-Portrait as Fur Worker, 1949*, was singled out by many of the symposium speakers because of its perceived uniqueness in depicting a case in which the artist is the worker as well. It was only later that it occurred to me that Orenstein had spoken of the time when he had

Coal Face, a 1944 work by Harry Mayerovitch.



From a 1920s linocut titled *Glace Bay*, by *Lawren Harris*.



Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University

Denying art its place as a full material social practice has left an immense gap

ceased being a worker to become a full-time artist. The point was never made that, as an artist, he was *still* a worker, now suffering the fate of having his very real material efforts doubly hidden.

It is the isolation of art-making to the realm of ideas and aesthetics — thereby denying its place as a full material social process — which creates the gap an exhibit such as this (along with its ensuing dia-

logue) must try to bridge. The dimensions of this gap are, perhaps, hinted at when one measures the lengthy list of institutions which have lent work to this exhibit against the very short list of the galleries that have opted to display this travelling show. •

Ellison Robertson, an Associate Editor of New Maritimes, is a Cape Breton writer and painter.

INTERVOX

Magazine Of New Directions



“If mankind is to survive, we shall need a substantially new manner of thinking”
—Albert Einstein

Our problems (whether personal, regional or global) stem not from circumstance but from our very way of being. We can make a positive difference to the world; our only limitation is our lack of awareness.

Intervox is published quarterly in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Topics so far have included innovative approaches to spirituality, health, business, the environment, education, peace, the arts and much more. It is available by subscription (\$10.00 per year) and at news stands throughout Atlantic Canada.

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What it Means to be a Child

This year, Amnesty International undertook a campaign that focussed on the tragic problem of child abuse throughout the world. Jennifer Prosser Wade, who recently left the Maritimes for work on the West Coast, is an Amnesty activist. Here, she reflects on some of the many problems facing young people the world over.

Far too many children today face the prospect of a uniquely hopeless world, one in which most of them will remain illiterate, malnourished and poor, even though resources are available that could educate, heal, nurture and care for them. The most fundamental rights of children are being denied in countries all around the world, and the consequences of this are dire: children who have never been given hope cannot pass on hope; children who have never known caring cannot pass on caring; children who have never known commitment cannot pass on commitment. Children pass on only what they themselves know — that is a truth of the ages. When we read that one-third of Brazil's children are growing up on the streets (and I doubt the figure is much different in most other Latin American countries), then we have reason to fear for the future. When we see seven-year-olds in El Salvador and Nicaragua, children unable even to read or write, carrying guns, then we have even more reason to fear for the future. Whole populations are pinning their hopes on "kids with guns" in areas of the world where the superpowers compete for control. A 1988 report to the United Nations from a London-based Quaker group estimated that the world's armies include 200,000 children, either brutally conscripted, or persuaded by the parents to join in order to get uniforms, food, shelter, and perhaps even some privileges.

But even worse things are happening to children than being conscripted

Jennifer Prosser Wade

involuntarily, if worse there can be. In South Africa, hundreds of children have, in recent years, been held in illegal detention: some, like Fani Kaduka, have been kept in solitary confinement for two to three months; others have been detained and beaten with fists, whips and rifle butts by police; still

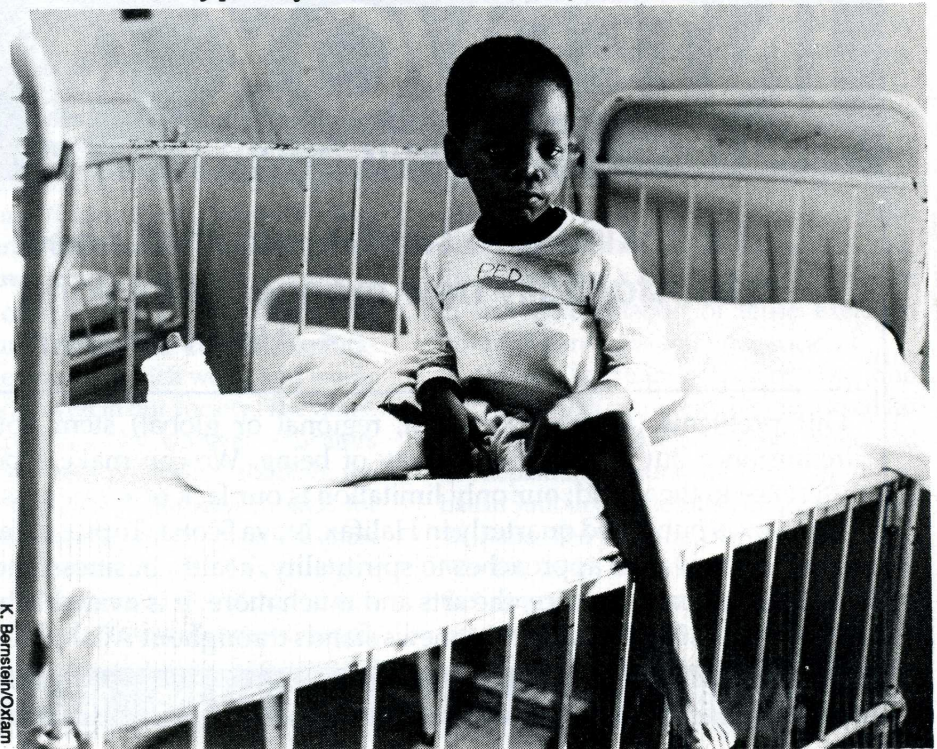
others have been assaulted sexually and given electric shocks during intimidating interrogations. South African doctors have said that 15,000 is a conservative estimate of the number of children detained by that country's police between September, 1984 and

the end of 1986. During the same period, approximately 25,000 children were arrested on charges arising from political protest and unrest. But it is not only under apartheid that African children are suffering. In Uganda, children feel unsafe walking to school because of the armed "children" in that nation's army.

In yet other parts of the world children have been the victims of militarization and brutality. Bombings, arson, rape, detention and torture in jails have all had their effect on Filipino children. On March 29, 1986 the residents of a small village were massacred and literally thrown in a toilet hole. Among them were two boys aged five and seven, and a seventeen-year-old girl, Celine Vicente, who was gang-raped before her body was mutilated. Doctors and psychologists dealing with traumatized children — including the offspring of political prisoners, either born or raised in Filipino jails — have



Children in many parts of the world are victims of militarization and brutality.



K. Bernstein/Oxfam

Where and how do we begin to repair a world where so many children suffer deprivation?



Jonathan Leaning/Oxfam-DEVERIC

commented on the low resistance these children have to respiratory ailments and other diseases. They have also spoken of the lethargy, ready feelings of defeat, irregular sleep patterns and frequent nightmares these children suffer. And, according to Beth Marcelino, who founded the Children's Rehabilitation Centre in the Manila suburb of Quezon City, they also have trouble speaking and relating to others as well.

Last year Amnesty International launched a campaign on behalf of children the world over who have been victims of political repression. "Innocence and vulnerability are no protection against abuses of power by the state," the world-wide human rights organization said in a news release announcing their campaign and citing human rights violations against children in eighteen countries. Amnesty supporters found themselves writing letters on behalf of these children: a seven-year-old in the Ethiopian capital's Central Prison; four Anatolian village boys given electric shocks by Turkish security forces; an eight-year-old in Ecuador who was placed over a roll of barbed wire and beaten by police; an Afghan schoolboy who was interrogated by police and subsequently "disappeared"; three hundred children arrested, tortured and imprisoned in Iraq; "missing" Argentinian children; a fourteen-year-old Chilean

boy whose crime it was to be the son of a political prisoner; a twelve-year-old sentenced to death in Pakistan for robbery; a thirteen-year-old boy who disappeared in Sri Lanka. Despite the length of this list, Amnesty knows it reveals only the tip of a massive iceberg — atrocities against children have become commonplace.

In many other nations, while there may not be actual atrocities against children taking place, an atmosphere of violence pervades society and intrudes into young lives. In 1982, *Time* magazine ran a report entitled "The Children of War." Young people from five war zones were interviewed; Northern Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, Thailand (Cambodian refugees), and Hong Kong (Vietnamese refugees). The stories these children told were ones of sadness and horror, but they were also tales of indomitable endurance. The long-term effect of growing up in a world of chaos and fragility, of fatigues and bomb blasts, of bigotry and hatred has still to be measured. These war-torn children are often propelled prematurely into adulthood and surrounded by an atmosphere of suspicion that cannot help but leave marks on them. Many of them have witnessed profoundly hideous sights — such as the cannibalism observed by those fleeing Vietnam in leaky boats — that will leave life-long scars. Since the *Time*

article was written, more children have come to know the effects of chemical and thallium poisoning, displacement and tragedy.

One of these tragedies is that of children deserted — abandoned often by completely destitute young mothers. In Bangladesh, for example, where husbands can leave a wife on a whim, 85% of women are extremely poor; thousands of abandoned young girls are sold into slavery and prostitution, and are later jailed — because they are prostitutes.

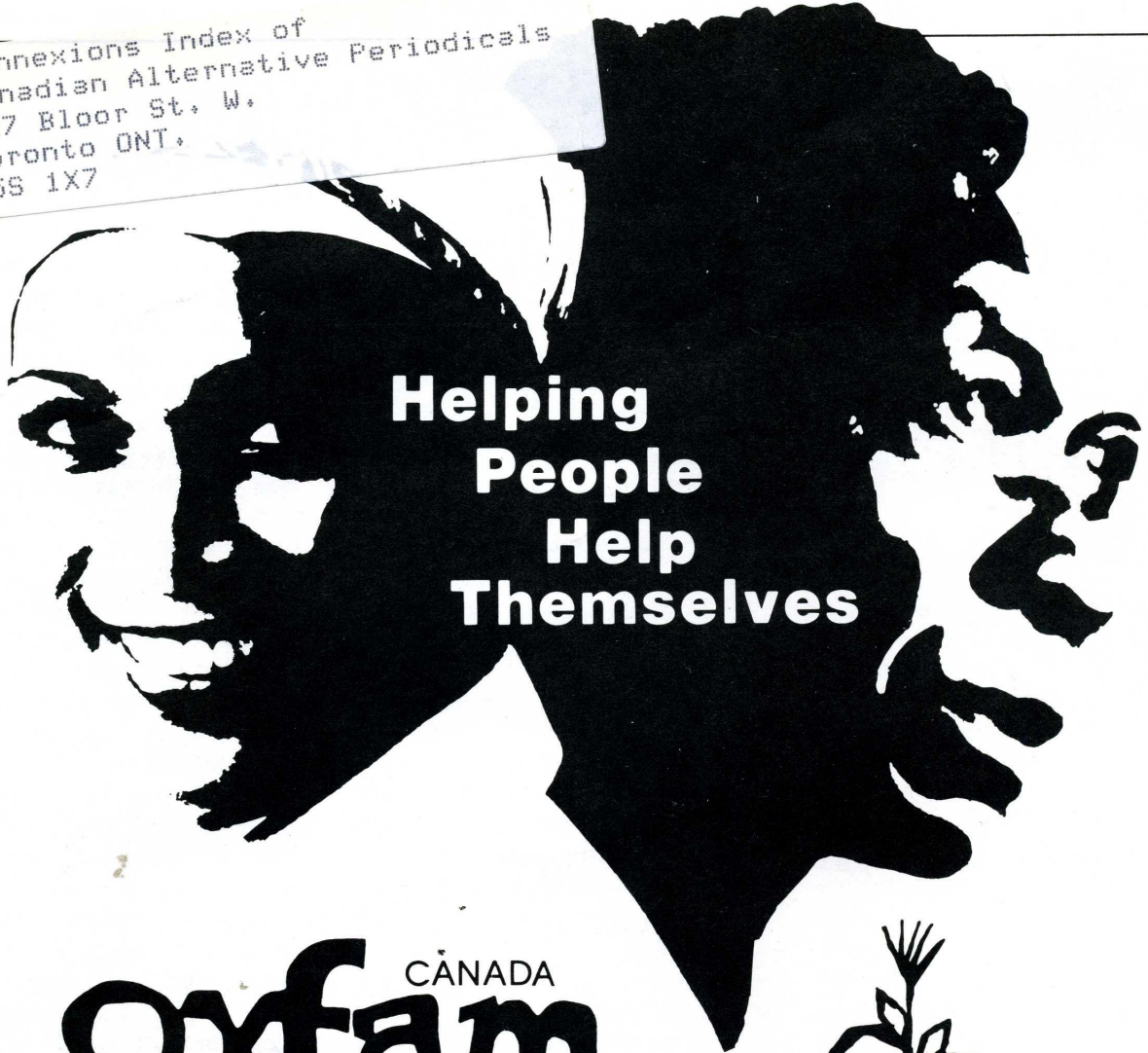
Given such a dismal portrayal of the state of the world's children, one might wonder what hope there is for the future. One thinks of a wish once expressed by Bertrand Russell; if all children could have security from want, security of affection, and security of some sort from a liberal education, the world could be miraculously transformed. But simple as such a wish is, its fulfillment seems unlikely.

Poet Francis Thompson once posed the question of what it means to be a child. Surely, he suggested, it means to share a sense of wonder, to have curiosity, to want to love and be loved, to be open and adaptable, to be honest. But the world today is not a safe, warm and cosy place that provides an opportunity for most children to know what being a child can mean. Rather, greed, fear and selfishness have brought about situations where children, surrounded by sadness and death, are propelled, too early, into adulthood. And those of us who try to be honest are left asking what hope there is for justice, and hence, for peace. How long can the band-aids applied by the many non-governmental organizations, and by groups like Amnesty International, hold out? Where and how do we begin to repair a world where so many children suffer deprivations and atrocities?

A lot of hard thinking must be done and a lot of loving kindness must be found to make better the state of the world's children, and it must be done soon. •

A slightly different, and shorter, version of this article was recently published by The Christian Science Monitor.

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