

Opinion page

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Violence and puck politics

Law must become social therapy, not penalty

By JOSEPH POLONSKY

We cannot rely merely on the evidence of our raw northern winters as an explanation of our collective cultural formation.

After all, the Russians too have winter. Let us simply say that it is some conniving substance germinating in the soul of our "Canadian-ness" that makes us the brutish hockey players we have come to be.

For it is undeniable, regardless of all circumstance, that it is brutishness which distinguishes the "Canadianity" of our style of playing the game. It is this noted infamy of our hockey essence which, no doubt, provided the Soviet officials with the emotional clout that allowed them to announce, just before the start of the final game, that any Canadian irregularities would result in the immediate suspension of further play. One must deal emphatically with wild men; obviously, a rule of thumb one has patiently harvested from wide experience in dealing with peasants and authors.

BIG HUSH

A nagging silence gathers about this moral announcement on the reprehensibility of violence in sport.

Firstly, there exists an apparently shared assumption of the natural state of Soviet hockey enlightenment, which prevents the possibility of there emerging some Soviet irregularity which might itself prevent the continuation of play. We must take for granted that unruly elbows have been long banished from the Soviet rink.

Further, there is the puzzling timing of the announcement. Why were the foreigners ostracized not after the bloody enthusiasm of the Thursday game, (the most violent,) but after Saturday's game, the most peaceful and one of the best played of the series?

Do we have here an instance of delayed bureaucracy; the pure joy of the ability of the authorities to gesture the presence of their own authority?

There is also the question of the effects of such a gesture on the generally good-

humoured relations between the two countries that had existed throughout the series. A certain calm had insisted itself in the hearts of men, which the Soviets felt compelled to crush. The atmosphere had become insufficiently paranoiac to please the authorities.

REMINDER

But perhaps the gesture was not really directed towards Canadian eyes. Perhaps it acted more as a reminder to the Soviet citizens of the necessity to keep on their guard, of their public duty to fear any relaxation of mood in dealing with Westerners. The Soviet borders must be as diligently defended as before. The peacefulness of hockey detente might lead the minds of citizens astray.

They might forget the pressing menace of Western attack, the need for arms now, and the futurity of any real freedom. It is not good for citizens to succumb to the myth of peace. It is even a greater threat for the longevity of governments.

And it is the perceptive appreciation of such facts of life, which makes faces stern. A twinkling eye and a softened mouth are crimes against the state.

We can probably assume that the piece of data which validated the Soviet pronouncement was Rick Ley's fight with a Soviet player at the end of the Thursday game. Ley's act was an obvious act of violence. It was illegal.

But if we dare extend the horizons of our vision, we might better comprehend Ley's outburst as a wild attempt at protesting the legal violence of the refereeing which the Canadians were forced to suffer passively throughout the game.

FRUSTRATION

Viewed abstractly, Ley's action was criminal. But, placed within the entire context of the game, the fighting can be seen as a reaction to the absurd wielding of power which completely frustrated any possibility of there being a fair hockey game in which

both sides were treated with equal scrutiny by the referees. The desire of the Soviet coach to send Ley to jail for fifteen days concealed a willed ignorance of the blatant invitation to violence that the unfair allocation of penalties precipitated.

In other words, any consideration of the concrete situation of the fight was repressed, so that Ley could be chalked up as a criminal; a typical Canadian hockey player. The choice to understand the outburst as one that would make sense as a reaction to an unfair situation was outlawed so that the Soviets could rest assured with their "beauty and the beast" representation of the hockey series.

PENAL CODE

The Soviet coach's ready reliance on the legal system to penalize the criminal Ley belies a mode of political life common to both East and West. We can see the same conception of the legal system as essentially a matter of penalization, at work in our own back yard as well as theirs.

We possess, in our society, a notion of the law as a kind of menacing grid of complicated statutes which we must stay clear of in order to avoid pain. Whether it be Nelson Rockefeller's citation of the law as a justification of the Attica massacre which killed forty-three people, or the Canadian Supreme Court's handling of the Henry Morgentaler abortion trial, there is a resort to the law as penalty which distorts any deeper discussion of the everyday social production of the crime.

Such discussion would make relevant questions of abject economic need, class or sex inequalities, who benefits and who loses by the enforcement of a particular law, and what service does the law perform for the general well-being of the community.

Why did Attica come about in the first place?

Why would a man like Morgentaler, a humane and respectable doctor, consciously go out and break the law?

Why would Ley punch a Soviet player?

The resort to bare legalities such as, if a doctor can be proven to have committed an abortion he should go to jail, masks the knowledge that law is fundamentally a social practice, and not just an automatic application of law 'x' to crime 'y'. Law should be a social process which actively integrates the interpretation of events and the interpretation of rules.

If the law is to exist not simply as a dispenser of penalties, but more radically as an instrument of public therapy that digs out communal ills at their roots, it must be practised with care, from the inside of an event, rather than aloofly, from without.

HIDDEN VIOLENCE

The Soviet coach's legalistic handling of the category of criminality can fetch out for us an appreciation of how we employ such abstractions to banish criminals in our own society. The treatment of Ley as a criminal might encourage us to reflect upon our own social uses of legality, and the hidden nature of our own violence, when we unthinkingly clobber others with our ready-made categories.

But despite any ill treatment the Canadian team suffered in Moscow, one positive thing that the hockey series did produce was the conferring of celebrity status upon that exuberant fan, Howie Meeker. And justly so. His enthusiasm and love for the game, and his intimate knowledge revealed in his showing how each goal occurred and why penalties were called, make him one of the most incisive and fair analysts of sport television has ever produced. His penetration of the activity which surrounded each goal or penalty revealed that they were not completely fortuitous occurrences but made sense within the context of the action.

'Goals' and 'penalties' no longer appeared as isolated words in the incessant patter of the sportscaster's commentary. Rather, they took on fresh meaning as they became concrete tools in the understanding and enjoyment of hockey.

Letters To The Editor

Alienation made easy by lack of information

It's about now that "first year blues" start to be felt among a fair number of first year students, especially the ones from out of town or from the less affluent parts of the city.

This place seems big, strange, and very impersonal. They don't know anyone and no one seems to give a damn about wanting to know them. They look around and see the kids from the smug middle class Toronto districts or ethnic groups sticking together with all the old gang from pre-York days and they feel cut off. When they try to strike up a conversation in a class or corridor they get a complete cold shoulder. Given all the turmoil of coping with the classes, the additional burden of loneliness is almost too much to bear sometimes.

Maybe it was always thus in big city universities. After all, a Western or Queen's we ain't. But say a person is willing to do a little more than just stand around moping. Say he or she has no great burning passions for the arts, crafts, politics or sports but wouldn't mind trying out a few clubs, groups or organizations devoted to those things just as a way of getting to meet a few people.

What the person really wants is a

comprehensive list of all the extra-curricular groups around here. Something that tells what they do, when, where, what kind of membership they have and what kind of new members they want. Then it can be looked over and one can decide which ones to try.

Seems like a simple, sensible sort of an idea, doesn't it? Certainly better than the six million pieces of paper, posters, etc. that chaotically festoon every nook and cranny of wall space.

But is such a comprehensive list available? NO! Nothing even faintly like such a thing is to be found.

Would it really be asking too much for the CYSF, the Administration, YES, the joint colleges, somebody to try to put one together and get it into the hands of the first year students when they register?

It's probably asking too much to organize "clubs, groups, sports and sundries" day where all would set up booths to talk to the newcomers, but surely a little list wouldn't be too tough, would it?

Society may be alienating everyone anyway these days, but does a place like York have to make it so easy?

VIC MURRAY

CYSF offers nothing to Bethune, referendum should reject union

By JAMES McMURDO

It has been said that in order for democracy to work, it must be seen to be working.

Those who advocate Bethune College's joining the Council of York Students Federation, pointing to the need for a unified student voice, see CYSF as the "logical mouthpiece for student constituents" on issues concerning all students.

To quote the lead editorial in the October 31 edition of Excalibur, "CYSF is still the most effective means of dealing with many campus-wide student issues."

To this argument that Bethune should vote to join CYSF, I would adapt my opening line to read, "In order for CYSF to work it must be seen to be working."

The effectiveness of any organization designed to work in the interests of its constituents, can not be based on theorized potential but on what it has actually done for its constituents. To again quote Excalibur, "CYSF's performance record at least over the past few years has been dismal." The students of Bethune College acting in any kind of responsible matter will not and should not vote to join any organization that consistently fails to achieve the potential that its proponents say it has.

NO STUDENT SUFFERED

What we in Bethune who fight to remain out of CYSF say to each student at York University is this: "Can you think of any way that CYSF has benefited you?" Bethune College has never belonged to CYSF and no student of the college can say that he or she has suffered as a consequence.

According to Allan Cox, who is unfamiliar with the

workings of Bethune College, "the council has been forced to accept the obvious fact that services are provided by CYSF to Bethune." We on council would like to set the record straight. We are not forced to accept the obvious. The referendum is being held in recognition of the fact that college membership has changed and old decisions should be reviewed as a democratic right of the new members.

Any services provided by CYSF to Bethune students are a result of a negotiated settlement by an elected representative of Bethune College. There were no whims involved. All decisions made in Bethune are a result of the elected council making them.

CAMPUS VOICE

To say that Bethune lacks a campus voice is to ignore the fact that the chairman and vice-chairman of the Food Services committee are Bethune representatives.

The chairman of the caucus of student senators is a Bethune student.

In the area of social, academic and cultural contribution to the entire campus, Bethune has become the leader. Bethune College can and does provide a range of activities that satisfies all its members because the entire Bethune community is asked to participate in the selection of programmes.

A strong rejection of CYSF in the October 16th Referendum by Bethune will serve to accentuate the inadequacies of CYSF and perhaps bring about changes that will see Bethune opt into that famous "community as a whole" we in Bethune hear so much about but fail to see working.

• James McMurdo is the chairman of the Bethune student council.