

Middle-east struggle erupts at Killam lecture

by David Olie

Seldom do violent events of the international scene find an echo, however faint, on the peaceful streets of Halifax. But that peace was violated Tuesday evening as Dalhousie got a taste of the hatred and bitterness currently wracking the state of Lebanon, still embroiled, after so many years, in civil war.

The occasion was a scheduled presentation by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah called "Palestine Today". It was to be presented in the MacMechan Room of the Killam Library on behalf of the Canada-Palestine Association, a domestic affiliate organization of the PLO. The presentation included a talk and slide show on the bloody massacre of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of West Beirut, one year ago this month.

Controversy surrounded this event from the outset. Originally scheduled for the Burke Educa-

tion Centre at St. Mary's University, it was cancelled by officials of that institution when "threats against the University" were received by phone. St. Mary's administration has not yet elaborated on the nature of these threats. Notice of the cancellation was received only thirty hours before the meeting was scheduled to begin, despite the fact that the Education Centre was booked two weeks in advance.

The Canada-Palestine Association is considering legal action against SMU.

In a last-minute effort to find a forum for its views, the CPA turned to Dalhousie, which granted use of the McMechan Room. Security was tight, including both Dalhousie Security and four city police officers.

By 7:15 pm a raucous crowd had already gathered in the library courtyard, numbering over seventy persons; CPA sup-

porters and sympathizers on the one hand and members of the Lebanese Maronite Christian community on the other.

As the doors opened, both groups crowded in to try to gain a majority of seats, a contest which the Lebanese group won. It became clear when Dr. Abdullah entered the room that the flag-waving Lebanese had no intention of allowing him to address the crowd until their own representative had spoken.

Security and HPD on hand decided on the basis of this already volatile situation to give the room over to the Lebanese for a period of time to register their opposition. They were then expected to leave.

The speech by their representative, the Reverend Dr. Aokar,

lasted some fifteen minutes, punctuated by shouts of "PLO out of Lebanon!" and catcalls at every mention of Syria. It soon became clear the Maronites had

no intention of giving up the room until the CPA meeting was cancelled. One Lebanese shouted to Max Keeping, Head of Security, "We will pay for the room for the night." Keeping had no choice but to end the sit-in by cancelling Dr. Abdullah's presentation.

The victorious Lebanese group then stood, sang their national anthem, and prayed to the memory of the late Lebanese president Bashir Bemayel, assassinated just one year ago. As the excited crowd left the room they met the CPA supporters who had been waiting their turn outside. The mob began jostling as they moved towards the foyer, and fighting, if not even greater violence, became a certainty.

A few Lebanese cornered Dr. Abdullah and verbally abused him until police managed to free him and send him out the back door. This appeared to be the signal for fist-fighting to erupt within the crowd.

An Indian student, apparently mistaken for a Palestinian, was thrown to the floor and kicked repeatedly until police, now making use of their nightsticks, forcibly restrained the assailants. By now a pair of policemen were injured, as well as a number of participants and bystanders, and there was blood on the floor.

The arrival of more police, along with the efforts of some of the more cool-headed members of the mob, brought the violence to a gradual end. To his credit, Rev. Aokar made considerable efforts to restrain his followers.

"It's ... the pits" said Keeping after the feuding factions had been separated as well as possible by the locked doors of the library. Such violence has not been seen on campus for many years. Three persons were arrested on charges including assault, illegal possession of a weapon, and resisting arrest.

There was potential for even greater mayhem, but only the sterling efforts of police and security men prevented further bloodshed. Caroline Zayid, daughter of the organizer of the CPA program, confessed afterward to having been "afraid of my father being hurt", a fear shared by others. At the conclusion, eleven patrol cars and a paddy wagon were on the scene.

What kinds of emotions can lead to such an outpouring of ill-will? Rev. Aokar said in his speech that "Lebanon hangs on the cross because all they want is the peace." Among his followers there is a genuine anger at the horrors visited upon their unfortunate country and its people over the last decade. Yet their explanation of the horror is that "The PLO is to blame for everything", surely a self-serving and unrealistic view. On the other hand, Dr. Abdullah was present with evidence that the PLO is not to blame for everything, and that the very people supported by Rev. Aokar have been responsible for horrors of their own.

Tuesday night saw an encounter between outraged victims and outraged victims, and under these circumstances, turmoil is highly likely. We can be sure that the situation will not end here, however.

Video controversy at the Grawood

by Bob Morrison

The issue of sexist activities taking place in the SUB has once again reared its ugly head, as pornographic films were shown during a private stag party held in the Grawood Lounge three weeks ago. In reaction to this the Student Union executive has taken disciplinary action against two SUB employees.

A group consisting mainly of lawyers from a downtown law firm received permission from the Grawood Management to hold a "private party" for a lawyer who was getting married.

A section of the Grawood was allotted to them by the Bar Manager, Drew Taylor. After closing of this section with a curtain, the group proceeded to show pornographic films.

When SUB Night Manager Brian Paris discovered what was taking place he informed members of the Student Union executive. Student Union Treasurer Shawn Houlihan said he then went outside and saw that the film was clearly visible from the street. "It was a typical black and white porn film—and it couldn't have been more pornographic," he said.

The following day a meeting was held between members of the Student Union executive, Asst. SUB Manager Pat Hartling,

Student Union Manager John Graham and all of the people involved in the incident.

The Student Union executive then decided to suspend Drew Taylor for a two-week period without pay and placed him on a three-month probation period. Tim Pertus, Grawood Manager, was also placed on three months probation.

Taylor was suspended because he was present at the time the films were shown but failed to stop them. Pertus was disciplined for failing to immediately stop the showing of the film when he was informed of it. Feeling the damage had already been done, he allowed the group to finish showing the film.

Pat Hartling, the Asst. Manager of the SUB, praised the method used by the Student Union executive in assessing the situation and therefore felt the disciplinary actions taken were appropriate.

Houlihan was critical of how Taylor and Pertus handled the situation. "They were very sneaky about the whole thing," he said, explaining that when Susan McIntyre (Vice President - Internal) entered the Grawood that evening, "they (staff members) came over and were very polite to her to make certain she would stay away from the closed off area," he said.

Houlihan said the SUB's policy on such activities should have

been clear to both men. "They know the Student Union does not condone any form of sexist activity," he added.

Taylor refused to comment on the incident, but Pertus said, "I guess I should have told them to pack it in but I said, 'Hell—let them finish because it was an older crowd and later in the evening.'" He added that they had asked the group in advance if there would be any entertainment. The group had said no.

Pertus said he doesn't feel bitter about the disciplinary action, admitting, "It was an improper managerial decision on our part—or more accurately, an error in judgement."

Houlihan expressed concern that the SUB's liquor license could have been put in jeopardy. "If a liquor inspector had seen what I did we could have lost our license and 150 student jobs would have been lost," he said.

"It's important not to blow the incident out of proportion—the film equipment was not brought in by staff; the only problem was that it wasn't stopped in time and we will make certain it will never happen again!" said Student Union President Tim Hill.



The Grawood: The eye of the storm.