

## More Mao than thou

# From teach-in to thump-out

What promised to be a productive and informative panel discussion on the federal cabinet's invocation of the War Measures Act last Thursday rapidly degenerated into the stupidest confrontation that has ever taken place at Dalhousie.

The panel, sponsored by the Dalhousie Law Society, included Penny Simpson, of the Ligue Socialiste Ouvrier, and le Front d'Action Politique (FRAP), Keith Jobson, of the Nova Scotia NDP and law professor at Dalhousie; Professor P. D. Pillay, history professor and emigre from the Union of South Africa (U.S.A.) and Professor G. V.V. Nicholls, professor of administrative law. Nicholls was the only panel member who spoke in support of the War Measures Act.

Superintendent Ross of "H" Detachment of the R.C.M.P. had originally been slated as one of the panel members but in some mysterious and devious way he found out that a demonstration was going to take place. Proffering apologies to the meeting organizers, Ross suddenly discovered that he had a previous commitment in Sydney.

"Some regard their fantasies as truth, while others strain to realize in the present an ideal which can only be realized in the future. They alienate themselves from the current practice of the majority of the people and from the realities of the day, and show themselves adventurist in their actions."

— Mao Tse-tung, On Practice

A few minutes after the meeting got under way, five members of the Dalhousie Student Movement (Marxist-Leninist) walked in carrying placards denouncing the War Measures Act. Their arrival was greeted with laughter and a few catcalls. "The demonstrating persons came in and stood quietly at the back of the room until Professor Nicholls finished speaking, and then they burst into shouting slogans, and reading a speech, and this went on for several minutes until, it seems to me, someone snatched a sign from one of the demonstrators. At that point blows were exchanged and you have what's going on now." (Keith Jobson, interviewed by Dal Radio Thursday, October 29.)

Keith Jobson was strongly opposed to the implementation of the Act: "I think that the War Measures Act, in transferring the decision-making powers of Parliament to the cabinet has faced us with a problem of the utmost gravity, and I find it a very sad thing for us to have to meet here today to discuss what I regard as a very fundamental constitutional upset." He outlined the significance of the suspension of common law rights such as bail, the powers of arrest and searches, and freedom of speech and association.

The next speaker was Penny Simpson. She had hardly begun when she was loudly denounced for "hobnobbing with pro-Fascists!" This denunciation provoked a good deal of laughter, which ceased when Subir Roy, one of the Internationalists,

began reading a speech on the War Measures Act. When it became obvious that he was not going to stop his speech, a shoving match began between the Internationalists and some members of the audience.

"Our dogmatists are lazybones. They refuse to undertake any painstaking study of concrete things, they regard general truths as emerging out of the void, they turn them into purely abstract unfathomable formulas, and thereby completely deny and reverse the normal sequence by which man comes to know truth. Nor do they understand the interconnection of the two processes in cognition — from the particular to the general and then from the general to the particular. They understand nothing of the Marxist theory of knowledge."

— Mao Tse-tung, On Contradiction.

It quickly escalated into a vicious two-minute free-for-all involving at least fifteen people.

Witnesses also report that around this time there were four uniformed city policemen outside the Law Building, although they did not intervene at any point in the meeting. It is not known how long they had been outside the Law School, or who called them.

Penny Simpson finally got a chance to speak, after the room quieted down somewhat. She told the audience of her arrest and of conditions in jail during the six days she was held. "The most significant thing about the War Measures Act is . . . that it in fact opens the door for every government to do what they bloody well please." She referred to mayor Tom Campbell of Vancouver, who is trying to get the B.C. legislature to pass "its own little War Measures Act", and to the fact that "the city of Vancouver is attempting to ban all radical meetings in the city of Vancouver."

Dr. Pillay briefly outlined some British Commonwealth legislation comparable to the War Measures Act, especially that of Britain and South Africa. In South Africa, there is a practice of picking political undesirables up off the street, holding them without trial for ninety days, releasing them, and then arresting them again as soon as they get back on the sidewalk. Think about that one.

## Don't fight — struggle

The Internationalists, under various aliases, have plagued the revolutionary left all across Canada for several years. No group in human history has enjoyed the tremendous success of alienating so many people from socialism as have the Internationalists. For example; last Thursday, five Internationalists destroyed whatever positive effect the teach-in on the War Measures Act might have had. It was obvious to anyone at the teach-in that many people who attended had no clear idea at all of what the War Measures Act really means. That's why they were there.

But, instead of using the discussion as a forum to bring out the facts surrounding the occupation of Quebec by Canadian troops, the Internationalists chose to disrupt the meeting. There's absolutely nothing wrong with disrupting meetings.

The following interchange took place between Robert A. Samek, a member of the law faculty, and William LeVire, a member of the Internationalists, shortly after the first mass democratic fist-fight, and shortly before the second one.

Anon.: (Boomingly) "Death To Fascism!!!"

Anon.: (Reverberatingly) "Death To Fascism!!!"

LeVire: (Loudly) "Do you support fascism!!?!!!"

Samek: (Timidly) "I don't support your nonsense."

LeVire: (Redundantly) "Do you support Fascism!!?!! Answer the question!!!"

Samek: (Firmly) "I don't support fascism and I'm against your stupid . . ."

LeVire: (Impatiently) "Say it out loudly!!!! Say it out loudly that you don't support fascism!!!"

Samek: (Again) "I don't say anything that you tell me to."

LeVire: (Illogically) "All right!!!! So you support fascism!!!"

Samek: (Resignedly) "Why don't you go out peacefully?"

But disruption is only possible when those in authority refuse to go through the

motions of having a "dialogue" with the people whom they are oppressing. In a situation where it is possible to argue intelligently with people who are at least willing to listen to what you have to say, disruption is unnecessary and destructive.

There were people at the teach-in who did not know that the entire Bill of Rights has been suspended indefinitely, that the cabinet has made it a crime punishable by five years in prison to have sympathized in the past with the F.L.Q. or its goals, or that the Q.P.P. have arrested at least 750 people as of two weeks ago.

Many people who support the War Measures Act do so because they think it was brought into effect to help the Q.P.P. and the Army catch the F.L.Q. members responsible for the kidnappings. The fact is that the Act was brought in for three reasons: 1) to intimidate any significant support for FRAP in the Montreal civic elections; 2) to neutralize the growing student and labour strikes in support of the F.L.Q. manifesto (when the War Measures Act went into effect 15,000 university and CEGEP students were already on strike) and 3) to round up anyone in opposition to Trudeau, Bourassa and Drapeau.

Not only were F.L.Q. members arrested; several hundred of those detained are members or supporters of the Parti Quebecois, which has made a policy of expelling terrorists. Singers, poets, journalists and students were selectively arrested, including Robert Charlebois, the Bob Dylan of Quebec. Even the head of the right-wing cultural-nationalist St. Jean Baptiste Society was arrested.

Few, if any, of those who have been questioned by the Q.P.P. were asked anything about the F.L.Q. or if they had any knowledge about the kidnappings of James Cross and Pierre LaPorte. Hundreds have been held incommunicado, have not been permitted to see a lawyer, and have been fingerprinted and photographed without being charged by the police. The War Measures Act does not allow the police to do this. No act allows the police to do this. It is against the law.

The way to deal with the situation we find ourselves in today is not to parade around with signs and provoke people into fights, but to struggle.

The Internationalists think that argument comes too close to compromise for them to sully themselves with it. As a result of this craving for purity, they have reduced the whole world to a simple polarity: either you support what they stand for, or you are a fascist with them or you get thrown out of their "open" meetings.

What is frightening is the degree to which they conform to the media's idea of what a revolutionary is. Revolutionaries are simplistic. Revolutionaries are inflexible, and incomprehensible. Revolutionaries are violent.

Revolution is a Bad Thing.

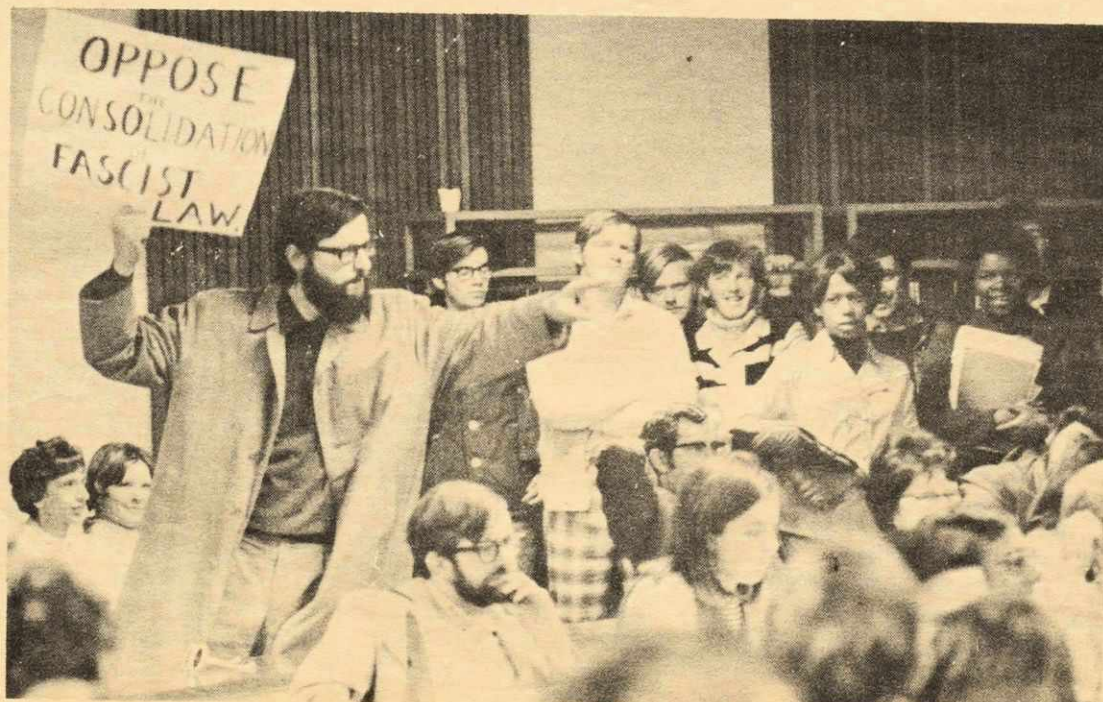


photo by Elio Dolente