

Abdullah in Halifax

The Middle East explained

The background to the 30 year crisis in the Middle East, and the present Palestinian view on the 'peace' efforts will be the focus of a public meeting Thursday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m. in the McInnes Room, Dalhousie SUB. The speaker, Abdullah Abdullah—Director of the Palestine Section of the Arab Information Centre, Ottawa—is one of the principal Palestinian spokespeople in Canada.

Uprooted and scattered from their homeland in the series of successive wars that have racked the Middle East since the 1940's, the Palestinians have refused to lie over and pray dead. After waiting for almost two decades in refugee camps for the right to return home,

the Palestinians began to realize that only through their own efforts would their homeland be returned to them.

The formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964—now widely recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people—marked a giant step forward. They now had a cohesive, independent organization which could give practical expression for their overwhelming desire to return. Although their struggle since then has been difficult and winding, the Palestinians' desire to liberate their homeland and to build a democratic secular state where Jews, Moslems and Christians can live together,



has only grown in determination.

On the current 'peace' efforts in the Middle East, the 'Israeli' position has been consistent with their historical denial of Palestinian rights. For example, Menacher Begin, the 'Israeli' Prime Minister, has offered 'self-rule' for the Palestinians, but has insisted on 'Israeli' armed forces remaining as the dominant military force in the area. His proposal is little different than the sham 'independence' of the Bantustans in South Africa. It is becoming clear that Begin has little intention of giving up the territories conquered in the 1967 war, let alone recognizing the Palestinian right to self-determination in Palestine.

Are the Palestinians discouraged by the present turn of events? Yassar Arafat, of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was asked in an interview with the Manchester Guardian in late January whether the present difficulties would tire the Palestinians and their Arab supporters. He replied: "I don't think so. It is not struggle which tires people, but oppression... We shall pass through hard times, there is no doubt, but it won't be the first ordeal the Arab nation has passed through."

The meeting is being sponsored by the Canada-Palestine Association of Halifax.

TWAS FUNDAY IN THE KINGDOM AND ALL THE HIGH COUNTS, LOW COUNTS, VIS-COUNTS, NO-A-COUNTS AND COUNTS WHO COULDN'T COUNT WERE GATHERED ROUND THE CORNERS OF THE ROUND TABLE DRINKING EGG-NOG BECAUSE BEER HAD NOT YET BEEN INVENTED. WHEN IN WALKED THE BARMAID, "WE'RE LOOKING FOR HELP WITH THE SCIENCE SOCIETY BALL", SHE CRIED! CHAIRS FLEW HERE AND THERE. CHAIRS FLEW EVERYWHERE. CHAIRS FLEW AT RANDOM. RANDOM DUCKED, AND A CHAIR HIT THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCIENCE SOCIETY. "HELP", HE CRIED! IMMEDIATELY, THE ROOM CLEARED AS EVERYONE IN THE PLACE HURRIED TO DO THE PRESIDENT'S BIDDING. WHEN ALL OF THE EXCITEMENT WAS OVER AND EVERYONE HAD VOLUNTEERED TO HELP, WE FOUND THAT WE STILL NEEDED A FEW MORE PEOPLE. SO WHY DON'T YOU PHONE 422-7800, ASK FOR DAVE OR GORD AND OFFER US A HAND. WE ONLY NEED A FEW PEOPLE, BUT THE MORE THAT OFFER THE BETTER IT WILL BE. SEE YOU THERE, MARCH 18TH.

continued from page 5

whether I am good or not—and would like to point out several things to Mr. Epstein—at absolutely no charge.

To begin with, I don't think anyone can predict what the Supreme Court will do next with the Canadian Constitution, not even the best of lawyers. If they could, we wouldn't need court cases. And, it is obvious that Mr. Epstein has not read any cases in which the court has applied a strict interpretation to the BNA Act. In fact, some courts have stated the constitution is like a ship with closed, watertight compartments, which must be construed strictly.

The whole tenor of the article seems to me to suggest that Council should just side step the provisions of the Constitution whenever they feel the need. This overlooks several minor items. The first is that the Constitution is the instrument which gives Council its very breath of life. To skirt its terms would be to make the results what the law calls *ultra vires*, which means 'to no effect'. Hence, such measures would be tantamount to being illegal—but not in the criminal sense. As well, to give it a little more weight, the Constitution of the Student Union was passed verbatim as an Act of the Nova Scotia Legislature. Does Mr. Epstein suggest we ignore this fact when necessary?

When the courts do give a liberal interpretation of the Constitution, it is an interpretation of the words used where they are ambiguous. What Mr. Epstein seems to be suggesting is that Council can skirt around the procedures outlined in the Constitution—something, I think, that the courts would never suggest. That would be like suggesting that where needed, the courts could say that Parliament could sit six years rather than the required five under the BNA Act. The court would have to follow the procedure set out. That is what

council has always done. Granted, sometimes it may seem stupid—but it must be followed in all cases—otherwise it would not be a constitution. Such an approach is not an interpretation of words, unless Mr. Epstein is suggesting that in the above example, he would read the word five to read six.

In addition, in Canada, it is the Court and not the legislature that interprets the BNA Act. Council does not have that advantage in as easy a form, and thus they must often interpret the Constitution themselves. For that very reason, and to protect the interests of students, it should be followed as closely and strictly as possible.

Mr. Epstein next talks of the interests of students being defeated by the use of the Constitution. Those situations are rare. The Constitution is there to protect the interests of students and as it stands must be followed. If more change is needed to protect those interests within the document itself, may I remind Mr. Epstein that he was present for the changes made this year and he didn't come up with many useful changes.

Thus, I would suggest that before Mr. Epstein makes more comments on the Constitution, he learn a little more about it. He claims to be part of the responsible part of Council and looks for hope in the future. If this is so, I am glad I am retiring—since what this "responsible" Councillor is suggesting is that Council can circumvent the document which allows him to be there. What kind of responsibility is this? Is this what he means by conscientious?

He closes the article by saying that perhaps the next year will allow Council to enjoy a good harvest. I doubt it—since Mr. Epstein has been out gathering all the crops for himself—since he was obviously out to lunch when he wrote his article.

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