

Black Panther says youth not radical enough

BY KRISHNA LALBIHARIE AND MICHAEL WINTERS

(CUP) — Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin doesn't pull any punches when it comes to politics.

"The [U.S.] government, for black Americans in particular, is one of the worst forms of modern oppression and is the source of war and economic injustice," said the former Black Panther Party member and Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ) representative.

During a recent stop in Winnipeg, Ervin, co-founder of the militant anti-racism journal Black Autonomy, said the 1960s civil rights movement was successful "mainly because of student dissension."

But today's students, the political activist says, are not following in the footsteps of their predecessors.

"The youth of today aren't active enough," he said. "When we were young, we had no rights against racist, government-

supported terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and still we fought, and we fought hard. Myself and others went to prison and died for our beliefs."

Yet the social activist's vision goes well beyond the university campus.

During another stop at the University of Alberta, Ervin spoke out against the privatization of prisons.

The Edmonton talk, organized by the Industrial Workers of the World, focused on what Ervin sees as the corporate exploitation of prison labour.

According to Ervin, corporations such as Boeing, Microsoft and General Electric have taken advantage of cheap prison labor and made millions through what he called "plants behind prisons."

"[It's] the establishment of industrial plants under the guise of altruism," he said. "You will never, ever be able to undercut prison labor when an average prisoner will make seven cents an

hour and you make a minimum wage of \$7-\$9 an hour."

Ervin warns the trend in private prisons might soon reach Alberta.

He noted the provincial government's mandate of privatization and that an American company, the Aguirre Corporation, is looking into establishing a privately owned prison in Hobbema, Alberta.

"I would hate to see some of the worst excesses of American capitalism come to Canada," said Ervin. "If there's one thing I want to get across, it's the urgency of this matter. At this particular time you can prevent the corruption,

but if you wait until the contract is finalized your chance is much more minimal."

The former Panther has good reason to be wary of the justice system.

According to Ervin, the United States government targeted him for assassination, forcing him to flee the country in 1969.

He was later arrested in Czechoslovakia and subsequently extradited to the United States, serving 15 years in prison for firearms offences before an international defense campaign won his release in 1983.

Ervin and other 60s southern black activists staged demon-

strations against the KKK, which defense counsel say led to his conviction and incarceration.

Now a community organizer on Black Anarchism and militant anti-racism, Ervin says African Americans are unfairly subject to police brutality and systems of oppression.

"Africans in America are colonized and exist as an internal colony of the U.S. white mother country," he said. "I believe that white workers must give up their privileged status, their 'white identity,' and must support racially oppressed workers in their fights for equality and national liberation."

Ottawa "lukewarm" to post-secondary education

WINNIPEG (CUP) — Student leaders are asking Ottawa for a \$4 billion boost in funding for post-secondary education (PSE).

The request was made at a conference last week, where members of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations — Canada's second largest student group — met with federal ministers.

CASA officials point out that a \$4 billion investment in PSE would fully restore funding to 1993 levels, when it was cut by \$8 billion.

At the conference, members from 17 different student unions met with federal ministers, opposition leaders and representatives from the national banks.

CASA National Director Jason Aebig said that a re-investment in PSE isn't a priority for the Liberal government.

"In general, throughout the whole conference I think there was a lukewarm response [for increase funding]," said Aebig. "It's pretty clear the government has identified its priorities [and is] going to stick to its Throne Speech."

Student leaders across

Canada were disappointed with Ottawa's Throne Speech last month, which didn't contain a single increase in transfer payments to the provinces for PSE.

The Throne Speech sets out the broad goals and directions of the federal government, as well as its strategies for achieving these goals.

Aebig adds there wasn't a commitment to PSE from the opposition at the conference, with the Reform party focusing on tax cuts.

"The reason why PSE is not a priority, and any social spending is not a priority, is because it's tax cut time," he said.

Aebig says that while CASA doesn't expect a huge change in the Liberal's priorities, the conference allowed the student organization to realize how much work they have ahead of them before the release of the upcoming federal budget in February.

CASA will continue lobbying the federal government and other key education stakeholders until the release of the budget.

University of Manitoba Student Union President Steven Fletcher, who was at the confer-

ence, met with Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin one on one.

"[Martin] seemed sympathetic and is certainly more aware of what a good investment a university like the University of Manitoba is for tax payers," said Fletcher.

Fletcher, however, says he doesn't foresee an increase in funding for PSE in upcoming federal budget.

"Not in this budget," he said. "That was conveyed quite strongly."

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