

Visiting prof says certain freedoms disappearing from British society

# UK moves to authoritarianism

by Shona C. Welsh

"If Karl Marx was in Britain today he would be deported" says Dr. Colin Leys, political science professor at Queen's University, who lectured on campus last Friday on "Is Britain moving toward authoritarianism?"

"I do think authoritarianism exists in Britain, understanding that it's in the context of narrowing options produced by British economic declines" said Leys.

Leys believes habeas corpus (the requirement that a person be brought before a judge to investigate the lawfulness of an accusation), trial by jury, local police forces and freedom of the press are fast disappearing from the fabric of British society.

Leys explained the principal of habeas corpus is now only enforceable after a person has been detained by the police for 48 hours. Additionally, that person is denied the right to see a lawyer until 36 hours have elapsed since his detention.

The judiciary are subject to administrative law and the police forces are more frequently armed and organized on a national basis.

"The press is controlled by a monopoly of 5 companies. They control 95% of the daily papers, 90% of the Sunday papers, 70% of the regional papers and 50% of the independent T.V. programs," said Leys.

In explanation of his contention Britain is becoming increasingly authoritarian, Leys outlined three categories of causes: long-term, intermediate and short-term.

Long-term causes include what he terms the "de-democratization" of Britain.

"Government has become a rubber-stamp organization for mass parties. For example, the Irish parties (couldn't care less) about English domestic issues" affirmed Leys.

He added that "(there has been) executive streamlining in the Civil Service (whereby) the upper class take management positions".

The Doctrine of Secrecy, which limits information released to the public, has been law since 1911 and Civil Servants who release information deemed "sensitive" can be prosecuted.

As Leys stated, "(The government thinks) the masses are to be distrusted ... they aren't educated and are impulsive."

Leys observed until recently there had been two exceptions to the insulation of the government from the popular vote: local governments and the jury system.

These safeguards are now endangered because the national government has been removing the power of effective financial administration from local councils and police have been furnishing lists of prospective jurors to the prosecution on political cases.

"Even though (the latter practice) was exposed by journalists in the seventies, it has not been legally challenged — the practice continues" asserted Leys.

An example of an intermediate cause in Britain's trend toward authoritarianism is technology.

Leys explained with modern computers, police have access to any

information about anyone at any time.

He noted "this type of Big Brother knowledge is in effect in 42 mainland counties (in addition to Northern Ireland)."

Recent causes of the British political polarization are familiar to most of us, notably high unemployment.

Leys pointed out that unemployment in Britain is marked with a racial dimension: "The riots of 1981 in 13 major cities focused on the relationship between police and people. (In some cases) van loads of armed police patrolled areas with high immigrant populations."

However, he quickly added that "the police have contributed to race problems but the problems they're dealing with are not their creation."

Other short-term causes of the British situation include Trade Union militancy whereby union members turn out in the hundreds for demonstrations.

Additionally, there is the Northern Ireland situation which has prompted a Britain-wide law that permits the detention by police of anyone suspected of being affiliated with a "subversive group."

Leys also maintains that "Thatcherism" is a major contribution to Britain's trend toward authoritarianism.

Under Thatcher's leadership, the Conservative Party has spawned higher unemployment, increased class inequality, advocated militant police forces and encouraged judges to be tough on pickets.

In the words of Leys, "the victims must be kept down (according to

the Conservatives)".

Towards the end of his lecture, Leys offered a few suggestions concerning remedies to the British problem.

"I think the real answer to British problems is within the Labour Party", "They have consistently defended only a narrow range of rights (frequently favouring Trade Unions) so when the Conservative Party extends its power at the expense of civil rights, there is no check from the Labour Party."

As Leys pointed out earlier in the lecture, "Acceptance and habituation (among the people) are important factors in extending the power of a state". He feels the Labour Party needs to devise a conception of what the role of government would be in a socialist state.

Summarizing, Leys said "(Britain) needs to redefine a concept of socialism that would be democratic, liberal and non-statist in practice. The formation of a left-wing party devoted to civil libertarianism is essential."

## SOS helps students

by Kerry Hoffer

Students with grievances against university bodies and staff can now turn to Student Ombudspersons Gayle Morris and Don McGarvey for help.

Student Ombudsperson Services is an autonomous organization able to take an active role in helping students exercise their rights.

"People often confuse our office with (that of) Student Help," commented Morris.

Counsellor at Student Help can only "refer and give help — they can't file a grievance or phone a professor."

SOS, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with filing grievances, academic appeals and affairs between students and the Registrar's Office, Administrative Office and the Students' Union.

SOS offers an impartial viewpoint with a degree of confidence.

tiality.

Morris noted some disclosure may be necessary between the opposed parties, but names will not be made public unless the involved individuals feel it would be of benefit to others to know about it.

The procedure for filing an appeal is listed in the University of Alberta calendar.

Students wanting to make an appeal should make an appointment to see an ombudsperson before they file a grievance.

Morris also stressed the importance of resolving disputes at the lowest level possible.

"If you have a problem, talk first to your professor."

The SOS office is in room 230 SUB. Office hours are Monday and Wednesday from 3 pm to 5 pm, Tuesday 11 am to 1 pm, and Thursday 11 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 5 pm.

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## PACSH Annual Report 83-84

The following is a summary of the PACSH Annual Report, 1983-84, compiled by the President's office.

During its first full year of operation, the President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment (PACSH) has demonstrated that it serves vital roles of intervention and education for a varied cross-section of the University of Alberta community.

Initiated in November 1982, the committee's first six months were spent establishing itself and working out a plan of operation.

Since June of 1983, the committee has refined its terms of reference, held a training session for new members and alternates, and conducted an educational campaign.

A survey has tested the effectiveness of this campaign. Most important, the TALK hotline, allowing placement of information-seeking telephone calls, has been operational, and a number of cases related to sexual harassment queries and concerns have been handled informally.

In addition, two cases have reached the formal complaint stage in the past year.

Although the following outline does not capture the scope or depth

of PACSH activities during 1983-84, the past year has served to convince committee members that the advisory committee fulfils two essential services on campus: It averts as much misunderstanding as possible within a variety of personal interactions and it minimizes the attendant potential for human grief by resolving complaints wherever possible.

The operation of the new "TALK" (432-8255) hotline enabled a dozen persons to seek information and learn of the various alternatives available for solving their particular problems. Many callers did not want to place a formal complaint but did need to know the options open to them.

PACSH members were interested to note that the cases resolved informally cut across all age, sexual and cultural barriers and involved persons from all four campus interest groups — academic staff, non-academic staff, graduate students and undergraduate students.

The variety of inquiries demonstrated that sexual harassment is a concern which is not specific to any one group within the academic community.

PACSH's educational campaign took the form of issuing brochures to students during registration, dis-

playing posters across the campus and participating in a variety of interviews with local media.

An April 1984 survey conducted of classes in U of A faculties showed that half of the students polled knew that PACSH existed but the majority of students did not know what procedure to follow should they become involved in a sexual harassment case.

Over the past year, meetings were held to solidify PACSH relations with its four representative associations: the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta, the Non-Academic Staff Association, the Graduate Students' Association and the Students' Union.

PACSH also amended its procedures during 1983, adding a new stage in the complaint procedure to enable a two-person assessment panel to determine whether complaints are within the committee's terms of reference before cases are considered by an investigative panel.

PACSH jurisdiction was also clarified this year to emphasize that PACSH can consider cases involving all persons on campus over whom the President's office has jurisdiction.

Yard Apes



by Hans Beckers