

Behind the Barricades: Universite de Moncton

By COLIN LEONARD
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MONCTON (CUP) — Thursday, Jan. 16 — Happiness is a warm hose from behind the barricades at Universite de Moncton.

The bust may come tonight or that is what they think will happen.

The administration decided today to reject clause 9 of the nine-point list of demands, the one that grants amnesty for all who participated in the occupation of the science building.

Only one set of doors is available for entrance, this means that a heavy concentration of hose fire from at least four hoses should be enough to keep the toughest of constables from entering, if they did enter, however, it will not be too easy to escape arrest, all other exits are tightly sealed off with bars and lockers.

There is the threat that the water may be cut off from the outside thus rendering their first line of defense ineffective. To counteract this, waste baskets filled with paper have been placed in the windows in important labs. Should the water be cut off, the baskets will be ignited and the first alarm sounded. This will force the enemy to resume water power because the insurance company will not pay damages for a building not adequately protected by functioning extinguishers.

Everyone is talking about last-ditch stands — all fire hoses on all floors have been placed in strategic areas. There has been no mention of escape, in fact, a small group is jokingly planning the liberation of the jail should it end up within its confines.

The students have been occupying the building for five nights and the strain of anxious hours at the door is showing on their faces. But morale is extremely high and much of the situation is treated like a joke.

The science building at the university has five wings springing out from the centre like the spokes of a buggy wheel without the rim. There are lookouts in the wing of the second floor of the three-storey building, and a sentry posted on the roof. The music is piped through a speaker to this cold, isolated position and there is an abundant supply of hot coffee.

A telephone connecting it with the porters office in the lobby was being installed when I arrived though the position is rather redundant because a spy network is well established and incredibly accurate.

The students in the building are aware at all times of what is going on in the temporary administration offices (the administration has been ousted from its proper position in the science building). The co-ordinating committee is promptly informed of the results of every meeting and plans can be made to meet any threat that may develop.

Michel Blanchard, editor of the student newspaper L'INSECTE and leader of the expedition, has been informed that the administration has decided not to use violence in coming to terms with the radicals. This does not dissuade many students here and members of the French-language daily L'EVANGELINE that the police will not intervene.

A reporter from the paper confided that the likelihood of a bust was greater than we imagined and that the police would probably strike around 2 a.m.

Blanchard, on the other hand, is confident that this will not be the case. Meanwhile, life goes on all around. The students are well-organized inside, and are very careful to take good care of the building. Two students were busy polishing and waxing the lower foyer when I walked in this evening, others were hard at work cooking supper, sweeping the floor and cleaning up the day's garbage.

A great store of food was smuggled in early Sunday morning from the university kitchen in one of the residences. No one will say whether the food was "liberated" or donated but it is enough to last for at least three weeks. As far as everyone here knows there-is-more-of-that-where-it-

came-from so the administration cannot hope the students will starve themselves out.

Tonight's supper consisted of fried hamburger, fried onions, peas, potatoes, ham sandwiches, and French cheeses. "We would like to offer you caviar," one of the students said sadly, "but we ran out of it last night." The only staple that is missing is beer. The reason for its non-existence is to be found in the policies drawn up by the committee when it first met in October to plan this action. There was to be no unnecessary rowdiness during the occupation and they feel any alcoholic beverages would only stimulate this kind of action and so it has been outlawed.

Two major classrooms have been taken over as common sleeping quarters to avoid messing up of too many of the other offices and rooms. The boys sleep in one wing, the girls in another. Those who have been liberated are free to do as they wish.

The students do not seem to be making use of the time they have. When they are not on guard duty or on one of the work details, the students generally sit around and talk, play records or sneak out for a quick beer at the tavern nearby. There are no counter-courses being offered or seminars on topics relevant to the strike. Only a few are concerned about it.

This concern stems from boredom than educative need.

Meanwhile, there are mixed feelings about the occupation among the general student body. The commerce faculty, the most radical faculty on campus, has given it support along with the social science-psychology faculty. The student federation has yet to sanction the action but it is the professors that the students are looking for support.

The students have asked them to join in the strike and the occupation of the building. They will be meeting on Friday but it is unlikely they will have anything to do with the students.

A taxi driver from the airport, an Acadian himself, told us how awful it was that Quebec students should come to Moncton and take over the campus. The general feeling among the Acadian population of Moncton, according to our taxi driver, is totally opposed to the action of the students.

Last year, when the students struck, the whole community, including L'EVANGELINE supported the students wholeheartedly. This year, the feeling is that they have gone too far and so the students are alone in the struggle to assure that their heritage is properly preserved.

Much of the criticism of the people of Moncton towards the strike is aimed at the Quebec students who are attending the university. The townspeople say the strike is being run and supported by the students of Quebec — "outside agitators" have always been scape goats in any act of civil disobedience anywhere.

In fact, the strike was organized and is being run by students from New Brunswick.

Michel Blanchard himself is from Caraquet, N.B., a small lumber town in the northern part of the province.

Only 15 per cent of the students directly involved in the strike are from Quebec.

Now the evening vigil begins.

Life here hasn't been without incidence: when the first group had just occupied the building they found it ringed with local police and dogs. Two thieves had stolen a car in town and had made their way to the campus where they were forced to abandon the car. In desperation they broke into the science building they thought was empty. But they were seen by their pursuers who radioed for help. Unfortunately, in the confusion, a student was arrested and the thieves got away.

Word has just come through that the RCMP are calling up all their men tonight. For the sixth time in six nights this kind of rumor has spread wildly.

It will be another sleepless night though everyone promised themselves that they would work their shift and then get some sleep.

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