

# Indian self-government needs constitutional basis

by Ken Lenz

"The Penner Report is the first official government document endorsing the Indians from their own perspective," according to Dr. Gurston Dacks, Political Science professor.

Dacks spoke last Friday at a Political Science Undergraduate Association Forum on "The Need for Indian Self-Determination."

"Canada's native people have fared abominably since the ascendancy of Europeans in North America," he said.

"The first and fundamental problem is constitutional. When the constitution was first written, the aboriginal people were defined as nations - with well-functioning political systems, capable of regulating relatively well-ordered societies," said Dacks.

He continued, "they started with the notion of a roughly equal relationship, and moved to the situation where the incompetents had to be protected from themselves."

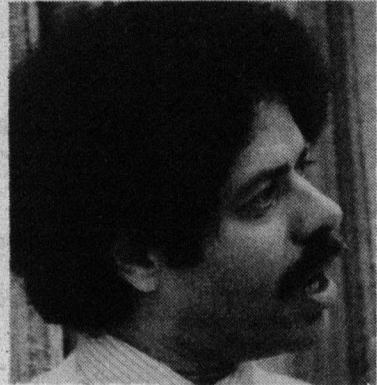
"It was thought that the assimilation of native people would be good. The federal government felt that if the native people had some degree of sovereignty it would be at the expense of some other area of government."

The Indian Act, first implemented in 1876, compounded the problems of Canada's aboriginal people. Indian

governments and Band Councils were reduced to subordinate status by the government of Canada.

Under the act, any decision by a Band council may be defeated by a minister, and any decision which is contrary to government regulations is automatically null and void.

Indians were not even allowed to organize politically until 1951 when the Indian Act was slightly amended.



Dr. Gurston Dacks

Says Dacks, "it is not clear whether a Band Council can sue, or can be sued. This means that all contracts must have allowances for uncertainty."

There are also financial problems that native people face under the Indian Act.

"One quarter of all the money that goes to the Indian and Inuit programs goes into the administration because of a very

tight system of control."

In real terms this means that \$250 000 000 of the one billion dollars spent per year on programs for the aboriginal people of Canada goes back into the Department of Indian Affairs.

The Penner report, a federal report compiled by MPs from all three parties, says the antiquated Indian Act is so flawed that there is no way it can be modified.

Dacks adds, "the report says that native self-government should be entrenched in the Canadian Constitution, a ministry of state for Indian Affairs should be established, and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development should be phased out."

"Self-government for the 520 band councils in Canada would mean that these administrations would have roughly the same powers as the provinces, including the administration of justice, health care, education, social assistance, and economic development."

"The report involves a basic re-thinking of the relationship among the people of Canada," says Dacks.

But Dacks sees problems with regards to the entrenchment of any legislation of this sort through the House of Commons.

Amending the constitution requires the support of 50 per cent of the House and at least 7 of the provinces.

"The governments of BC, Alberta and Ontario are not particularly sympathetic to the problems of the native people. Quebec would not endorse any amendments to the constitution, because they don't like the constitution in the first place," he says.

Though Dacks does not believe the report will have much

impact on government policy in the near future he refers to it as a "first step."

The author of the Penner report, MP Keith Penner will be at the U of A on February 22 Room 2-115 Education Building North at 7:30 PM as part of the Canada the World and the Future Conference.

## R.A.T.T. in R.A.T.T.

"The chaplains' association wanted to raise the issue of drinking on campus," said Intern chaplain Peter Schwabe-Fry.

"The SU agreed that the proposal was a good idea and decided to co-sponsor R.A.T.T. (Responsible attitudes towards tipping) in RATT (Room at the Top) with us," said Schwabe-Fry.

The seminar to be held 12:30-2:00 this Thursday in the popular 7th floor SUB lounge. RATT in RATT will consist of a guest speaker, Marilyn Lang from AADAC's (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission), a short film, and lectures dealing with attitudes towards alcohol.

The seminar will begin with a short film *Calling the Shots* and a short self-quiz to test a person's attitudes towards alcohol.

"The film is about attitudes

towards alcohol, attitudes that alcohol manufacturers build up and the attitudes that we create, what we think alcohol will do for us," says Schwabe-Fry.

Cards from AADAC to help people compute their blood alcohol contents will be handed out as well as tips for prospective hosts and hostesses. People can discover how to host a party responsibly.

"A lot of university students use booze to unwind, relax, and socialize. Student's lives rotate very much around alcohol. And these attitudes carry on the rest of our lives. If they are good attitudes, students can use alcohol as it was meant to be used. But if their attitudes develop irresponsibly, it can lead to addiction, drinking and driving, and other problems that stem from alcohol abuse," said Schwabe-Fry.

# THE U of BLUE

•EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BEER•

## Lesson #113 "The Head"

When serving beer, brewers, bartenders and beer experts all agree that the head is one key to smoother, cleaner taste. A good head will help maintain a beer's vitality and enhance its flavour. For the proper method of pouring, please refer back to Lesson #4 ("The Pour"); and remember, the perfect head stands between two and three fingers tall.

Although pouring your beer is quite important, what you pour it in matters even more. Glasses used for beer shouldn't be used for anything else, because they'll retain fats or residues that can quickly flatten a beer head or even affect the flavour.

The real secret to serving beer is to use a wet glass. Rinse it in pure cold water and drain upside down for a minute or two before filling. Your beer head will form better and last longer while the cold water rinse will remove dust and lint particles from inside the glass.

Want to get the most out of your beer? One sure way is to try and keep a good head. Especially when those around you are losing theirs.

Lesson #113 from the College of Beer Knowledge.

