

Vigod says pessimism 'overwhelming' in Israel

By CHRIS HUNT

UNB history professor Bernie Vigod was one of twenty Canadian professors who visited Israel during December on a study mission for Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East.

The CPPME was set up three years ago in order to try and organize some scholarly discussion of the Arab-Israeli problem and calls for a just and lasting peace between the states of the Middle East. Although the organization tries to remain objective, said Vigod, they do feel that Israel has a right to exist and this immediately makes them no longer objective as far as most Arabs are concerned. Nonetheless, the mission was determined to find out about the prospects for peace by studying the Israeli side of the conflict.

The delegates were introduced to some of the leading politicians of both the government and the opposition parties including the Minister of Defence, Peres and the former Foreign Minister Abba Eban. They also met local administrators including those of Jerusalem where, according to Vigod, a special problem must be dealt with. That is, they must effectively handle the headaches of a city split in two and deal with it as one.

The delegation was given a military escort into three of the occupied territories - Gaza, the



Photo by Tim Gorman

University of New Brunswick history professor Bernie Vigod was one of 20 Canadian academics representing Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East who visited Israel over Christmas.

Golan Heights, and the West Bank of the Jordan, where they met some key military leaders. On the West Bank they also met some Arabs who are openly sympathetic to the Palestine Liberation Organization. They also met Israeli academics and journalists on the tour.

According to Vigod there is an "overwhelming sense of pessimism" in Israel today. The Israelis are not worried about surviving but they believe the Arabs will never allow them to live in peace. "The Arabs will never accept anything alien in their midst," said Vigod.

The Israeli government is presently involved in a debate on how best to protect Israel. There are some who believe no concession should be made but the party in power feels it must make concessions. The main hope of the Israelis, according to Vigod, is President Sadat of Egypt. The Israelis believe that Sadat is genuinely interested in peace. The state of the Egyptian economy is desperate and the Israelis feel that Sadat cannot afford another war. "There is a belief," said Vigod, "that Egypt may be persuaded to look to its own interests."

Unfortunately, for Israel, there is no guarantee that Sadat will remain in power. In a military dictatorship a coup d'etat which would destroy all progress is always possible.

The most optimistic in Israel hope for a "de facto" peace at best. In other words, although the Arabs may never accept them, they hope will simply get tired of attacking them.

The major problem of the Israelis, said Vigod, is the PLO. He says there are two ways of looking at the problem as far as the Israelis are concerned. 1) One simply does not negotiate with terrorists, especially ones who do not recognize Israeli right to exist. The Israelis are angry at the international community for recognizing the PLO and thereby endorsing the aims of the PLO manifesto which calls for the destruction of the state of Israel and the expulsion of all Jews who did not arrive before 1917. 2) The Israelis realize that they must negotiate with the Palestinians but they will not negotiate with the PLO and at the moment the PLO is the only representative of the Palestinian people.

"Right now," said Vigod, "the Israelis are kicking themselves for a stupid mistake they made after the '67 war." As a result of not permitting local Arab leadership to emerge on the West Bank they missed the chance of having a more moderate political alternative to the PLO. "What they did was to create a political vacuum. Now it's virtually impossible to oust the PLO from its position." Vigod gained the impression from most of the Arabs he talked to on the West Bank that the average Palestinian is afraid of the PLO. They proclaim themselves sym-

pathetic to the movement out of sheer necessity, but Vigod feels that most of them would prefer a more moderate group to represent the Palestinians. The refugees in Gaza live in fear of both the PLO and the Egyptians. At the moment, according to Vigod, the Israelis are trying to encourage refugees to establish themselves in jobs in Israel so they will no longer need to demand their little parcels of land back.

The problem of the Palestinian refugees seems to have been partly brought on by the Arabs themselves. According to Vigod, although some Palestinians were definitely evicted for bearing arms against the Israelis in 1948, many more were told by the other Arab countries to leave Israel for a short time so they would not get in the way when Israel was destroyed. That "short time" has stretched into 28 years and the destruction of Israel seems very unlikely.

The Israelis hope to manoeuvre moderate Arab political leaders into positions of power in the PLO so that when the time comes to negotiate they can negotiate with these moderates.

The Israelis also say they won't permit an independent Palestinian state to be set up on the West Bank. Vigod feels that this is a bluff, however, because if Israel returns to West Bank to Jordan they will have no control over its fate anyway. Vigod said he believes the Israelis are holding out on this point to make a stronger bargaining position for it. He said the Israelis will use it to ensure Palestinian non-belligerence.

Another current problem for the Israelis, says Vigod, is the "Zionism is Racism" act passed by the United Nations. To the Jews, Zionism was a movement to establish a Jewish homeland and now that Israel is an established state, Zionism is a thing of the past. They feel that the condemnation is anti-semitism transferred from the individual to the state. They are profoundly disturbed by this, said Vigod. It has forced them to be introspective and ask themselves the question, "Do Jews have a right to a nation or for that matter do the Palestinians? Both peoples have valid historic claims to Israel but a reasonable compromise is yet to be found," said Vigod.

'Get involved' urges Greenblatt

The University Senate welcomes students to serve on any of the various senate committees. Their duties cover almost the whole spectrum of the academic work and life of the University.

There are approximately 20 committees, including: Academic & Campus Planning, Admissions, Athletics, Audio-Visual, Bookstore, Budget, Computing Centre, Creative Arts, Curriculum, Examinations, Facilities, Services & Equipment, Honorary Degrees, Lecture Series, Library, Nominating Publications, Student Services (Health Centre, Guidance, Housing, etc.), Student Standings &

Promotion, Summer School & Extension Operations, Timetable, Undergraduate Scholarships, Visiting Lectures.

The frequency of meetings varies from group to group. Some committees meet as little as twice a year, while others convene regularly every month. Their members are nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by Senate. Usually each group consists of about a dozen persons of which two to four are students.

"Now is the time to get involved; experience gained this term will prove invaluable, and will enable

student members to provide valuable guidance next year. The work involved is minimal. But when an issue comes up affecting students, it's vital that a representative can stand up and present our views," according to student Senator Marv Greenblatt. "Qualifications needed? Simply being a student at UNB, eager to present our outlook, and willing to learn the work of the committee." Interested persons can contact Marv Greenblatt (MacKenzie House 453-4929) or Professor Dugald Blue (Old Arts Building 453-4613). Students are requested to make their preferences known.

Scholarships to be awarded

Three \$1,000 Scholarships will be awarded to students selected to take part in the undergraduate student exchange program operated between UNB and the University of Maine at Orono, Maine.

The program allows for students to pay the tuition at their home

**Appointments
cause
controversy**

The Student Disciplinary Committee has two new members appointed by the SRC of UNB.

The two new members are Joe Robinson, a second year law student and Kenneth Harding, a second year education student. A point was brought up by several councillors that the Application Committee was the vehicle by which promotions to the Student Disciplinary Committee be made.

However, Council did not think this argument strong enough to nix the appointments.

University. The balance of the scholarship can be used for travel in the New England area.

Students selected will be required to enter their junior year at the University of Maine in a program approved by their respective department at UNB. This is to ensure that students can receive full credit for the year's work upon return to the UNB campus.

Interested students may pick up application forms from the Overseas Student Adviser's office and return them completed by February 20, 1976. The Selection Board will sit on March 12, 1976.

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