

"THIS IS THE REVOLUTION"

Karen Braun discusses the challenge to longstanding world hierarchies by an increasingly strident group of 21st Century social revolutionaries.

Several days ago while lost in reverie, I called to mind a conversation I had with a very special friend more than two years ago. Over coffee, this woman, whom I consider to be of the wisest of women on the earth, said something in passing which I am unable to forget. We were discussing some hideous example of social injustice and as I spluttered and gesticulated with my usual energy, she seemed almost amused. In complete frustration, I remember exclaiming, "What we need here is a REVOLUTION!" With absolute calm and the wry smile I have come to love, she very quietly said, "Are you kidding? This is the revolution." As usual, she was right.

There is a force currently being loosed on the Earth, the impact of which will radically change the fabric of our social system not only nationally, but globally in the century to come. The effects can be felt every day in every corner, in every country, in every home in every city, village, and town, as we creep inexorably toward 1990. History tells us that the 1890's were a time of dramatic social change--that social orders and patterns were irrevocably altered as the twentieth-century was ushered in. It looks as if the 1990's will serve as a similar landmark for future scholars of the twenty first century, that is, if there is a world left to study.

It is a natural law of simple physics that energy must always translate itself into something else. Social energy is no different. We have seen the effects of such energy most recently in the Soviet Union, in Poland, on the West Bank, in South Africa, in South America--in fact, it is hard to name a place on the planet where change is not afoot. It can be felt in Canada; in New Brunswick; in Fredericton; it can even be felt at UNB. What is happening is that more and more people are clueing in to the arbitrariness of the forms of social control which are currently instituted by agents of religion, education, or government--always for the express purpose of control, and always for control's sake.

Big news? Not really. Man, in the non-generic sense of the word, has always needed something/someone to feel superior to. No doubt the Neanderthal felt himself superior to the CroMagnon, having to his credit the so-called "discovery" of fire.

It is no secret that more people on this planet are unhappy, oppressed, impoverished, malnourished, or exploited than are otherwise. It is no secret that purely as an accident of the circumstances of their birth (i.e., which womb they happened to come out of), some people on this planet live ridiculously well while others are unable to live at all: in that they are deprived of life completely, or are destined to spend an undetermined number of years enduring a living nightmare that passes for a "life" for no good reason. It is no secret that some are able to operate without boundaries; their freedom comes most often at the expense of others who are considered inferior, or different. It is also no secret that dominance on this planet has always been affected by a very small circle of individuals and their immediate followers who consider themselves superior and are so considered by others.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, these individuals hold many things in common. In the West, these individuals share: an Anglo-Saxon heritage; produce similar levels of melanin (a natural pigment which gives colour to skin); display identical genitalia (perhaps with the exception of Margaret Thatcher); have annual incomes of at least five figures, not including remuneration for stocks and other investments. Most often, these individuals are English, or at the very least, speak it--some form of it. While most of the ruling elite in this country profess to be Christian, religious differences do not seem to matter in questions of dominance. The abominations committed against humanity in the name of Christianity are only equalled by those committed in the names of Juda-

ism and Islam. In fact, what all of these religions hold in common is their conviction in their own superiority. The truth is that until now, the planet has been ruled over by a very select group of individuals who comprise less than 4% of the earth's population. Does it seem a bit odd that 4% of the global population has all the answers. While the other 96% seem to require improvement and some form of instruction?

Ditto for the parliamentary and judicial forms which can be seen in any country--West or East--which also believe their own particular form to be superior to other forms of social organization. Democracy and capitalism have been touted in the West as the pinnacle of parliamentary civilization; we in Canada, however, have the opportunity to see democracy in action and to gauge for ourselves how democratic the process of government really is. We need only turn on a radio or television, or open a newspaper to see how just and fair the law, and how free the market, etc.

The force with which democracy and capitalism are defended and upheld by the same Western institutions which designed them is matched only by the vociferous praise of communism and socialism formerly heard in East Bloc countries. While democracy in Canada crumbles in the shadow of Meech Lake and the General Sales Tax, the residents of East Berlin dance on the Wall. Unheard of? Maybe, maybe not. I am almost afraid to exhale--all I need is to close my eyes and I can see the tanks rolling over the city of tents in Tiannemen.

Still, people all over the planet are getting sick of this stupid patriarchal social system in which we all pretend to "live." Defenders of human rights are sick of it! Environmentalists who are tired of seeing poison settle like a dirty

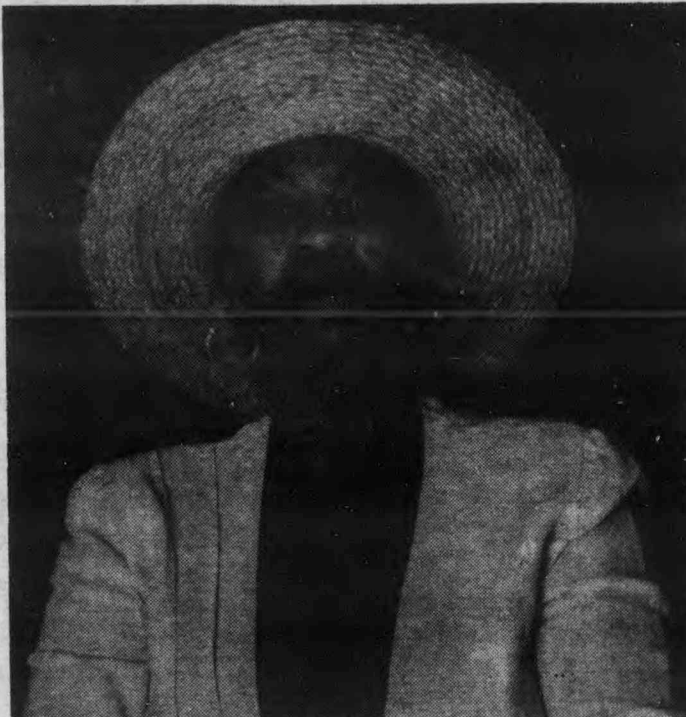
blanket over the land are sick of it! Anti-poverty organizations who see the conditions in which many are expected to live for no reason at all are sick of it! Human interest groups of all kinds are sick of it! Black people have been sick of it for a long time! Native people are also heartily sick of it and are organizing and gaining strength daily for the purpose of doing something about it! The students in Tiannemen Square were sick of it--sick enough to lay down their lives for change! Jewish people have always been sick of it, except now there are more people who are prepared to listen, to speak out, and acknowledge the presence of anti-semitic sentiments instead of denying that such feelings exist. The elderly, the physically challenged, the mentally ill, the homeless are sick of it! Altar boys in Newfoundland are sick of it! Women from one end of the planet to the other are already indescribably sick of it, or are in the process of becoming so with every passing day! The gay and lesbian community is also sick of a society which is so blind it can not see that sexuality is culturally determined and socially perpetuated--which gender one chooses to attain sexual pleasure with is by no means naturally determined.

While many of you Chore Boys may not realize it, your time is limited. Change, which in this case is long overdue, is upon us. Though Chore Boys may not recognize it, James Gill and the other "vocal" people of this world--gay and straight together--are part of this as yet nameless movement. The fight against homophobia is just another facet of the larger struggle against arbitrary and cruel forms of social control. The two homosexual students who have written to Professor Martin Yaqzan requesting him to retract his remarks regarding homosexuality are a part of this movement, too. At long last, the awe inspired by individuals who use nine syllable words in places where three syllable words would suffice is being recognized for what it is: a lot of bullshit. Also, the power of rhetoric is finally being recognized for what it is - verbal sleight-of-hand! All I can say is give him hell!

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The Big Three at Yalta: in effect, if not by intent, a sanction for Soviet dominance



"I'm always annoyed about why black people have to bear the brunt of everybody else's contempt. If we are not totally understanding and smiling, suddenly we're demons." TONI MORRISON, black novelist and Pulitzer Prize winner. She, too, is sick of it.



Estonians protest in Russia. They reflect the new reform movement in Eastern Europe.



MANILA: a protester weeps at a rally outside the Chinese consulate



STUTTGART: students hold a sign saying CHINA BLEEDS



NEW YORK: demonstrators gather outside the United Nations