

"Return to grassroots"

The crisis of sport

by Barry Dorey

Sport in Canada is headed for a crisis and the pressures of winning and centralization are the main culprits. That was the conclusion of a seven-person panel on *The Crisis of Sport, An Amateur Perspective*, held last Thursday at Saint Mary's University.

According to several speakers, Canada's obsession with winning Olympic medals is focussing too much attention and funding on national-level activities and ignoring the "grass-roots" programs. This centralization, coupled with the exploitative marketing activity of major corporations, is creating a fundamental crisis in the system.

"The new objective is not to create more activity, but to concentrate all our efforts on win-

ning Olympic medals," said Dave McLean, executive director of Sport Nova Scotia. The new national sports policy, outlined in *Towards 2000: Building Canada's Sport System*, "has no grass-roots representation" and therefore excludes volunteers, "the driving force of about 95 per cent of all sport" from decision-making and plotting a future course.

Although the policy contains many progressive points, McLean said the emphasis of "trying to compete and not necessarily trying to help sport" is regressive and added that "money should be spent on developing a good, all-round sport system."

Curtis Coward, a Halifax native whose baseball career took him to the AA level with the St.

Louis Cardinals organization before an injury forced him to retire and is presently the assistant recreation director for the Halifax Housing Authority, agreed that restructuring the regional and local activities would strengthen the whole system.

"The almighty dollar should not dictate what level an athlete can reach," Coward said. "If money was spread more evenly through domestic sports, more people would be involved to rise to higher levels later on."

The current system emphasizes specialization and upgrading a select few sports which might win us a medal and is slowly eroding the number of quality athletes that can move through the system, he said.

The problem of funding these athletes is the other main thorn in the side of Canadian sport, said panelist Tony Seed, a Marxist-Leninist candidate in the last federal election and an avid sports participant and organizer.

"Government has to do more, but their emphasis on increasing corporate funding (as outlined in *Toward 2000*) is not the way," he said. "The real criminals are the multinational corporations who

put too much pressure on athletes to win. They look at sports as a way to market products and that can do more harm than good."

He said the problems can be reconciled by reintroducing competitive sports to the domestic levels and encouraging local business support.

"It has to be redeveloped," he said. "What we're seeing at the Dubin Inquiry is proof of that. A club system based in communities and stressing self-reliance is the way". This would reduce the vast monetary incentive to win and might also help clean up cheating in sport, he added.



The panel discussion, the third in a series of Political and Academic Studies, also heard from former Olympic basketball player John Cassidy on the Olympic Ideal, former Olympian Carolyn Merritt on Fair Play in International Sport and longtime sports participant and sports activist Don Wheeler.

... Erasmus

Continued from page 3

population in the North. He said that prior to the Constitution Act of 1982, the federal government's approval alone was needed to create a new province. But after constitution was ratified, agreement of seven provinces was needed to create a new province.

Now with the Meech Lake Accord, said Erasmus, all the pro-

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Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, and the smell of the wind itself cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with pinion pine. The air is precious to the red man. For all things share the same breath — the beasts, the trees, the man. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying many days, he is numb to the stench.

If I decide to accept, I will make one condition. The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. I am a savage and I do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalo on the prairies, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive. What is man without the beasts?

If all the beasts were gone, man would die from great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beast also happens to the man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.

We think we have become ecologically aware. We are concerned about the destruction of the ozone, the disposal of garbage and toxic waste, and acid rain since in so much as it concerns each one of us personally. Progress — or have we really progressed?

vines must agree to create a new province.

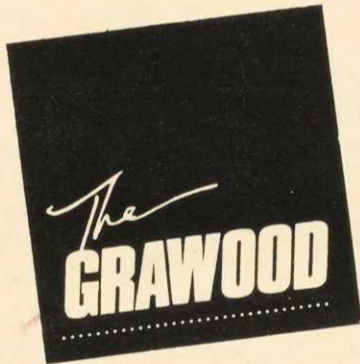
If the provinces were to agree and create a new province in the North, they would be giving control of the land to the Native people. The Accord is set up in such a way that this would never happen said Erasmus. AFN feels that it is aimed at Native people specifically so they'll never control the North.

In conclusion, Erasmus stated that Native peoples of Canada have a better chance of attaining self-government by bringing nations of first peoples together and approaching it on that basis.

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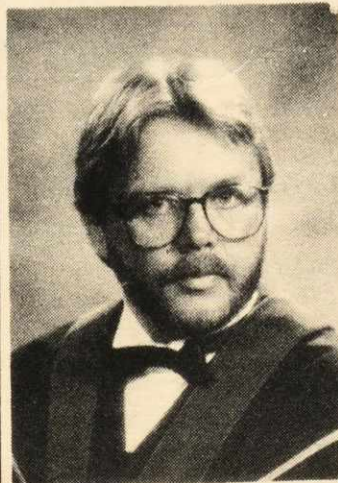
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