

The choice of a dead generation

by Heidi Radford

Burma's military has produced the world's longest war (45 years) against the borders people and encourages 60 per cent of the world heroin trade, and has silenced all political opposition including Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Three Canadian organizations have launched a national boycott against PepsiCo until it stops dealing with the dictatorship in Burma (Myanmar). They are OPIRG-Carleton and Friends of the

Rainforest in Ottawa, and the Canadian Youth Network for Asia-Pacific Solidarity or "CYNAPS" in Vancouver. As a result of OPIRG's involvement in the boycott, NSPIRG at Dal (Public Interest Research Group) urges students to boycott Pepsi to increase pressure against the multinational's involvement in Burma.

Burma's military government, called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), is recognized as one of the world's most destructive regimes. Boycott supporters claim PepsiCo is an accomplice to SLORC's crimes against hu-

manity by supporting their regime. In November 1991 PepsiCo opened a soft drink plant with a Burmese partner firm in the capital of Rangoon.

Boycott coordinator Terry Cottam says, "Pepsi's very presence is being used as a propaganda tool. Its American image gives SLORC undeserved

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legitimacy and deprives the people of their hopes for freedom."

The question is how does this directly affect Dalhousie Students?

For starters, Dalhousie University has a five year contract with PepsiCo to be the official soft drink on campus. As well, each Dalhousie student paid \$4 to PIRG when they signed away student fees this year (...Yes, you did). Therefore, all Dalhousie students are members of PIRG. PIRG's goal is to make information

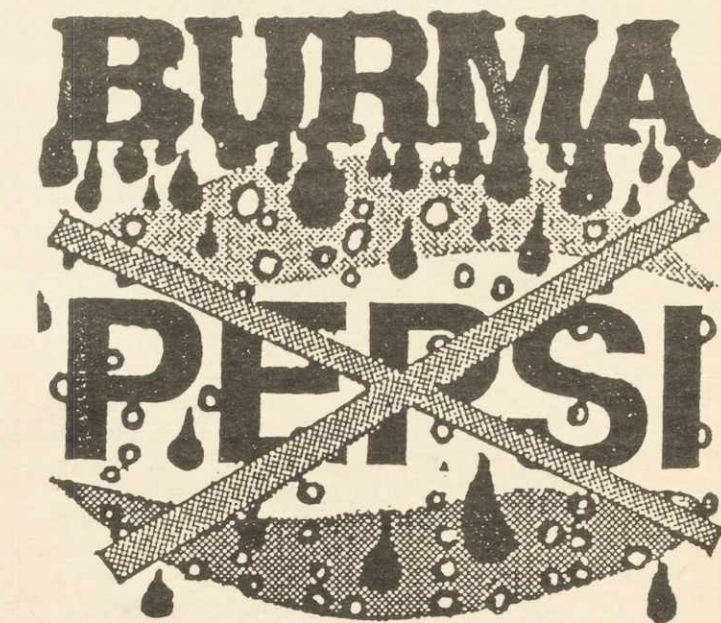
available to the public; information which enables the public to make informed decisions on issues concerning social justice.

Dennis MacNeil, Vice President of the Dalhousie Student Union says the university has no plans to administer a boycott of Pepsi and it is unclear to them why PIRG wants to interfere with a contract which is beneficial to both the university and students at Dal.

"It is not like Pepsi is supplying weapons to Burma...They are supplying soft drinks," says MacNeil who points out that PepsiCo's business in Burma stimulates their economy. "And if there economy suffers the people will be much more likely to depend on their government and its military."

MacNeil also reminds students of Pepsi's continued support towards the development of Dalhousie students. Over the next few years Pepsi will have donated a substantial amount to sports and athletics at Dalhousie and an equal amount to the student union for student activities.

Marketing Manager of PepsiCo's regional Halifax office would not



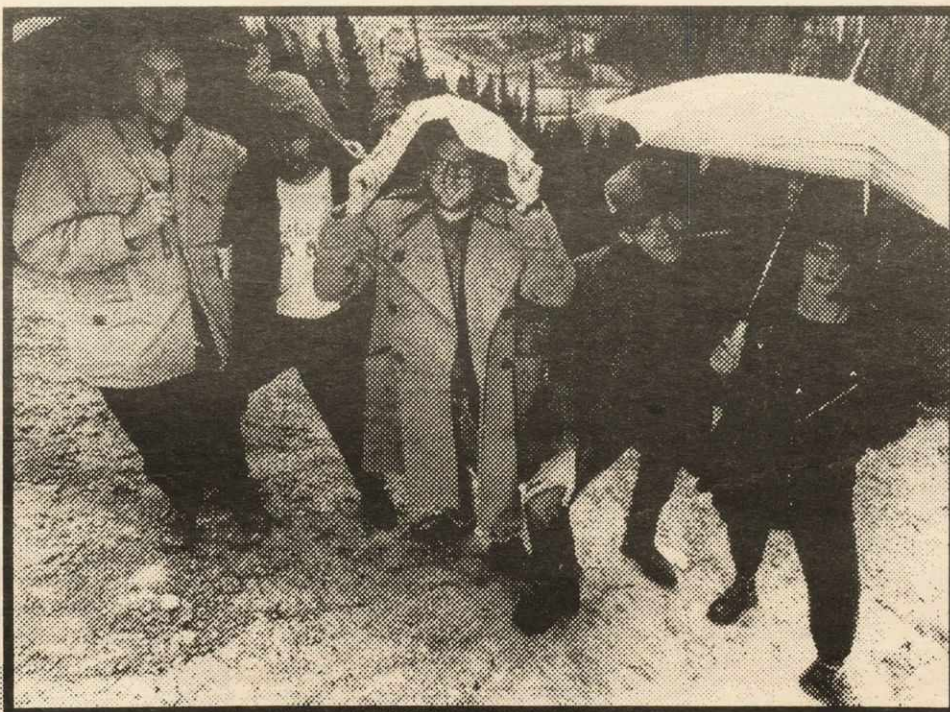
comment on the political issue involving Burma. He offered this, "We will continue to support Dal and we are committed to our relationship with Dal."

The PepsiCo boycott is only one of the many projects NSPIRG at Dal

oversees. Work projects focusing on economic responsibility, waste management, animal rights and the homeless are all currently assigned to specific work groups led and organized by Dalhousie students.

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