

# Disappearances - the new terrorism

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You are young, a student, and take a serious interest in the political situation in your country. Perhaps you have participated in a political demonstration against the government or written an article, critical of your national president, in the student newspaper. In any event, the government now knows you exist. You are marked as a subversive influence.

Late one evening, as you prepare for bed, government security officers barge through your door, slap you around and drag you out into the cold in your night clothes to a waiting car. What will happen to you? If you are a female, young and pretty like Graciella Melliborsky Saidler, a political economy graduate student who disappeared from central Buenos Aires on September 25th, 1976, you will probably be violently raped numerous times, horribly tortured and then murdered. Your body will be deposited in a shallow grave somewhere in the country and your family and friends will never know what happened to you. You will have disappeared.

A worldwide campaign to expose and halt the use by governments of "disappearances" as a means of eliminating suspected opponents was launched by Amnesty International on December 1st, 1981. Amnesty members and supporters in more than 100 countries are making a concerted effort to spotlight the practice by which uncounted thousands of people have been

abducted and made to "disappear" either by government forces or with their complicity.

The abuse, which also inflicts terror and suffering on family and friends of the victim and other suspected opponents, has been documented in the last decade in country after country -- in Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guinea, the Philippines, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and other nations. In addition to the mass killings that took place in Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge and in Uganda under the government of Idi Amin, there were also many "disappearances."

Many of the victims are feared dead, but the special mark of "disappearances" as a tool of repression is that people remain unaccounted for, missing without trace, and that government officials claim to have no knowledge of them. Families are left in permanent uncertainty without even the solace of mourning. Sometimes a released prisoner reports having seen one of the "disappeared" alive in captivity, but for most families this is followed by more years of anxious waiting.

## Mutilated Bodies

In Guatemala, where many thousands of people have "disappeared" in the last 15 years, bodies have been found mutilated so as to be unidentifiable. In Argentina, where it is estimated that up to 15,000 people may have "disappeared" after the 1976 military coup, a network of secret detention camps was created. Torture is commonplace and

many of those sent to the camps are feared dead.

A.I. members around the world are using letters, appeals, posters, meetings and other public events to call attention to individual victims. Among other places in which "disappearances" have been reported, sometimes under a government no longer in power, are Afghanistan, Brazil, East

Timor, Syria, Morocco, Mexico and Namibia.

A.I.'s campaign aims at strengthening and increasing efforts already under way to counter the terror technique of "disappearance." The United Nations recognized the problem and called on member governments to cooperate in finding the victims and ending the abuse. The UN Commission on Human Rights set up

a working group to seek out and act on facts. It reported the release or tracing of some of the many people on whom it had requested information.

## Speaker at Dal

As part of A.I.'s "Disappearances" Campaign in Halifax, Michael Stephen Schelew, a Canadian Refugee Co-ordinator for Amnesty International will be speaking at Dalhousie Law School and Saint Mary's University on Thursday, February 18th. Everyone is invited to attend these sessions on "Disappearances," the first of which will be held in Room 115 of the Law School between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and the second of which will be held at 8 p.m. in the auditorium of the Burke Building at St. Mary's. Mr. Schelew is an alumnus of Dalhousie Law School (1975), a practising lawyer and lecturer at the University of Toronto.

As university students we are all too willing to march with our banners when we are personally affected by higher tuition fees or decreases in student loans. However, apathy reigns when we are presented with much more important issues concerning basic human rights. We are secure in a country that respects certain fundamental freedoms. Therefore it is our duty to further the cause of human rights for those who do not. As citizens of the larger global community, if we fail to object to the abuses of power in other nations, how long will it be before we too risk joining the ranks of the "disappeared?"



Disappeared: Graciella Melliborsky Saidler, a political economy graduate student.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Feds, funding, and EPF

by Thomas Vradenburg

OTTAWA -- The impasse at last week's federal-provincial conference on the economy is interesting and important in what it tells us about the process of federal-provincial relations. Once again the federal government is practising brinkmanship, and the provinces, however much they may squawk, may not be able to do much about it.

On the issue of Established Programs Financing (EPF), or federal funding for post-secondary education and health care, the feds and the provinces are back to about the same position they were in before the November budget, which is about \$1.5 billion apart.

The so-called revenue guarantee, a federal handout that provinces have used for social programs, will still be cut, as first stated in the budget. Because of this, Nova Scotia will be short \$40 million for education and health funding this year, Finance Minister Joel Matheson said. The feds have never acknowledged that have-not provinces actually use the revenue guarantee for such purposes.

The revenue guarantee was not even mentioned at a briefing last Thursday afternoon, when a senior government official outlined the not-so-new federal proposal.

The feds will, according to their proposal, continue funding for the EPF programs at about the same rate they do now, with an escalator clause to adjust for inflation.

Federal funding will now come with strings attached: the strings that were discussed before the budget. I will deal with the three of greatest concern.

String number one (I discuss it first because it costs the most money) is that the provinces keep paying their fair share of the funding for post-secondary education, about 28 per cent of the universities' operating costs. (The feds pay about 57 per cent, and our tuition is the other 15 per cent.) Since the last EPF agreement was signed in 1977, the feds have complained that the provinces have been welching on their 28 per cent.

New Brunswick Premier Richard Hatfield, quoting the Parliamentary Task Force on Fiscal Federalism, denied this charge in the case of New Brunswick. The Task Force also acquits Nova Scotia of this welching charge.

String number two is 'credit' in the moral sense of the word. When the feds spend money, such as the aforementioned 57 per cent, they want the public to know about it. Ontario Premier William Davis said he would hang a sign out in front of the Univer-

sity of Toronto to make sure Prime Minister Trudeau is getting the credit he feels he deserves.

"You're going to get the credit," Premier Hatfield told the Prime Minister, "and I'll make sure you get the credit," for the cuts in EPF and other transfer payments. Hatfield was arguably the angriest of the premiers (aside from Quebec's Rene Levesque, who is always angry at these affairs).

String number three you can tag "major national objectives". By using such financial levers as EPF cuts, the federal government seems to be attempting to get more control over education. They say they want education policy to be more closely tailored to "major national objectives". That is, education should be more responsive to the needs of the national labour market (fewer artsies), hinting that the labour market's needs should be determined by the federal government.

In his closing remarks, Trudeau made reference to a shortage of 2,000 engineers in Alberta, to exemplify the provinces' supposed inability to train people in the right skills.

This rhetoric has already been given life in the job training programs recently begun by federal Employment Minister Lloyd Axworthy. Earlier in the conference, the provinces had tried a rather innovative approach, which

the feds promptly rejected. The proposal, approved by all the provinces, would have saved the feds \$374 million compared to their proposal in the budget. The provinces agreed to put a 12 per cent ceiling on the growth of EPF payments (that is in the federal proposal also). Alberta and British Columbia agreed they would chip in what they would have gotten from the feds, almost \$150 million, to help out their poorer brothers.

Though I did not study the proposal in detail, it seemed to make good sense; the feds would pay out less money than they had intended to, the two richest provinces would share their wealth a bit, and health and education services across Canada would be all the better. This proposal seemed to do more to prevent the "checkerboard effect", as Nova Scotia Premier John Buchanan phrased it, than would result if services in poorer provinces were cut due to underfunding.

The problem with the idea was the feds did not think of it first. Their strategy says that they must appear to be in control. The feds dictate and the provinces debate. So at the end of this conference, the result was the feds appear to have regained the upper hand in the EPF debate, by throwing out what appeared to be a good idea.

For better or for worse, the feds

are trying to impinge on what has traditionally been provincial turf.

By rejecting the provincial proposal, Trudeau has regained the upper hand in the EPF debate, and is going to let the clock wind down some. The deadline for the provinces to accept the new federal proposal is April 1, 1982. If they agree to it, they will be given until April 1, 1984 to work out a completely new arrangement with Ottawa.

As with the constitution, Trudeau's method is brinkmanship; he at first takes a hard line with the provinces, and then at the last moment (this March), he comes out of his corner to do some horse-trading.

So, there may be some room for the provinces to bargain on the federal EPF proposal. But the provinces do not see that possibility as any reason to breathe easier.

"He (Trudeau) is getting very very close to tampering with the concept of federalism that Canadians can accept and endorse," said an unnerved Richard Hatfield.

The concept of federalism is tested vigorously at any such federal-provincial meeting.

So while the feds and the provinces battle for control of education, we who are being educated are the real losers.