

The imperialism page

CUSO tells Senate

Colonialism in the Caribbean

by Alan Ruffman

On February 25, 1970, CUSO presented a brief to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs with respect to the Caribbean.

CUSO went before the Senate to capitalize on its increasing respectability and to put another viewpoint on the record. This Committee has been hearing briefs on the Caribbean for over a year.

It has heard from the extractive giants like Alcan which operates in Guyana and Jamaica, and from the Canadian banks (the Bank of Nova Scotia has 65 branches in Jamaica alone!). The senators have also heard from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and numerous other experts on the Caribbean.

The CUSO brief was in two parts. Part I was similar to the other 15 or so briefs the Senate Committee has heard: details of CUSO's programme, statistics, history and projected plans.

Part II was quite unlike any brief ever presented to the Committee. Entitled "Some Observations and Concerns", it may serve to counter the emotional charges of "Neocolonialist agency" that occasionally are hurled at CUSO. The record of the Senate hearing is available from the Committee in Ottawa at no cost.

CUSO's comments on Canada's increasing involvement in the Caribbean grated on the ears of some Senators. Yet, they were a needed contrast to the polished stories earlier presented by Canadian businesses, like Alcan.

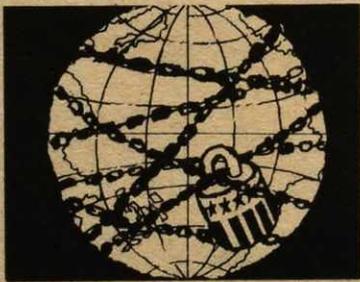
CUSO described St. Matthew as the first development economist in his bitter statement from Matthew 25:29:

"For unto everyone that hath shall be given; and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

The brief went on to cite Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, who suggests, "that in order to do uncalculable harm to the people of the Caribbean, or the Third World in general, it is not at all necessary that the Western politician or businessman be evil. He only has to be reasonable and realistic."

West Indians feel "they are getting the short end of the stick", added the brief. CUSO laid the blame directly on the shortsighted aims and lack of sensitivity of Canadian business in the Caribbean.

CUSO asked: "Why is it that Alcan, the banks, the insurance companies, Distillers Corporation Seagrams Ltd., Sherrif (Jamaica) Ltd., Colgate Palmolive, Brandram-Henderson (CIL) Ltd., Winwell Manufacturing Co., (leather goods), Waterman Leather Products, Bata Shoe, Jamaica Fibre Glass Company, etc., all seem to be very profitable and most West Indians are not?" CUSO also blamed the sun-sand-sea-sex syndrome of the Canadian tourist and quoted a West Indian:



What is happening is clear. The pax Americana, which during the 1960s reached all around the world, is being driven back upon a continental base. Recalcitrant nationalisms, tired of United States hegemony, have discovered they can kick it out. As their perimeter of empire contracts — in Southeast Asia, Latin America, even in Western Europe — they have found a new empire in their own back yard. Canada is a decompression chamber for their own comfort and safety during the transition to a different level of imperialism.

by James Eayrs in the
Toronto Daily Star,
December 16, 1969

"There is something very arrogant about Western concepts of tourism. They travel two or three thousand miles to come to our country, but they want to stay in the same kind of hotels they have at home, eat the identical food they eat at home and have us wait on them hand and foot. The Western colonial mentality really hasn't changed."

"For the business community, being a 'Good corporate citizen' and paying taxes", stated the brief, "— even if this is all the government has demanded — is not enough." It pleaded for an enlightened attitude among Canadians, based on sound developmental principles — principles that must be dictated by the citizens of the developing country itself.

Whether or not the senators listened is doubtful. We must remember that at least two of the senators on the Committee have grown fat on their company's investments in the Caribbean.

A year ago one senator is on record in these same hearings as deploring the precipitous rise in the cost of a martini in Venezuela.

The significance of the CUSO brief is that for the first time CUSO has spoken out in public. It has presented its point of view, all too seldom heard on Canada — a point of view sensitive to the aspirations of the developing country.

You, me and U.S. Imperialism

To paraphrase the old proverb, everybody talks about American imperialism, but no one does anything about it.

Part of the problem is that not too many people really know what American imperialism is. The standard explanations deal with esoterica about imperialism in economics and structural underdevelopment.

But economists' jargon doesn't turn too many people on. After all it's hard to get worked up about dollar devaluation. Unless of course you really understand imperialism, in which case you really don't need explanations anyway.

I wouldn't go so far as to say that *Close the 49th Parallel, etc.* is the answer, but it is a good attempt to explain the entire process of imperialism in some kind of historical context.

Published by the University of Toronto Press and edited by Ian Lumsden, the book is a collection of essays by what seems to be most of the intellectual community.

To be sure, the economy isn't neglected. The book features articles about the Canadian branch-plant, perhaps leading the list is an essay by Mel Watkins, which goes into the possibility of a distinctly Canadian science of economics.

Then there's an article by Canadian Dimension's Cy Gonick about the relationship of foreign ownership to politics.

Tying into that closely is an article about the history of the Canadian Labour movement, fittingly titled *LABOUR FOR A LABOUR MOVEMENT*. It's a history of the Americanization of our labour movement, by a chap called Abella, who teaches history at Glendon College.

On what seems to be another track altogether is *YES, CULTURAL IMPERIALISM, TOO!*, an article by Gail Dexter. She asks the perennial question about the Canadian identity and describes the kind of identity we would have, if we did have.

Canadian art, says Dexter, is totally oriented toward American art. Her experience as an art critic for the *Toronto Star* no doubt gave her the experience to make that statement.

But what is interesting about her article is the pervasive consciousness of the process of imperialism. The cultural imperialism visible in the world of art is not isolated; rather it is directly related to the economic domination of Canada.

"As long as the Canadian economy is dominated by the United States, Canadian culture will be submerged and

CLOSE THE 49TH PARALLEL ETC



The Americanization of Canada Edited by Ian Lumsden

Canadian painting will bear the hallmark of the imperial style," she says. And while her article thrusts mainly at the plastic arts, it is too much to believe that the same situation isn't occurring in other art forms. Logically following from that, Canadian art will have to be anti-imperialist.

That's the value of this book. Each of the articles is in itself a good article, either historically, analytically or theoretically. For instance:

You want to know why the papers are so bad? Take a quick look at John Warnock's *ALL THE NEWS IT PAYS TO PRINT*.

You want to know just what the American capitalists take out of Canada, and how? Sneak a peek at *THE ALIENATION OF CANADIAN RESOURCES: THE CASE OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY*, by Larrat Higgins.

You want to know how the US got control of the National Hockey league? Swing your stick in the direction of Bruce Kidd's *CANADA'S "NATIONAL" SPORT*.

There's more and I could go on forever. But it's probably easier for anybody that's interested to buy Lumsden's book. It costs \$3.75 in soft-cover.

CLOSE THE 49th PARALLEL, Ian Lumsden, University of Toronto Press, \$3.75.

A review by Mike Smith
Special to the Gazette