

bureaucratic nightmare

Blockade nothing new

It's after midnight, and I've changed out of the clothes I'd worn for three days. The long drive from Lubicon Lake to Lethbridge has taken a lot out of me, and there's still a week of classes ahead. But what the hell! For me, it's just a weekend off studies. For the Lubicon Cree, it's been 48 years of a bureaucratic nightmare. The Blockade is really nothing new - the Canadian and Alberta governments have been blockading the Lubicons' access to justice for decades. As the saying goes: "What goes around, comes around."

Numerous fresh images leap to mind out of my weekend vigil: the low, lazy circling of the RCMP aircraft, tilting to

plate?"

In response to questions about his presence there, one constable just said "You'll have to direct any questions to the Media Liaison officer back at the detachment." We drove to the detachment in Peace River, but the Media Liaison refused to meet anyone.

No... it's not the RCMP who are to blame for their role in this whole fiasco. Their good name has been as much abused by the bumbling of Indian Affairs Minister Bill McKnight, as have the Lubicon people.

Neither McKnight, nor his equally culpable Provincial colleagues started this confrontation. And as things are heading, they don't seem to have the skill and know-how to reach a solution. Meanwhile, the Lubicons have been suffering such idiots 'ungladly' as every permutation of provincial and federal governments has consistently belched up ineptitude since 1940.

Sadly, as Canadians, we have learned nothing of the political process which yields our supposed representatives. We persist in electing people who promise to capitalize on opportunity. Instead, we should be looking for those who don't recoil from the problems - especially the human ones. Our willingness to continually accept the incompetency of a McKnight or a Getty will create shallow, insulated governments, akin to those of South Africa, Israel and the United States.

All things considered, the blockade will prove to be a very positive development for the Lubicons, and for all Indian groups in the country confronting the government. They are reasserting their stewardship of the land, and showing their children how to do so. The methods which the adults now pass onto the next generation are much different than yesterday's but so are the Lubicons themselves.

To wholeheartedly support the Lubicons is not to advocate the breaking of law, as government officials assert. In order to have law, you must first have justice, and the government has repeatedly ducked justice in order to serve the laws of oil companies, and the laws of royalties.

When the CKO reporter shoved his microphone at me, asking why I had come all the way to Little Buffalo, I had to quickly sift through the mound of anger I was containing. What finally came out is, rationally, the reason why every Canadian who is concerned about justice should travel to any one of the number of Little Buffalos cropping up all over the country. Quite simply, Canada is not working!

Canada is not working when Indians, teachers, students, churches, Europeans, Americans, librarians, clerks, children, truck drivers, camera crews and journalists all stand on one side of the line - and only the police and the government stand on the other.

BY JON OXLEY

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capture everything and everyone on camera... the energy and determination of the Lubicon people, taking control of a land which has housed them for thousands of years... the simultaneous anger and excitement of the supporters - church and student leaders, private citizens, Indian Chiefs and Councillors, the media, and even a European Parliament member. And the quiet...

Despite the 400 media and supporters present, the Lubicon lands rang with a silence unknown in the 12 or so years since the Province began leasing the commercial assault. Hundreds of oil rigs stood still, and pumping stations were like corrugated tombs.

Roads normally growling with service, survey and seismic traffic received a respite. Only the ugly assault of Oil and Welding company signs remain to mar the environment. I can only imagine that the moose, long frightened off by industry, will return even to the roads if the blockade lasts long enough.

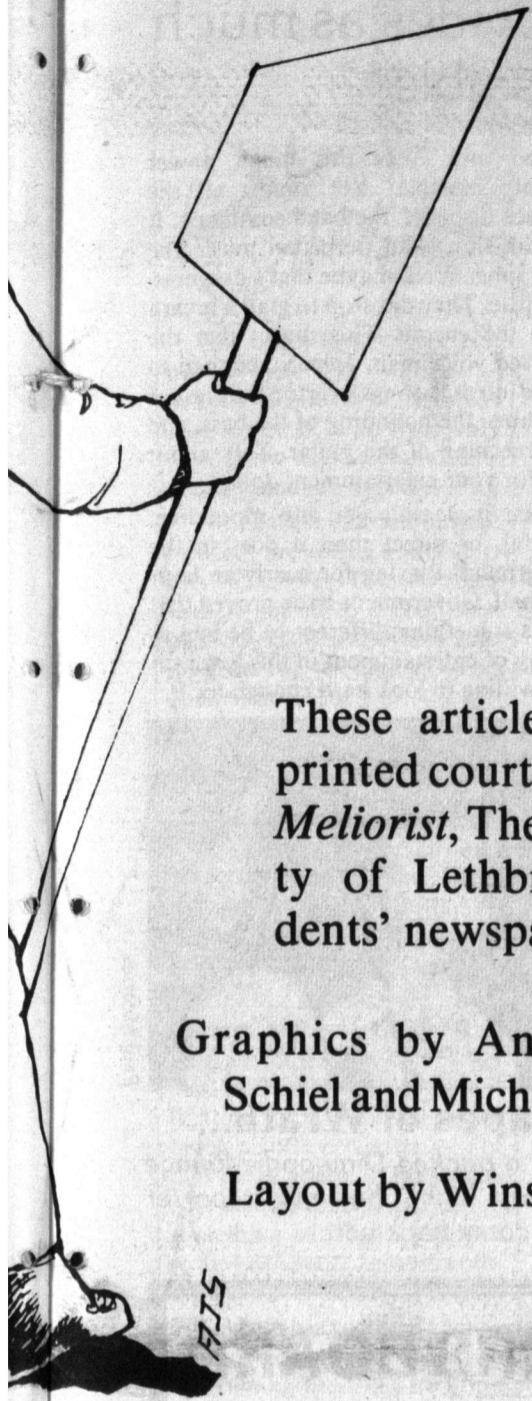
The ruthless pettiness of the RCMP provided a momentary distraction for the media. But this served little use other than proving just how much of a puppet even the best police force can become in the hands of incompetent representatives.

In the end, one has to feel sorry for the RCMP. After all, it's they who are parked a mile downroad from the blockade, playing that they've set up an "Alberta Checkstop" (for 24 hours) - harassing church elders, statespersons, camera crews and the like, asking if seatbelts are being worn and "Where is your front license

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Graphics by Andrea Schiel and Michael Tolboom.

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the destruction of also be put in economic % of the 457 member re; in 1988, 95% is on ne average annual in-as \$5,000; now it has l in 1980, 219 moose ter food. Last winter

omic view is a more A once self-reliant tly and socially pro-e - is now beginning to and desperation have ohol abuse and suicides tributing to a tuber-hich has affected 91

members since 1987 - almost one half of the band.

The Lubicon Cree band today is facing annihilation and it refers to its recent campaigns as its "Last Stand" which it fully intends to win. Chief Ominayak stated to a full hall of supporters and media Saturday "Politically we've been trying for the last 49 years to arrive at a settlement that would be fair, and that hasn't been possible. After trying to use the court system for the last 8 years we haven't got anywhere and we don't have the financial resources that are required." He continued, "We can't afford to fool around for the next 10 years to come up with a settlement... therefore, we're going to start asserting jurisdiction."

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the government to dispossess them of their land. They, as all other Natives in Canada, are denied human and aboriginal rights by the Canadian government and its people who allow such injustices to take place. Members of the European parliament feel that we are obligated by Europe's historical role in creating these unjust situations to investigate and take a public stand on these matters."

The blockade was peacefully put in place, but no oil trucks or RCMP attempted to enter. Chief Ominayak expects the authorities to wait until supporters have left before interfering. However, he also suggests that the oil companies may be pressuring the government to settle quickly. This seems to be born out in Getty's announcement Monday that he is ready to grant the full 246 square kilometres which the Lubicons are demanding, although this is as yet unofficial.

