

Way off base on boat people

Dave Dellinger's article on the boat people in *The Gateway* (Tuesday, Sept. 11.) was truly astonishing both in some of its assertions and its logic. I make no claim to expertise on South-East Asia, and so will limit myself to a few comments on the more vividly ridiculous aspects of the article.

He begins with an attack on the "self-indulgent pity promoted by the press", and four sentences later says that "no one with a trace of compassion could fail to be moved by" the refugees' sufferings. The difference is not made clear. One can assume that Mr. Dellinger is "moved" while many of the rest of us, under the press's pernicious influence are indulging in "self-indulgent pity". The media people themselves, though, are not just misled, but downright sinister. The proof of this: a statement by ABC News that "waiting in line for gas is a small problem compared to the plight of the...boat people". To you or me, this may seem like a fair statement, but to Mr. Dellinger's penetrating mind it is clear evidence of blackest reaction.

"The media have seized on the refugees sufferings...to try to convince (the) American public...that not matter how bad things are here, they would be worse under any alternative economic system or form of government."

Mr. Dellinger correctly notes that "there is more than enough blame to go around with the United States, Vietnam and China all implicated", but for some reason overlooks the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which during the war with the South supplied the North with hundreds of thousands of

support troops and advisors and billions of dollars of sophisticated weaponry. This partnership has now been formalized with a friendship and co-operation treaty. This plus Hanoi's invasion of Cambodia and support for guerilla movements in neighbouring countries not only led to China's invasion of Vietnam, but has alarmed the surrounding South-East Asian States.

Mr. Dellinger cites a report by visitors to Ho Chi Minh City (column 7) whose Chinese friends there are still running small businesses...This suggests that those gainfully employed are not pressured to leave but that the estimated three million unemployed in southern cities are pressured to go where they can scratch out a living and contribute to the desperately needed reconstruction. "Logically, there is a dialectical leap from a mighty flimsy bit of evidence to the conclusion it supposedly suggests". Factually, Mr. Dellinger could have quickly determined just how unfounded this conclusion is by talking with a few refugees.

There are some piquant phrases: "scratch out a living" and "pressured to go," which leave one curious for details. Just what does pressure mean? Mr. Dellinger had earlier assured us, in an outpouring of righteous indignation against the "New York Times" (col. 2), that Vietnam "used persuasion rather than compulsion to try to

repopulate the agricultural areas." It is also interesting to reflect that while Mr. Dellinger would not doubt view as beyond the pale suggestions that people receiving unemployment benefits in the West be required to accept any available job in Vietnam "pressuring" millions to "scratch out a living" in state-elected locations in the country is not only not in the least reprehensible but necessary, nay desirable.

The aloofness of the United States towards the Vietnamese government, denounced by Mr. Dellinger as the biggest single cause of the refugee problem

(col. 4 and 8), was motivated by a sinister desire to "advance U.S. interests and designs in South-East Asia". Two examples are cited: trying to promote "a neutralist solution (in Cambodia)" rather than the Khmer Rouge or the new Vietnamese-sponsored regime; and Carter's "security assurances" from Brezhnev that there will be no Soviet naval bases in Vietnam, an idea "adamantly opposed" by even the Vietnamese governments as Mr. Dellinger points out.

The most hilarious moment in Mr. Dellinger's exposition comes when he briefly alludes

(col. 3) to the Chinese fleeing to Hong Kong (which he curiously locates in South-East Asia). These people, "40,000 or more a month", are fleeing...rightist revisionism! "Chinese citizens, displaced or displeased by China's recent moves to the right, have been flooding into Hong Kong." Presumably no one has told these poor unfortunates that Hong Kong is not Maoist territory. Mr. Dellinger does not specify how many of them have booked passage to Albania, that one remaining bastion of true Marxist-Leninism.

James Dunlap
Grad Studies

North Garneau eaten up slowly

Richard Miller in his letter of the 11th of September suggests that the University purchase older buildings as alternative student housing. In fact the University bought a large area of North Garneau in the late 1960's, originally for the purpose of later expansion. However, largely due to the efforts of a tenant's association in 1972-73, 80 houses were saved for student housing. They are administered by the North Garneau housing authority, aided by the North Garneau committee. This was at the time a major victory for the tenants of Garneau.

However, it appears that North Garneau is now threatened again, not with immediate demolition, but with a change of

tenancy. A sub-committee of the campus development committee recommended in 1973 that "academic and other use of North Garneau houses, unless fully merited, is not to be encouraged." Nevertheless, in the last year, two houses on Saskatchewan Drive have been converted to academic offices, resulting in the loss of twelve rooms, previously occupied by students. This seems to be a minor issue, but it indicates a change in policy by the University. What is more important is that this change of use was not brought before the North Garneau committee, the only input that the residents of Garneau, and the student body as a whole, have in the decision making

process. These decisions have been made unilaterally at some level in the University administration with no consultation with the student body at all. Most students are aware of the appalling housing situation in Edmonton. In the reduction of the number of places in this

cheap and convenient accommodation, the University is acting directly against their interests. It is to be hoped that our elected representatives on the appropriate committees will see fit to question these actions, and also the manner in which these decisions were made.

Second Wind

by Alison Thomson

There is no area of social services where the user-pay philosophy is more harmful than in the area of health care. Anyone who doubts this has only to look to the United States, where it is a common occurrence for a relatively minor illness to plunge the patient and his family into debt. In Canada we are fortunate to have avoided this state of affairs thus far; however, under pressure from doctors who are increasingly feeling taken advantage of, the Lougheed government is launching a serious threat to the medicare system.

The Conservative government's proposal for the future of medicare is in three parts — the implementation of a hospital user fee of ten dollars per day, continuing cutbacks in health care, and the abolition of balance billing in conjunction with "realistic negotiating with doctors" over fees.

The ten dollar per day user fee is regressive on several counts. First, it is a small amount compared to the approximately \$120 per day which hospitalization costs. It is a drop in the bucket. It also inflicts hardship on those who can least afford it. It is not the wealthy woman entering the hospital for a face lift who is going to be deterred by this nuisance fee, but rather the elderly on fixed incomes, one-parent families, and other economically disadvantaged people.

Patients do not, by and large, choose to be hospitalized. For most, it is a frightening and painful experience. To add to the anxiety which they are feeling over their illness by creating more financial worries than are already entailed by the loss of income is wrong. Hospitalization is frequently a necessary part of diagnosis and treatment, and it should not be made inaccessible to lower income people.

Cutbacks in health care are absurd in Alberta. This is not a province which is impoverished, and there is no excuse for depriving the people of this province of the best health care possible. In this time of prosperity for Alberta, people should not have to wait hours to see a physician. They should be seen by the physician as individuals, and should not be made to feel like a cog in a machine. These problems are already occurring, and cutbacks in public health spending will exacerbate the situation.

Studies in both the United States and Britain have shown that an effective health care package costs governments about 10% of their Gross National Product. Medical care is not cheap. It has to be paid for by someone, and if that someone is not the government via taxation, it must be the individuals using health facilities, with all the inequities that ensue.

That the government is willing to negotiate medicare payments with physicians rather than allow them to continue balance billing is encouraging. The practice of

balance billing has arisen because medicare payments to doctors have risen at a rate of 5 to 6% per year, while staff salaries, instruments, rent and other overhead expenses have risen at a considerably greater rate. Doctors are required to make a substantial investment of both time and money in their education. They must then establish a practice, and unless they are on the salary of a hospital or university they must create their own pension and sickness plans. For these reasons, doctors feel entitled to above average incomes.

Many also resent being told what they can charge. Those doctors who come from the United Kingdom have no reason to have faith in the government's good will. "Many American and Canadian doctors perceive medicare as a quick trip to Moscow via the NDP," as Dr. John Eddington of Student Health Services comments.

However, these problems in the present system should not be remedied by imposing the further burden on the health care consumer — which is the solution balance billing suggests. It is in this context that medicare payments must be made more compatible with the substantial investment the doctor has made in his skills and practice. So long as doctors are paid by a form of piecemeal, they will attempt to see as many patients as possible, to the detriment of the quality of the time spent with each one.

Although the Tories have said they will negotiate with doctors over fees, doctors have lost what trust they had in the government's good faith. The Tories have an appalling record in their dealings with professional groups — doctors, nurses, and teachers can all attest to that. The government must not be allowed to escape from their obvious incompetence in this field of labor relations by dismantling the medicare system and allowing private billing, because to allow this will cause great hardship among groups already harmed by the reactionary Tory social service policies.

It is unlikely that the Official Opposition in the Legislature will prove capable to deal with the threats to medicare. The opposition must be in the form of public protest, and to this end the Alberta New Democratic Party is organizing a rally at the Londonderry Hotel at 8:00 p.m. tonight. Speakers will include the party leader, Grant Notley, Dr. Gordon Fearn, and Dr. John Eddington. A small turnout at this rally will be seen by the government as tacit acceptance of the present threat to medicare.

It is important to show the Conservative government that the people of Alberta will not stand for the imposition of further financial burdens on those who can least afford it. Show your support for the medicare system and attend the rally.

Given the present political atmosphere in Alberta, actions of this sort are at least as important as elections.

Grass was greener then

I have been attending this university for five years now, and in that time I have observed a saddening trend. Upon my return each fall, I find that another strip of concrete has been laid across one or two of the few remaining green areas on this campus. Bit by bit, our larger areas of lawn have been reduced to oddly-shaped chunks of grass interspersed amongst a maze of concrete walks. One only has to look at the quad between SUB and CAB, or at what is left of the lawn in front of the Dentistry/Pharmacy building, to see where this process is leading and why has this been taking place?

It's been taking place because of the thousands of lazy slob on this campus who, in order to save a few steps, are continually cutting across the grass rather than bothering to walk maybe a dozen steps more and stay on the existing sidewalks. After a few days of being constantly trampled upon, the grass along the shortcuts dies, and we are left with unsightly goat paths criss-crossing our lawns. Then the grounds crew, bowing to the inevitable, covers these goat paths with concrete.

But the process does not end there; the new walks do not satisfy the lazy herd, new shortcuts are taken, more goat paths are created, soon to be followed by more concrete. Will the process end before there is no lawn left large enough to toss a football or a frisbee on, to kick a soccer ball around on, to eat lunch on?

Mike Courting
Education