



photo by Bob Jeffries

Acadia Axemen (in white) dig in against the losing Dal Tigers. Their effort paid off in a 34-14 win for the Axemen, and left Dal with a nasty 1-3 record.

You could be next

by Stephen Mills

Penny Simpson, revolutionary socialist and victim of the War Measures Act, spoke on the situation in Quebec to an audience of about sixty students Thursday afternoon (Oct. 29). It is part of a cross-country campaign to organize student committees against the Act and against legislation to be brought in following the Act's termination.

Simpson began her address by stating that hysteria over the recent kidnappings had died down and people are beginning to ask what's going on.

"This type of situation was never expected in Canada" said Simpson. "We've always been taught that Canada is a calm, peaceful, place. Now we know it has the same problems as other countries, the same pressures, tension, and violence. The situation in Montreal is very real."

She went on to explain that the situation had been building for some time and mentioned specifically the April elections in Quebec.

"People had enormous hopes

for the election," she said. "Quebec finally had a chance to change things democratically." Unfortunately, things did not change. The Liberal party won an enormous number of seats and the popular Parti Québécois won 25% of the popular vote and 6% of the seats.

"It was a terrible thing!" Simpson said. "People considered their representatives blocked from access to the established democratic structures. I believe this led directly to the FLQ's actions."

Simpson then explained the attitude of the Quebec people toward the FLQ tactics, which she completely disagreed with.

"People in general were not that upset by the kidnappings. People understand violence in Quebec. When there's 10% unemployment in the province — that's violence. When you're forced to work in another language — that's violence. When your children can go nowhere in their own language — that's violence."

"The FLQ manifesto is a statement of emotion, pointing out real problems," she said.

"There is hardly anything in it that can be considered political." She stated that the labor movement and the student movement (which she claimed "moves every year but moves now as never before") endorsed FLQ sentiments, not methods.

Simpson then stated that she felt the War Measures Act was not invoked just for the FLQ but was, in effect, an instrument used by the government to crush the left in Canada. This was demonstrated by her experiences the day the Act was evoked. Seventeen hundred homes searched, three hundred people arrested, fingerprinted, photographed, shoved into concrete cells for an indefinite time, without proper food, without proper sanitation, deprived of any communication with the outside world.

MUST KEEP RIGHTS

She concluded by stating the purpose of her campaign: "We want to find out what our rights are and keep them. We must work to keep the few rights we have on paper ours, because Canada has lost the idea of democracy."

Wanted — Canada . . .

(continued from page 5)

This has very serious implications for the political process by which we will get independence. If we would expect to get independence by something other than a socialist route, it would have to come through a strong nationalist bourgeoisie. But this is largely ruled out in the Canadian case, because our leading business firms and

leading business men are not autonomous or independent. They are serving foreign masters.

In terms of political processes, if we want to build an independent Canada, we have to turn to the growing numbers of people who are protesting at a grass-roots level both Americanization and the capitalist structure. If we look at it in terms of

structures, a positive alternative to the foreign based, American based, multi-nationalist corporation which tries to plan right across the world within an industry, is socialism. Socialism is the sense of having economic and social planning in many industries, and in the contemporary context, a socialism that is concerned with maintaining participation at a grass-roots level which is necessary for genuine democracy.

GAZETTE — When we talk about a scheme whereby we will regain our independence, where do you see Quebec in this process?

WATKINS — We have to

begin by saying that the roots of the problems of Quebec lie along the lines that we have been talking about. All Canadians are increasingly wanting to do something about American imperialism. Quebec is a part of this country and they suffer a double oppression of American and Anglo-Canadian domination. To a great extent British imperialism, and later American imperialism, channeled itself into Quebec through Anglo-Canadians.

Having said that, I think we ought to go back and talk about how, in general, foreign domination balkanizes a country, that is, it breaks down central authority and

federal structure. While we would generally deplore that, we must understand that Quebec is very much a special kind of case, because as well as this issue of oppression there's a very important aspect that is intimately related to it; that is the sense in which Quebec is a nation.

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There are really two nations in this country. Our response to the situation in Quebec has to be one in which we recognize the rights of the people of Quebec to pursue self-determination, by democratic means. And that means that when we want to talk about events in the last couple of weeks, it is not sufficient to deplore what the FLQ did. We must also deplore both how English Canadians and their government have treated the people of Quebec in the past, and the Trudeau government's kind of recreation of history; sending in troops from outside Quebec to put down what appears to have been, if anything, a popular uprising in that province. And we must deplore the use of the instruments of the War Measures Act to put into prison many, many people whose only crime appears to have been that they stood for a democratic and independent Quebec, and stood on that issue on the left.

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