

Blood n' Thunder

SOCIALIST SETS RECORD STRAIGHT

Dear Editor,

This letter is to set the record straight. I'm a member of the International Socialists (IS). I'm also a member of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS); as are 450,000 other students across Canada. I have a wife and a young child at home and, not unlike most students, I have a lot of school work to do. Yet, when the CFS called for a National Day of Strike and Action to protest the government's proposed cuts to education, I was excited. As a student, I wanted to protest a government scheme that would see me and my wife (also a student) in debt for the rest of our working lives. As a member of the IS, I wanted to help build the protest.

Somewhere along the line, my efforts, and those of many other concerned students like the Social Work students at STU, were denigrated by the student unions of STU and UNB. The representatives of organized university students in Fredericton made every effort to stop those who tried to get organized.

One of the most useful ploys of Estabrooks, Gionet and Co., was and is to say that the IS was *de facto* manipulating and organizing the Day of Action across the country. Presumably the CFS appointed us, a "non-student, Toronto-based" organization, as the official organizers or some such nonsense. Accompanying this change were accusations that the IS "harassed" Axworthy and his family and encouraged "goon" demonstration tactics; like throwing macaroni, etc., at politicians.

Indeed, IS branches across the country endorsed and helped organize the Day of Action. But so too did well over 120 other national and local organizations and individuals. Nationally these included CUPE, CUPW, NAC, and a majority of the universities and colleges in the CFS. Locally the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre and the Fredericton District Labour Council were among those who contributed to the Strike. How this could possibly translate into an "IS" day of action is completely inexplicable. In no way did anyone in either student union elaborate on how this Herculean *coup d'état* was accomplished by the IS.

The lack of an explanation is because there isn't one. In fact, on the campuses where student unions were involved in the Day of Action, the IS did what every other group did: they helped build the demonstration. It was precisely the STU and UNB student unions' lack of participation that forced the IS here to take a more active role.

If anyone thinks that members of the IS enjoy doing tons of work helping to organize an action of national student solidarity here in F'ton, they're mistaken. Nothing better could have occurred than to have had both student unions leading the Day of Action. Instead, we had an ironic situation where students themselves were forced to shell out their time and money to organize a student action, in spite of the fact that they paid an arm and a leg in student union fees at the beginning of the year to supposedly have a group who could, if not lead such a task, at least help.

So, to say or imply that the IS was either appointed by the CFS, or was the only group organizing and/or participating in the Day of Action is a slander. It is untrue and an attempt to "redbait" (the McCarthyism of the 1950s seems to be in vogue again) in order to sidestep the real issue: cuts to post-secondary education funding.

The IS is a worker and student organization. Many of the branches in Canada grew out of university campuses. The Fredericton Branch is no different. A majority of the members are students and take to heart the concerns that all students share over the proposed cutbacks. To say that the "non-student" IS was organizing the Day of Action, even assuming we were the only group doing it, is nothing short of a lie. As well, the IS is not "Toronto-based". There are six Toronto branches, each, of course, based in Toronto. But the Fredericton Branch is based in Fredericton. Most of us are from or have lived for some time in this area. To suggest that the IS is "Toronto-based" is only a way of trying to portray those in this city who were organizing against the cuts as "aliens" or "foreigners" of some sort (it

seems xenophobia is in vogue as well).

If you think that the student unions, in light of the depth of the threat to education, were petty to create such "smoke and mirrors", you are correct. But there's more.....

The IS isn't about throwing bricks, macaroni, molotov cocktails, or certain student union bureaucrats through windows or at politicians. This isn't what the CFS, CUPW, CUPE, NAC, or any other organization argued for. No one plans such things. The point of strength for any demonstration lies in its *collective* power and *solidarity*. Building the confidence of students who want to stand up against the cuts by getting organized is a fundamentally important exercise. In no way are such actions inherently violent or chaotic as our student unions would like us to think. Their attempt to make all demonstrators appear "crazy" or "violent" is nothing but hypocrisy.

Such a condescending attitude was certainly nowhere in evidence when STU students heeded the call of their student union back in October to demonstrate against Jean Chrétien. Two hundred and fifty students came out: there was no violence, there was no chaos, but there was plenty of solidarity and confidence. But, if demonstrators really are the screaming ogres that the Gionets and Estabrooks say they are, why didn't they express these views to the demonstrators at the Wu Centre last October? Indeed, how does such an arrogant attitude to the people they supposedly represent explain that it was only the presence of the demonstrators that day that made Chrétien even bother to blow hot air on Gionet and her made-for-an-Ottawa-paper-shredder alternative proposal document?

The only explanation for such hypocrisy is that demonstrations that build the confidence of the majority are only useful when it is convenient for the elites of the student unions. Well, I'm sorry that I and 80,000 other students inconvenienced you on Jan. 25. Miss Gionet and Mr. Estabrooks, but the sad truth is that your backroom paper shuffling with Axworthy is far less significant than the camaraderie (yep, you read it right - camaraderie) and solidarity that was exhibited to *ourselves and Axworthy* on Jan. 25th.

The reality is that no one from the IS "harassed" Axworthy's family, no one from the IS "trashed" the FHS cafeteria, and no one from the IS instructed demonstrators on Jan. 25 to throw macaroni.

The STU and UNB student unions had only one agenda when they tried to stop the demo. of Jan. 25: their own baby-political careers. It's no coincidence that Estabrooks has been appointed as the interim director of the proposed CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations). Their big claim to fame will be to develop new ways to enjoy their lobby/vacations to politician-land. Regardless of the virtues of the CASA-CFS debate, it was convenient for Estabrooks & Co. to build a new political career at the expense of students. So, rather than being there to help build one of the largest student actions in Canadian history or at the very least applaud those who wanted to contribute to such an endeavour, our elected officials felt that inflating their already ballooned egos by meeting Liberal Party elites was more important.

The January 25 National Day of Strike and Action was the beginning of something bigger. The government is planning massive cuts through the federal budget, and it'll be people like you and I who'll be hurt the most. *We have to organize*. Massive solidarity can (as it has in the past) force the government to back down.

There is an answer to the government's proposed cuts. You don't have to be Paul Estabrooks or a rocket scientist to let the politicians know it either. *Make the corporations pay*. On Jan. 25 the CFS proposed this alternative. The IS said it. CUPE said it. CUPW said it. High school students in many parts of the country said this. There was a message on Jan. 25. We weren't there just screaming with no alternatives. *Make the corporations pay*. If Canada's corporate elite, fat off of our labour and tax subsidies, rebel, don't blame those on the bottom. Instead, ask why the people we elect cannot ensure that political decisions are carried out for the majority who elect them instead of the minority who tend to control them.

We cannot afford the rich anymore.

—Scott Jack, International Socialists

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Walk

A Scandal?

"Do evangelicals (as well as Catholic and mainline Protestants) exercise the "mind of Christ" in academic matters at UNB?"

Evangelical Protestants make up the largest single group of religious North Americans. They also enjoy increasing wealth, social status, political influence, and educational achievement. Yet, according to Mark Noll, professor of history at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, they make only slight contributions to "first-order public discourse". That is, evangelicals do not treat scholarly research, modern culture, science, the arts, politics, and social analysis with the seriousness God intends. Noll states, in his recently published book, that *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, is that "there is not much of an evangelical mind."

Evangelicals voice strong concerns in certain areas—pro-life, family values, the nation's moral standards. But they are relatively silent in others, states Noll, and most noticeably in higher education. When it comes to the "life of the mind," evangelicals are either not much interested (anti-intellectual), or they fail to think Christianly. Is that the case, and also here at UNB?

Evangelicals are those who acknowledge the need for "change" or "conversion" (*metanoia*), for "new birth." Conversion, they recognise, is a profound life-changing religious experience. Further, evangelicals rely strongly on the Bible as having ultimate religious authority. They desire to share their faith, and they recognise the importance of Christ's redeeming work on the cross. I can identify with these.

Evangelicals are not confined to any one denomination, and their prominence

in any church varies in greater or lesser degrees with time. Evangelical impulses shift as groups, leaders, institutional concerns, and opponents shift in their visibility and influence. Clear, however, is that a much higher proportion of evangelicals practice their faith actively than do either Catholics or mainline Protestants. According to the Angus Reid survey presented in "God is Alive: Canada is a Nation of Believers," (*Maclean's*, Apr. 12 1993), up to 24 percent of Canadians identified themselves as evangelical.

According to Noll, a widespread anti-intellectualism has existed among evangelicals for more than a century. They have distrusted academia, most specifically scientific research. But in their willingness to disregard the discoveries, research, and discussions of modern scholarship on science and worldly affairs, they have unwittingly embraced almost "every wind of apocalyptic speculation and the crude spirits of populist science" (14). Not surprising, therefore, that Noll claims that evangelicals have not developed a "specifically Christian framework," by which they approach all areas of academic learning, teaching, and research.

It is not evangelicals have not succeeded in the academic world. Many have done quite well. It is, rather, that evangelicals as a whole fail to think sufficiently Christianly "about the nature and working of the physical world, the character of human social structures like government and the economy, the meaning of the past, the

nature of artistic creation, and the circumstances attending our perception of the world outside ourselves" (7). Evangelicals fail to exercise the mind of Christ in all areas of life. That, according to Noll, is the "scandal of the evangelical mind."

Do evangelicals (as well as Catholic and mainline Protestants) exercise the "mind of Christ" in academic matters at UNB? No doubt some do. But it is also clear that some (many?) do not, and Noll sheds light on why that may be the case.

Perhaps an additional point can be made. UNB is a public university; it is open to all people. But some maintain that UNB is secular, something they assume is affirmed by its 1859 Charter. That is where the confusion exists. There is a major difference between a public university and a secular university: they are not one and the same.

The confusion exists in part because evangelicals (as well as Catholics and mainline Protestants) are not sufficiently aware of the distinction. A secular university is not open to non-secular points of view. Is that the case with UNB?

Evangelical students are taught modern scholarly categories and ideas. Are any of these at odds with, or hostile to, Christian academic categories and ideas? Who points out to the students the difference? Further, have evangelical Christian scholars actively encouraged each other, and their students, to develop a Christian scholarly framework? Or, is there a "scandal of the evangelical mind" at UNB?

NOT that you asked... by Frank Pearce

Over the last few years the issue of euthanasia has acquired a great deal of exposure here in North America. Most of this has come from Dr. Kevorkian in Michigan and MP Svend Robinson's presence at the assisted suicide of Sue Rodriguez, but last fall it got thrown in our faces with two court cases. First was the case in Saskatchewan of the father who killed his daughter to alleviate her suffering from cerebral palsy. I'm not sure of the length of the sentence, but I do know that it was severe. Second came a case in Nova Scotia where a son and his wife were found guilty of manslaughter for the death of his terminally ill with cancer father. In this instance a sentence was waived, the judge ruling that the man and his wife were not criminals and were not in need of rehabilitation.

Admittedly, I am not totally conversant with the details of either of these two cases. However, from what little I do know of the cases, I find myself more in agreement with the judge from Nova Scotia than with the one from Saskatchewan. Those who are engaged in euthanasia are not criminals, they are honest citizens who have been forced by their love for another to perform a task which our justice system mistakenly calls illegal.

Who are we to decide for another person when his or her life will end? None of us have that right. Should any person choose to end their life then that is their choice, and it is not our place to forcefully choose

for them otherwise. All that we can legitimately do is try to dissuade them from their choice as best we can, but we can not force our will upon them.

However, in the case of the very sick and the elderly, this is often not enough. It is not enough to simply accept their decision and go our own way, because often they are too weak to enact their decision, and if they are able to enact their decision we are still forcing them to die alone. So, in many ways we have a moral obligation to assist in or at least be present for the death of those

be performed by a medically trained professional in the presence of the willing loved ones of the dying patient's choosing.

That being said, there must be numerous precautions to ensure that there are no abuses. In the case of euthanasia it is far better to err on the side of caution than the other way around. We must make sure that death is the patient's choice. To do anything less will actually be murder. That is why our government must become involved with euthanasia to the point that it can be carefully regulated.

Euthanasia must never become an easy decision, if only because it is irrevocable. Once the decision for euthanasia has been enacted it is too late to change your mind. Thus, measures must be taken to ensure that the patient is fully informed of the consequences of euthanasia, that the patient is fully informed of what life will be like if euthanasia is not chosen (this must be done truthfully if it is to have any value), and that the patient has not been pressured into making the decision by any outside influences. This will take time, and some will suffer the agony of a life they no longer want as a result, but it is necessary to take these precautions in order to avoid mistakes.

Euthanasia is ultimately a matter of individual human rights. Just as it is the right of every person to choose to live, it should also be the right of every person to choose to die. After all, whose life is it anyway?

"... we have a moral obligation to assist in or at least be present for the death of those whom we love who have chosen to die."

whom we love who have chosen to die. This is obviously not going to be a universally accepted idea. Many people have serious moral and ethical objections to euthanasia. These people should not face societal pressure to engage in an activity which they feel to be morally and ethically abhorrent. Other people may find that they agree with the idea of euthanasia, but also find that they are too weak to carry it through. They should not be forced to do so. Ultimately, Dr. Kevorkian has it right; euthanasia is something which should only