

Lubicons awaken from a

Lubicons determine their fate

It is highly symbolic that both the government and the media are mispronouncing the name of Bernard Ominayak, pronounced aw-Min-ai-yak, Chief of the Lubicons. Their refusal to take account of such a simple detail reveals a lack of respect and, worse, expresses a contemptuous attitude towards native culture, native needs and native demands.

The Lubicons, recognizing this attitude in the government's refusal to negotiate based on information available for over 48 years, walked away from negotiations late Friday night (October 14) and set up a barricade of their 10,000 square kilometers of traditional lands Saturday afternoon (October 15). Their basic claim is 246 sq. kms. of land by Lubicon Lake for a reserve with all rights including mineral rights. They also want environmental control over their traditional hunting grounds in order to minimize environmental damage so as to salvage as much of their traditional lifestyle as is possible now. They have decided that a desperate situation requires desperate measures.

This situation was created by a history of governmental irresponsibility as a result of its exploitative concerns and disregard for Native rights.

Forty-eight years ago, the Federal government officially recognized the Lubicons as a separate band which was entitled to a reserve. An aerial survey was taken, and the reserve was drawn up on a map (about 25 square miles representing 128 acres per person for 127 Lubicons), but WWII interfered and the necessary ground survey was postponed.

In 1942, the Federal government sent M. McCrimmon to see that the treaty pay lists were in order and he, as a result of a personal stand against "giving" Indians anything, arbitrarily decided that any Natives added to the lists of 1912 were ineligible and stipulated that they must have "acceptable" proof that their male ancestors were of "pure Indian blood", next to impossible for a people who do not register births. Consequently, the Lubicons who were not included in Treaty 8 because their isolated location caused them to be overlooked, were no longer recognized as a legitimate band.

The Alberta government, however, con-

tinued to maintain records of the proposed reserve. In 1952, they repeatedly sent reminders to the Federal government about the Lubicon reserve. The boundaries of the reserve had to be settled so that the Provincial government could reply to requests for oil companies for permission to begin exploration without inadvertently allowing a violation of the reserve's boundaries. When the Federal government failed to respond to an ultimatum, the province declared the land Alberta Crown Land, and gave the go-ahead to the oil companies. The Lubicon reserve was the victim of federal and provincial government

Stress and desperation have caused death rates, alcohol abuse and suicides to rise...

disregard and economic expediency.

As a result of these irresponsible actions, full scale oil production was initiated in the '70s when a gravel highway was bulldozed to Little Buffalo. Since then, roads have been cut throughout their traditional hunting grounds and the land which was to have been their reserve. Large worksites, storage areas, pump areas and pipeline cuts have been carved out of the undisturbed forest, ripping up the habitat and chasing out the wildlife so vital to the survival of the Lubicons who depend on hunting and trapping.

More recently, the Alberta government has taken active steps to legally secure the profit it is obtaining from Lubicon land. It claimed that the Lubicon Cree were remnants of other bands which already had reserves — that the Lubicons were "squatters on Alberta Crown Land". In 1981, the Provincial government changed the status of Little Buffalo from "Indian settlement" to "Provincial Hamlet". It divided Little Buffalo into 2 acre plots which adult band members could buy for \$1.00. It built new roads and proposed to build a provincial school, and applied all of the laws which

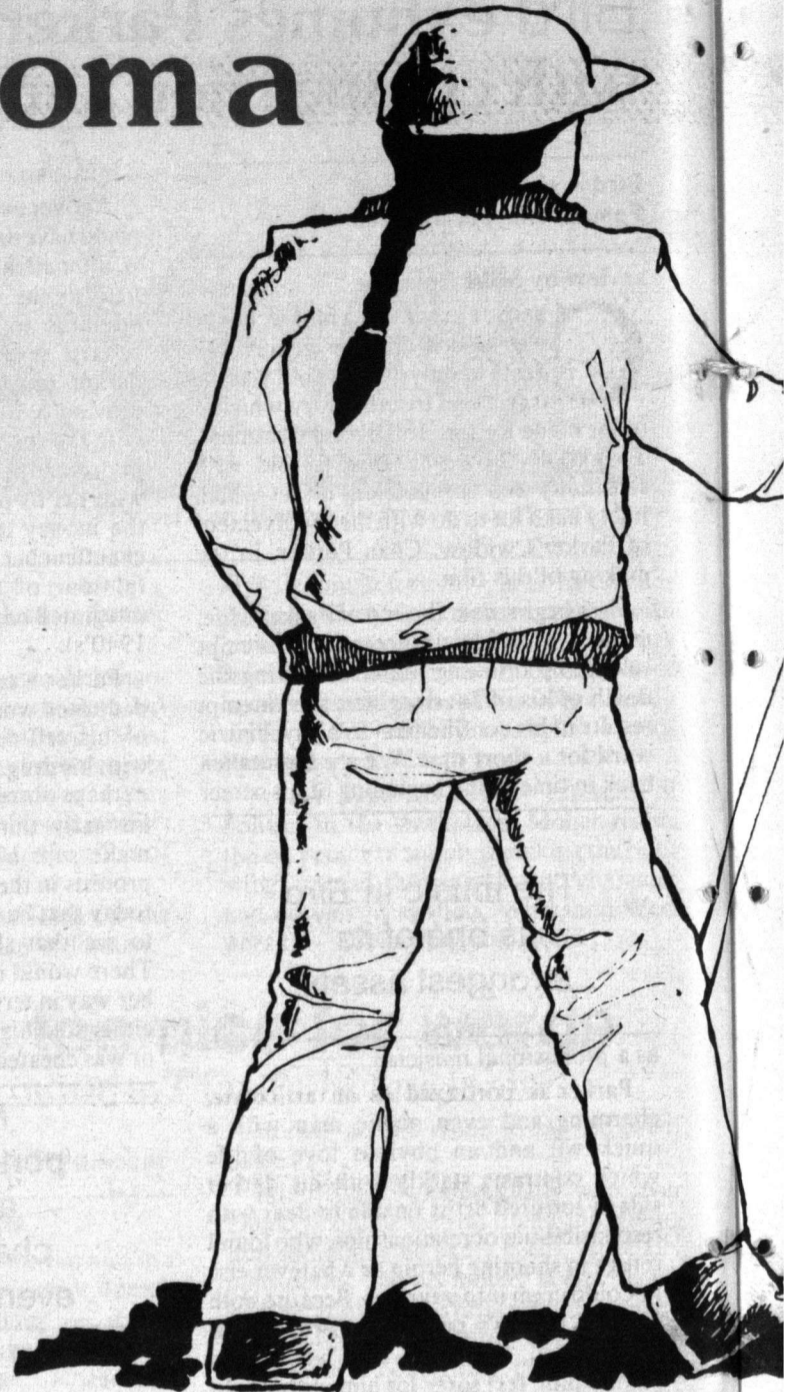
are applicable to municipal hamlets. It demanded that either the Lubicons recognize Provincial jurisdiction, give up their land claim and buy property in the hamlet, or they would be forced to leave. Many Lubicons have letters from the Alberta government which apply fines and threaten demolition of houses and property.

The Lubicons have refused to recognize the province's right to sell their land or unilaterally extend its legal jurisdiction to their land. This is not really a matter of law, but one of economics. The partnership between the oil companies and the province in the 10,000 sq. km area of Lubicon traditional hunting grounds is grossing the oil companies \$12 million a day and is earning Alberta \$1.2 million a day in

revenues.

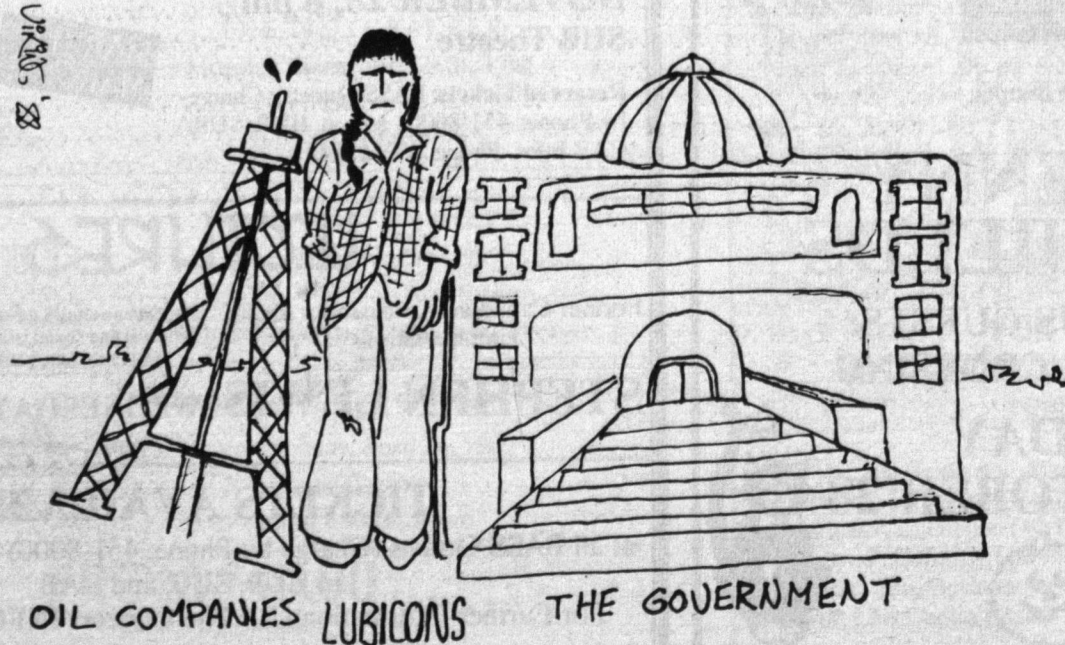
In stark contrast the Lubicon society can also be put in terms: in 1979, 10% of the band was on welfare; in 1981, 19% were on welfare. In 1979, the average income per person was \$5,000; in 1981, it had fallen to \$400. And in 1981, 19% of the band were taken for winter food only 19 were taken.

Beyond the economic devastation is a social reality. A once cohesive and cohesive - is now disintegrate. Stress and desperation have caused death rates, alcohol abuse to rise, and are contributing to tuberculosis epidemic which ha



BY HELLEN VON HARBOU

JUST A QUESTION OF SPACE...



International

by Hellen von Harbou

An aspect downplayed by both governments and media is the perception internationally of the Lubicon land claim which is supported by the U.N. Commission on human rights. The commission sent the Canadian government a letter asking it to uphold the Lubicon land claim and to do so as quickly as possible. Canada is renowned for its strong stand on human rights, but the first time the issue in question concerns Canada's behavior, the government makes no response and takes no action. Yet Canada's human rights record will be judged according to how it deals with the Lubicon's claim.

Herman Verbeek, a member of the European parliament sent to Little Buffalo to document the situation, said Saturday at the barricade: "These people have had their traditional lifestyles permanently destroyed and are subject to attempts by