

Violence and social change

By RICK JANSON

Violence is an abhorrent way to resolve a political conflict. In a perfect world all political conflicts should be resolved by negotiation and expressions of democracy. At the root of all revolutions should be a sense of justice and a universal acceptance of human equality. If the world worked this way we would have no need for revolution, wars, or what the status-quo media would dub "acts of terrorism."

As a society we accept various manifestations of violence in keeping with what we would perceive as public and world order. For example, we accept that our police force may have to use violence in order to cope with certain deviant members of society who cannot be handled otherwise. We draw limits on the violence the police force is allowed to use though, assessing the situation and reason for force. When we condemn police brutality, we are not condemning the fact that the police use force, but the manner and application of that force.

We accept the role of our military in the world wars as necessary to preserve our concept of world order and justice. The role of our military in other campaigns may be more questionable. Again we make value judgements in assessing the use of our military in particular situations. If we questioned the use of force in the international arena, we may well question whether we should have a military in the first place.

Society accepts the concept of violence so long as it comes from the state (or a surrogate authority) and is used in what public would consider an acceptable manner.

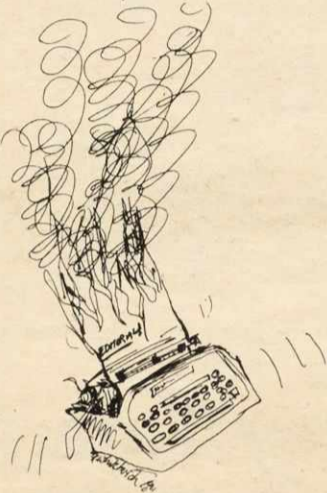
What is an acceptable manner is much larger and complex debate. The other key and important question is what does a society do when the state goes beyond the realm of what is acceptable? What happens when a people's collective will is ignored by those who wield power in a society?

Scenario: The house you have rented all of your life has suddenly been expropriated for a set of luxury condominiums. Despite all attachments you may have to your home, it will be bulldozed within a given time frame.

You check around and find the entire block is to suffer the same fate. The houses are all rented to low-income families and you and your neighbours have nowhere else to go. You have fought city hall tooth and nail, but as the old adage goes, you can't fight city hall. The neighbourhood gets together and forms a human wall to stop the bulldozers. Is the state's violence (destroying your home) acceptable? Is the physical force the neighbourhood is using to stop the bulldozers acceptable?

Scenario: You are a black in

We're not exempt from the tragic global plains



South Africa. You cannot vote. You cannot travel freely within the borders of your own country. Your wages are considerably lower than your white counterparts. Members of your family have been imprisoned for life for speaking out against the government. You thought that groups like the African National Congress might be able to bring about change, but they have faced nothing but frustra-

tion in dealing with an unbending racist regime. Out of frustration you realize the only solution is to take up arms against the government. Is taking up arms against the apartheid regime acceptable? Is violence used by the state to repress the majority of South Africans acceptable?

Violence is not as much a methodology for social change as it is a last resort when reason fails. When looking at struggles between the Irish Republican Army and Britain, The Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel, Direct Action and the Canadian government we have to look at the cause and effect relationships between the conflicting groups and not just at the violence.

In all three instances the media has made it clear to us which is the villain and which wears the white stetson. Isn't it ironic that the state is always somehow the force of good? Isn't it ironic that in all three situations violence had to be used to resolve conflicts in supposed democracies?

In internal struggles within a society prejudged values are usually assigned to the protagonists by our governments and media.

When the PLO destroys a bus loaded with civilians it is an act of terrorism. When Israel shells a

Palestinian settlement it is an act of retaliation in defense of the state.

When the Canadian government assists in building a bomb that has the potential to destroy an entire city, it is an act of defense. (If mutually assured destruction is not an act of terrorism, what is?) On the other hand, when a group sets out to destroy the factory that manufactures parts for this horrible weapon, it is an act of terrorism (according to the official interpretation).

Isn't it a bit odd that in a world so filled with large-scale state-sponsored killings and repression that small scale individuals labelled "terrorists" are considered one of the most pressing problems of our times?

The word "terrorist" is in itself used inconsistently and is weighted with political value. For example, why aren't the CIA-backed Contras fighting in Nicaragua considered terrorists? One person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist.

When looking at global and domestic conflicts it is important to judge the issues, and not prejudice

the causes because acts of violence may have been used.

In the Canadian context, change through violence has been part of our history. Out of the FLQ crisis came an awakening in English Canada to the problems of Quebec. The Litton bombing resulted in that company losing out on a bid to produce more advanced guidance systems for newer cruise missiles. Out of the Riel rebellion eventually came an independent Manitoba. More political power was granted to the population as a result of the 1837 rebellion. The list goes on.

It is a myth that somehow as Canadians we are above the use of force internationally and within our own society. It is pure vanity to suggest that we are exempt from the same tragic plains that belong to the rest of global history.

In order for peace to be established we need accessible and open channels for political change. Perhaps that should be our goal. But until then we live in an imperfect world where unfortunately people get hurt. □

Ed at Dal

Ed Broadbent, federal leader of the New Democratic Party will address the public at a lecture on Thursday, October 25, 1984, in the McInnes Room of the Dalhousie Student Union Building at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Broadbent will talk on the topic of the future of the New Democratic Party. Following his presentation he will respond to questions from the floor.

Reza Rizvi, Community Affairs Secretary sent invitations to all three leaders on behalf of the Student Union. Mr. Broadbent was the first to accept the invitation.

"We are expecting that both Mr. Turner and Mr. Mulroney will also address the students of Dalhousie and the community in the very near future," said Rizvi.

Calgary grads vote to pull-out of CFS

CALGARY (CUP)—The University of Calgary graduate students have pulled out of the Canadian Federation of Students, at a time when the three-year-old organization is scrambling to pay off its \$65,000 deficit.

The graduate students voted about two to one at a general meeting Oct. 10 to end their membership in CFS. Fifty students voted not to stay in and 23 voted yes.

The U of C graduates pay about \$6000 in membership fees. Although CFS is sorely disappointed with the loss, CFS executive officer Diane Flaherty said the pull-out will not affect this year's operating budget. □

"It's unfortunate that we have suffered this loss at this time, but we are optimistic that the grad students will vote to rejoin in the not too distant future," Flaherty said.

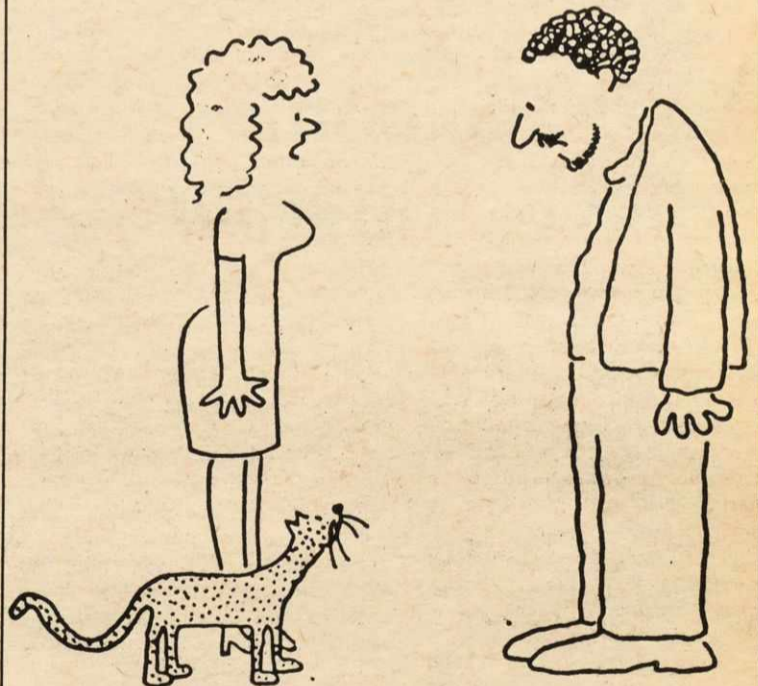
Graduate student council president Robert Gordon said the graduates voted to end their membership because they disliked the financial burden CFS placed on the council. But graduate student fees will not decrease as a result, he said. The graduates voted to raise fees by the same amount formerly paid to CFS—about \$4 per student.

About 1800 graduate students attend the U of C. □

NO COMMENT

The following is a closed letter sent to members of the Zeta Psi fraternity on Dalhousie campus. The *Gazette* received a copy through a friend who accidentally got one in the mail.

We think this sort of thing is beyond editorial comment but you're more than welcome to write or phone the boys at 1460 Seymour and tell them what you think. We'd also like to know what you have to say so write to us as well.



"But, darling, you're the one who wanted me to shave my pussy!"

October 21, 1984

Dear brothers,

Bet you thought you'd never hear from me again? Many of you WISH that you'd never hear from me again. But alas; how many male chauvanist pigs does it take to clean the men's room?

None. That's women's work.

At any rate it's time once again to meet in the spirit of Zeta Psi. "As thy spotless banner white". The young men at 1460 Seymour St. have a hold on some high calibre pledges for sure.

So come on out to the Elders Meeting at the Brown-Hutton residence (Apt. 7—3699 Windsor St) at 7:00 p.m. October 22.

B.Y.O.B.B.D.

TKO

Br. Brown

Br. Hutton

(Booze Broads Drugs)