

MUGWUMP

OPINION

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The Brunswickan.

by Lynne Wanyeki

The New Year!

Yet, the optimism felt worldwide at the start of 1990 seems to have disappeared in 1991. The year 1991 holds prospects for war in the Gulf, for a complete breakdown in the USSR, for ... a multitude of depressing possibilities.

Realism vs Idealism. One who is realistic has countless actual illustrations and examples to back one up in the formulation of cynical arguments. It's harder for one to be idealistic. One who is idealistic has only the conviction that things can and should change to stand by. So many times when discussing and arguing about various topics and issues with friends, I get the patronizing response: "Yes, it would be nice if things were different ... I wish they were different! But, you've got to accept that this is the way things are." In other words: "Don't be naive! Get real!"

But isn't this acceptance the very factor that allows the status quo to remain as is? Tacit approval by any individual allows for stagnation in societies as a whole.

An illustration: I had dinner with two friends of mine on Wednesday night. One of these friends was talking about an opinion poll that's currently being conducted in Atlantic Canada. He commented on the incredibly pervasive discrepancy between the responses he received in answer to these two questions: 1. Which one of the three main political parties do you sympathize with? 2. Which of the three main political parties would you actually vote for? Invariably, the answers to the two questions differed. It seems that people are so disillusioned regarding their actual ability to change anything, that their participation in the political process has become based on realism rather than idealism. What's the point of participating on this basis? ! ? People feel helpless, but actually contribute to their helplessness by not standing by their true beliefs. Some words of Martin Luther King Jr. which are worth remembering: "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

On to less serious matters ...

I spent New Year's on the West Coast outside Vancouver. You know how it's meant to be warmer on the West Coast? That's a myth, a complete and blatant myth! There was at least two feet of snow on the ground and it was cold. And, of course, I hear it was warm in Fredericton until I came back! It's a conspiracy!

Upcoming on campus... Varsity-Mania at the Hockey Game in the Aitken Centre on Friday night, and a peace rally this Saturday morning. A series of talks on Native Awareness, which promise to be interesting and informative, as well as the Arts Cabaret next weekend. Finally, the Student Union's tour of the residences for their council meetings, throughout the term.

Upcoming at the *Brunswickan* ... recruitment, recruitment, recruitment. We need new staff i.e both writers and technical staff. If you like what we say, come out to Room 35 and join in. If you don't like what we say, come out to and tell the university community why. It's your paper. Participate in it.

Have a Happy Semester!

Armageddon Time

January 12 a National Day of Peace to Prevent Armageddon in the Event of a Persian Gulf War.

It's not the use of nuclear weapons, of poison gasses, or of any of the ammunitions massed in the Persian Gulf which will fry the world. It is Hussein's almost-ensured retaliatory torching of oil wells which will so pollute the environment and open earth's ozone layer that life will be eradicated: Armageddon in 1991.

The array of weapons of mass destruction now assembled in the Persian Gulf is greater than has been used in all previous wars in human history: There are more than 500 nuclear weapons alone on ships, apart from those on land-based planes and submarines. Iraq has tons of chemical weapons.

Even a "limited" conventional weapons' offensive aimed only at driving Iraq from Kuwait would cause 10 000 US military casualties, plus 10 000 US-allied casualties and 50 000 Iraqi casualties. (During the Iran-Iraq war an estimated 50 000 men, women and children were killed by chemical weapons alone.)

In the event of a massive attack on Iraq by UN-allied forces the Centre for Defense Information expects 225 000 deaths or injuries of soldiers on both sides, and 100 000 civilian casualties based on conventional weapons only - they don't include deaths from possible use of tactical battle field nuclear weapons or the other nuclear weapons deployed on vessels in the Gulf. The US seems to be prepared. While the Government of Canada has ordered 800 body bags, the US military has shipped 100 000 body bags and 10 000 units of blood plasma from Westover Air Force Base to Saudi Arabia for use in Operation Desert Shield, according to the The Canadian Peace Alliance, an association of 400 Canadian organizations working for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Of world concern is the fact that the United Nations is setting new precedents for how it deters aggression among members. Through imposing initially sanctions and then the January 15 deadline, the UN has shown that it can now act swiftly. But, are those actions even-handed? The UN is open to charges that it will oppose acts of aggression that harm the world's economic powers, but that it may still leave little nations to fend off their neighbours themselves. The decision to deploy huge numbers of troops in the Persian Gulf was taken unilaterally by the US and was only followed later by Security Council agreement.

In short, the UN's first foray into "collective security" could be a mammoth disaster - one that threatens to discredit and weaken the UN structure, rather than strengthen it. And that fatal mistake could simply take earth back to the times of the mammoth itself.

In the radically changed world we live in, it is becoming clearer that the Canadian public envisions Canada's role in preventing war and preserving peace in a much different way. To that end the Citizens' Inquiry into Peace and Security in Canada has been set up to do what the government has refused to do for years: Hold cross-Canada hearings on what Canada's defence policies should be now that the Iron Curtain's opened. Among committee members are Iona Campagnolo, long-time humanitarian and past president of the Liberal Party of Canada; Douglas Roche, former ambassador of disarmament; Johanna den Hertog, former president of the New Democratic Party of Canada; Jules Dufour, Prominent Quebecois social activist; and Jim Bear, chief of the Manitoba Broken Head Reserve and representative on the Assembly of First Nations.

As part of the Canadian Peace Alliance's "Gulf Crisis Plan" to urge Prime Minister Mulroney to vote against the UN Security Council's authorizing offensive military force in the Middle East, individuals can help. Participate in a National Day of Peace by joining representatives from a dozen New Brunswick organisations in a Peace Rally on Saturday, January 12, 1991, at 11:00 am in Fredericton starting at the Federal Building, Regent and Queen Streets, and moving onto City Hall.

If unable to take part, show silent support for Middle East peace by putting a lighted candle in a front window Friday evenings (the Muslim day of rest) throughout the crisis. It will say, "Please understand that we do not want to be the enemies of the Iraqi people. Instead of Holy War, can we as neighbours build a just and lasting peace?"

New Brunswick Voice of Women