

EDITORIAL

by Lynne Wanyeki

Last weekend, the streets, theatres and clubs of Fredericton all served as venues for the performers of the first-ever Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival. I'm sure that Chris Hunt, our Entertainment Editor has more than adequately covered the performances themselves, so I won't comment on that aspect of the Festival. What I will comment on is the fact that the Festival brought Fredericton's inhabitants out onto the streets. The Festival thus accomplished a feat of major proportions, for Fredericton is a remarkably insular, enclosed town.

I remember being in Montréal last summer, as I was on my way back to Fredericton for a brief holiday between treeplanting and returning home to Kenya. I was wandering through the downtown area with a French friend of mine. We walked up Ste. Catherine's from the "English end" which was unmarked by any extraordinary activity. But then we arrived at the "French end" where the Québécois were celebrating St. Jean-Baptiste day. The streets were full of cars whose drivers leaned out the windows whistling and waving little Fleur-de-Lis flags at each other. The sidewalks were jam-packed with pedestrians who turned and yelled merrily at each other with the slightest provocation. Music was blaring from countless sources. We sat down in a café, so I could watch the festivities for a while. A man draped in a flag weaved through the tables and poured wine into our glasses - after assuring himself of the fact that my friend was indeed Québécoise. "Salut" we said, raising our glasses in thanks. "Vive le Québec" he shouted, continuing on his wavering way. From the table behind us, we could hear a heated discussion of the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, and what the failure meant to grassroots separatism. It was a political day and the excitement and tension were almost tangible. But it was also a day where everybody talked to everybody (if you spoke French), a day of shared experience.

The Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival, although obviously nowhere near the proportion and political significance of St. Jean-Baptiste day, also brought Frederictonians together into some semblance of community for a shared experience. Perhaps the fact that all the performers in the Festival were either based in or from the Atlantic region explains the sizeable turnout for most of the scheduled events. Whatever the case may be, appreciation for the work of both the organizers and the performers was evident in the comments people made to each other as they shifted from one venue to the next. Well done to all those involved in putting the Festival together - Fredericton needs more events like this.

This Friday night marks the end of the Date Rape Awareness Campaign sponsored by the UNB Student Women's Committee. The ending of the Campaign coincides with the annual Take Back the Night March, which begins at the Rape Crisis Centre at 8:00 PM. The March is for women only - a fact which raises comment each year. The point is that the March is meant to empower women, to symbolically reclaim the streets as being safe enough for women to walk alone unescorted. Last year, I gather over 300 women took part in the March. It is to be hoped that many more will join this year - especially students in view of the fact that a woman was raped on campus last Tuesday.

Next week, Fredericton is to be honoured by a visit of a completely different kind. Walter Sisulu, who is the Deputy President of the African National Congress (the ANC), is to speak at St. Thomas University. The ANC is one of the most established political parties opposing the apartheid system of government in South Africa. Sisulu's visit is especially relevant in view of the fact that Canada is now seeking to adjust its position on economic sanctions against South Africa. Sisulu is in a strong position to press for public support in Canada for the continuation of economic sanctions because of the scandal that rocked the South African government in July.

The South African government and the umbrella opposition coalition group (of which the ANC is a member) had, until July, reached an impasse on negotiations towards a new constitution and a non-apartheid state. The South African government pointed at the rising violence between the Inkatha party and the ANC to justify its hesitancy to induce major changes quickly. The ANC pointed at the South African government accusing it of instigating this Black upon Black violence. And then the news broke revealing the fact that the South African government had indeed transferred funds via the South African Police Department to Chief Buthelezi, head of the Inkatha party. Divide and conquer, divide and conquer ...

Sisulu's visit is being sponsored in part by the Atlantic Centre for Human Rights (ACHR). The Director of the ACHR, Dr. Abdul Lodhi, died of a heart attack on Monday night. He was instrumental in the founding of the ACHR which has done very pro-active work to stimulate human rights awareness in Fredericton. He also published several books relating to human rights in Canada. His death was a great loss to St. Thomas University, and to the Fredericton community. The *Brunswickan* would like to extend its sympathy to his family and friends.

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