

# After Swissair Flight 111

*Nova Scotians respond heroically to a devastating tragedy*

Last Thursday, Swissair Flight 111 crashed into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean southwest of Peggy's Cove. In the recent memory of this province it is one of the single most disastrous events to have ever occurred, rivalled in the minds of the public by only the Westray Mine Explosion and the Halifax Explosion of 1917.

And to this disaster Nova Scotians have responded with acts of selflessness and heroism rarely seen in the world today. Fishing boats scoured the crash site, searching for non-existent survivors. The RCMP, the Navy, the Coast Guard and Fire Departments all played integral parts in the search effort and subsequent investigation. Everyday people offered their services, their homes, their vehicles and their hearts to rescuers, journalists, families of the deceased and many others involved in the investigation of Flight 111. I usually regard myself as somewhat of a cynic, but over this past week I've felt my pride swell when I think about our province.

I landed at Halifax International Airport on a flight from Toronto about

15 minutes before Flight 111 went down. I'd been working in Toronto since May, and coming home, I had mixed feelings. I was excited to see friends and family whom I missed during my months away, but I was weary about re-

turning to such a small, comfortable place. After being able to disappear into the megalopolis that Toronto and its surrounding area have become, I didn't look forward to the "fishbowl" feeling that Halifax provides. I sensed confinement. I sensed boredom.

That position may be valid. But as I watched the events in Peggy's Cove unfold on every television channel from CBC Halifax to CNN, I realized my priorities were definitely in the wrong place.

Nova Scotians who were presented to the world appeared to be thoughtful, giving people who were prepared to sacrifice their time and effort for the good of the investigation and those who lost loved ones in the crash. Even Premier Russell MacLellan man-

aged to shed his usually un-dynamic skin during this event, looking serious and professional during an interview with CNN.

Sometimes it takes great tragedy to put things into perspective — the shock of an horrific incident jolts a sleeping mind back to reality. And the responsibility of learning from those tragedies falls squarely on those of us who are left behind. And learning comes differently to all people.

Investigators will learn what caused this event. Some very average people who found themselves at Peggy's Cove that night learned what it was like to stare into the sea, knowing that the wreckage below the surface contained 229 deceased human beings and the broken hearts and dreams of those they loved. Family and friends of the victims will learn how to live in a world that does not contain them anymore.

And I've learned more about the good in this province in one week than I have in the five years I've lived here. It's a shame that it took an event like this to enlighten me.

**GREG MCFARLANE**

## Editorial

# Letters

## Peace in Northern Ireland depends on justice

To the editor,

While lip-service to the desire for peace on the part of people of British-occupied Ireland was made by Prime Minister Blair and President Bill Clinton, it should not be forgotten that peace prevailed in the northern six counties in 1968, a peace that lacked one important element - justice.

There was no IRA in 1968. Then Catholics decided to fight for an end to discrimination in housing, employment, and voting. They were met with official violence, culminating in the Bloody Sunday massacre of January 30, 1972, in which a British parachute regiment murdered fourteen peaceful demonstrators in Derry. While this was going on, the approximately 4,000 Orange triumphalist parades were proceeding as scheduled to inform Catholics of their "inferiority."

How sad that we heard nothing about the need to put an end to the climate of bigotry and hatred that fuels Unionist discrimination. The kind of injustice made possible by the British presence in Ireland has been the real cause of the violence that has persisted for the last thirty years.

Recent draconian measures to fight terrorism are doomed to failure. As President Clinton said, "Difficult, sometimes wrenching decisions lie ahead, but must be made."

One of those decisions must be the eventual withdrawal of British sovereignty

from the northern six counties of Ireland. Then, and only then will peace have a chance, for then there will be peace with justice.

**William Gartland**

## Improperly published article

To the editor,

I am writing concerning an article published in Volume 130, Number 26. The article, "Coming of Age in Babylon", published on April 9, 1998, credited me as the author. However, the article had been altered from its original form. The article now contains opinions which are not my own. I did not write the first sentence of paragraph seven and I did not write any part of paragraph eight. The views presented in these two paragraphs differ from those in the article which I wrote.

For the record, I did not refer to DeBias' opinions on drugs as "conservative". Further, I do not feel that DeBias' views on drugs are conservative. I am angered that the Gazette has attempted to associate my name with this opinion. I also would like to note that I did not write any part of the following, printed as paragraph eight in "Coming of Age in Babylon": "Yet, just when you think you have DeBias pegged as a bible thumpin' red blooded American, he jumps to the left again." I personally find this degrading remark towards religion horribly offensive.

**Tamara Bond**

*The Gazette apologizes for any inconvenience caused to Ms. Bond by the publication of the above mentioned article. We have sent a letter of apology to Ms. Bond.*

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All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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