

Native self-government issues

by Jeff Czopor

Tom Pocklington, a university of Alberta Political Science professor, delivered a talk at STU on Monday, March 23 regarding the issue of self-government of the Indian people. Indeed, the talk was not merely an orderly lecture but a medium of vented frustrations and misunderstanding.

It can be expected that this issue will always in the foreseeable future be one that stirs emotions from both Indian and non-Indian peoples. However, much of the problem, as demonstrated at the talk, comes from a lack of understanding on both sides.

Tom Pocklington approached the lecture from the standpoint of "hard-core" realities. What will happen to urban Indians? How can one expect this to clear up overnight?

However, Tom Pocklington was not labelled as a messenger of unbiased information by certain members of the audience, but as a biased "scaremonger". This title was perhaps used more than any other during the course of the evening.

Prof. Pocklington stated that the "white-anglo" people are under the misconception that the Indian proposals will have no direct effect on them. He believes too that this speculative attitude will cause problems in the long run.

As well, there have been identified by him many problems regarding

negotiations between the government and Indian groups; these primarily being misconceptions between what the government proposes and what the Indians think it is proposing. More often than not, negotiations appear to be hindered by a giant wall between the two groups.

The audience raised many questions and the Indian people representative appeared to be saying that the underlying issue is "the atrocities and wrongs of the past must be accounted for."

Many in the audience

seemed disturbed by the talk in that it appeared that Pocklington seemed to be justifying the ways of a "white man's" government. Many stressed that the rules enforced by this government were the ones that caused problems to begin with.

However, Pocklington appeared to be implying that governmental negotiation is a reality that Indians must always face, and avoiding it because of wrong doings committed by its ancestors 500 years ago is ludicrous.

Another perspective on Pocklington

by Pierre St. Amand

Dr. Tom Pocklington spoke on the problems associated with native self government with its implementation.

Various other difficulties were discussed, such as the cultural bias of Canadian laws. For example, a vast proportion of female inmates are natives.

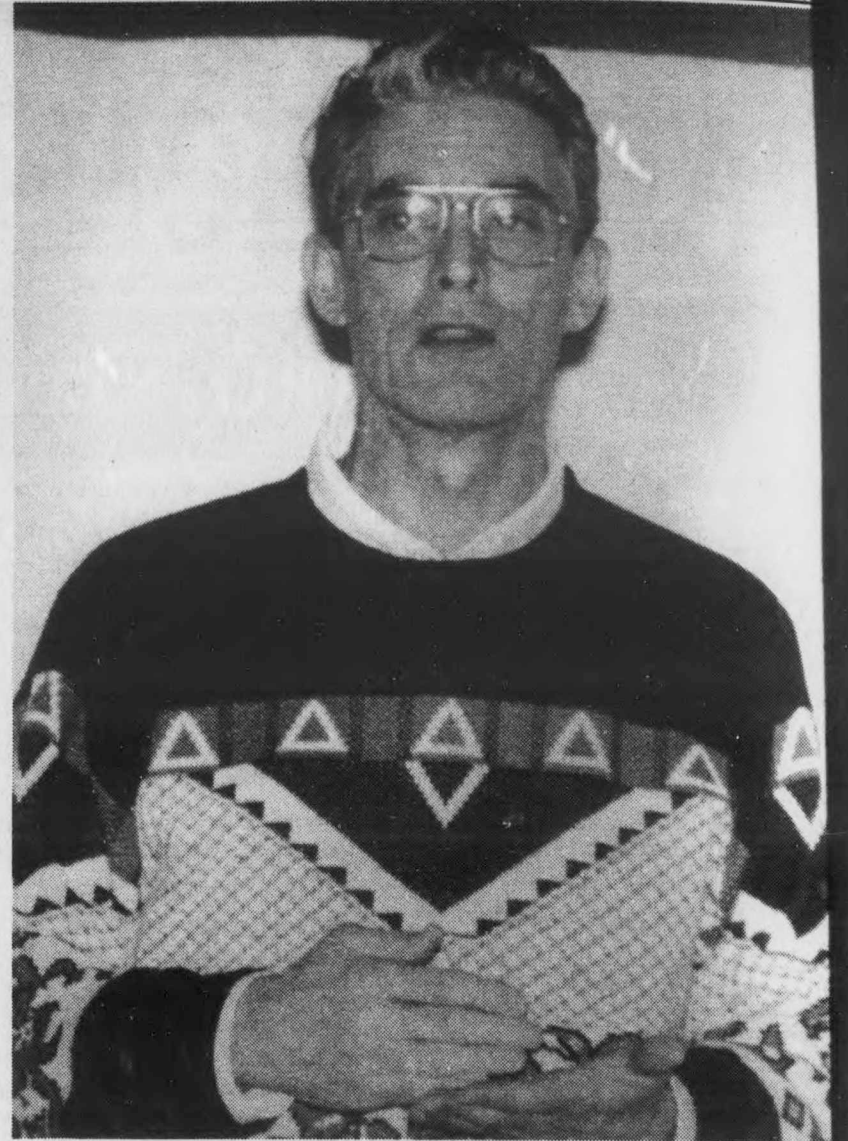
Zoning laws and territorially, as well as the rights of native self government were also addressed during the question period. Professor Pocklington was challenged several times for being biased in his views.

Others expressed their discontent with the Charter of Rights and the definition of what it is to be Indian. The quest for a definition of "Indian" led to the topic of

Métis rights and, those of other non-status Indians.

Finally, when asked to summarize the point of his lecture, he stated that: "Non natives are leading non natives to believe that nothing significant is going to happen if natives obtain self government but the changes are going to be immense."

Pocklington believes the Canadian public should be aware of this.



Shown is Dr. Tom Pocklington, a Political Science professor from the University of Alberta. Pocklington addressed the issue of native self-government in a lecture given Monday evening. Michael David Smith photo.

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