

Occupy Kenora offices

Canadian Indians begin to voice complaints

FROM THE UNITER

KENORA (CUP) - It wasn't another Wounded Knee, as was first feared. In fact, so well ordered and co-operative was the demonstration that members of the occupying force were busy cleaning up the offices, sweeping floors and emptying garbage before evacuating the building.

The 24-hour occupation of the department of Indian Affairs office in Kenora began early Nov. 27 as a group of 30 to 40 well organized members of the Ojibway Warriors' Society walked into the Federal Building.

Immediately after securing the department's offices on the second floor the Society set forth five complaints they wanted rectified before they would give up control of the building.

DEMANDS ISSUED

The demands were:

- 1) Immediate compensation for the victims of mercury poisoning on the Grassie Narrows Reserve.
- 2) An end to unnecessary violence and beatings inflicted on members of the Indian community by the local police.
- 3) Definite action by the local and provincial governments as well as the Department of Indian Affairs to eliminate racial discrimination against members of the Indian community.
- 4) Return of the Indian artifacts now in the possession of several museums to their rightful owners - in particular several scrolls which are of

significant religious value to the members of the Ojibway Medicine Society.

5) An end to the James Bay Project, which will, if carried to completion, result in the relocation of many Indian peoples.

Other demands included improved general conditions for Indian students brought to the town for schooling, and requests for rights to economic freedom for the reserves.

These were finally pared down to one major demand by the end of the occupation that of the mercury, contamination compensation.

After issuing these demands, the Society made several attempts to communicate with the Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien. Reportedly the department would not talk with them the first day, but had dispatched a department member to confer with them the second day.

A DESPERATE PEOPLE

In discussing the Indians' demands, Barry Caldwell, a fieldworker with the American Indian Movement (AIM), said that they were a desperate people, that they would not surrender before the occupation was scheduled to end, and would fight if necessary.

He said the government must act immediately on the situation in the Grassie Narrows Reserves, where apparently one person had already died of mercury poisoning, and "based on the levels of mercury in their bodies,



"This is Indian Land": The occupation of the Indian Affairs offices started with 30 to 40 people. During the first eight hours, almost 500 Indians from the Kenora district spent some time in the offices.

four others should be dead."

Caldwell said the James Bay Project went further than most people could appreciate. It involves moving a people from their traditional homes, where generations of ancestors have been buried, and changing the way of

life they have known since before the 16th century.

Chief Lou Cameron, co-chairman of the Ojibway Warriors' Society, felt their needs were even greater than those demands issued by the entire group earlier in the occupation.

"We want basic freedom of government, complete with economic co-jurisdiction over our communities, not necessarily a sovereign state independent of Canada, but a more responsible 'department', governing ourselves... guaranteeing independence in a new and more human government.

LEARNING THE OLD WAYS

"Institutions try to split people up, both individually and socially. We (the Warriors' Society) are going back to our elders, and learning the old ways. We try and keep our people together, with themselves, so we're not schizophrenics, or anything like that, and we're together as a people. This way we can have personal, societal and governmental unity."

Cameron felt that, as an institution, the Department of Indian Affairs was not allowing the Indian people to come together as a nation or people like they should, citing the reservations as a prime example. He believed that the Indian people in the Kenora district were feeling more united as a people from the teachings of the Society.

Chief Cameron said he felt closer to their great traditional chiefs of the past, by actually "living and making history" rather than just knowing what happened two or three hundred years ago.

Nov. 27, he added, should be a holiday for local Indian children in years to come, for this is their history.

The occupation was to last for 24 hours. But, at 9 a.m. on Nov. 28, no word had been received from Ottawa on a tentatively scheduled meeting with a representative from the Department of Indian Affairs.

OCCUPATION CONTINUED

The Society chiefs decided they would continue the occupation until word came from Chretien's office. In the words of Chief Cameron, "We're going to be here for a while."

The atmosphere became very tense from this point on. Nothing much was said; people moved to the entrances taking up guard, waiting for a phone call from Ottawa.

Shortly after 10 a.m. a phone call was received saying a member of the Indian Affairs Regional Office in Toronto would be in Kenora in a matter of minutes.

Chief Cameron told the press that the Indians would remain in the department office until the meeting was finished.

Chief Cameron wanted assurance that the department official would act on behalf of and in the interests of the occupying Indians, and that this would not be another "We'll see what we can do" meeting.

The official arrived at noon, and a meeting was held. In the early afternoon, the Indians left the building.

Although it has been reported that "both sides left optimistic", this is questionable. Both sides are definitely waiting to see what the other will do.

In the words of Lou Cameron, "Many people feel, that when we leave the building this morning, it will be over. Well, it won't be. This is just the beginning. We are starting to write our own history now."

Plight of Que. Indians outlined

By J.W. BELTRAME

Marie Marule, speaking on native rights last Wednesday at the St. Lawrence Arts Centre, accused the Trudeau government of deserting the 6,000 Cree and Inuits in the James Bay area.

Marule, herself an Alberta Blood Indian, said the Indians owe nearly \$1 million in fees and travelling costs and denied the government gave more than limited support in their court battle with the Quebec government over the rights to the land in the area.

She said Trudeau's 1969 speech refusing government recognitions of aboriginal rights, was the first public denial of rights everyone had assumed existed.

She called on the government to accept the four-point definition of aboriginal rights already agreed upon by the government's Standing Committee on Indian Affairs.

The definition, which was not allowed to come to a vote in the house, states —

- that where no treaty exists, the use of the land must revert back to the Indians, or compensation must be given to the satisfaction of the people involved.
- where a treaty exists, the rights to the land must be respected, and no encroachment of the land is allowed without the prior consent of the Indian people living in the area.
- where a treaty has been signed without the Indian peoples being made aware of what the agreement involved, there must be a renegotiation of the illegal treaty.
- that the Indians be given all hunting and fishing rights which they have lost.

Nearly 500 people attended the panel discussion, which also featured Tony Hooper, professor of law at Osgoode Hall, Judd Buchanan, Liberal MP, and Flora MacDonald, the Conservative critic for Indian Affairs.

MacDonald told the gathering the Indians are still legally under federal jurisdiction, since the Quebec government

has failed to live up to the 1902 Quebec Boundaries Extension Act, by which the province was extended to include James Bay.

MacDonald read excerpts from the text of the Act, which states, "The province of Quebec will recognize Indian rights in the aforesaid area", and "This act will in no way affect the Indians in that land."

She also said that the Quebec government has been negligent in failing to negotiate a treaty with the Indians in the province in the 71 years of the Act's existence.

She ended her 10-minute speech by calling on Canadians to live up to their "good sentiment."

"If we really believe we ought to respect Indian aboriginal rights, our beliefs come to the crunch in the issue of James Bay," she said.

Professor Hooper cut into the Trudeau government for claiming no responsibility in the case.

He said "the federal government has handed over Indian lands to Quebec without consulting the Indians in the area, and now that Quebec is abusing them, the federal government says that it's not responsible; Quebec is doing it."

Hooper also made fun of Liberal MP Buchanan for reading parts of Jean Chretien's recent speech citing government support of the Indians and Indian rights.

Hooper said the speech was unclear in supporting aboriginal rights, and it was probably written by the same civil servant who wrote Trudeau's speech denying aboriginal rights.

Hooper said the Quebec Supreme Court's overturning of Superior Court Judge Albert Malouf's carefully prepared decision was another example of "might is right" judicial rulings common in Canada.

He said the Indians will most likely be forced to sell the rights to the land even if they win their case. The only choice given the Indians is "how much" they will receive, not whether to sell or keep their land.

On Campus

• The Faculty of Arts is having a Council Meeting this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber (S915) of the Ross Building - interested persons welcome.

• The Department of Mathematics is sponsoring the visit of Professor Nicolae Dinculeanu, Vice-Director of the Mathematics Institute, Romanian Academy (Bucharest) to the York campus. He will give a talk entitled "Lebesgue Spaces for Vector Integration" at 4:00 p.m. in Room S170, the Ross Building.

• The Vanier Film Club is showing "Three Godfathers" and "101 Dalmatians" in the Junior Common Room of Vanier College at 8:00 p.m. - no admission charge; licenced - tonight.

• Ruth Bernard of the Centre for Continuing Education's E.G.O. Faculty will give a talk on "Movement Alchemy" at 7:30 p.m. this evening in Room 107, Stedman Lecture Halls.

General admission is \$6.00, \$4.00 for students. Commencing January 10, the E.G.O. Program will offer a series of lectures on "Communications and Interpersonal Relationships" which are open to the general public. The first seminar is entitled "Fundamentals of Communication I" and will be given by Harvey Silver; for further information call the Centre at 667-3246.

• Les Petits Enfants Laliberte will perform, in French, "L'af-front commun, Une Fable" on January 9 as part of the Faculty of Fine Arts Performing Arts Series. This second event in the Theatre Series will take place at 8:30 p.m. in Burton Auditorium; general admission is \$7.00; \$5.50 for staff; and \$3.50 for students.

• The students and faculty of the Dance Department will perform in concert on December 18, 19 and 20 at 8:00 p.m. in Bur-

ton Auditorium. Five Works will be presented each night: "El Retablo de Maese Pedro"; "Ricerare"; "Images"; dream quartet to "Serenata"; and "Fragment Suite" There will be no admission charged.

• York will host internationally acclaimed filmmaker and director, Masaki Kobayashi, at a special exhibition of Japanese arts sponsored by the Faculty of Fine Arts from January 8 through January 12. "Japan Week" events include: a screening of the 1962 film "Harakiri"; a zazen meditation session; an evening of Kabuki theatre and dance; a symposium on "Tradition and Modernity in Japan"; and lectures on Zen painting and the philosophy of Zen Buddhism. Other guests include: Jan Fontein, curator of Asiatic Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; and Phillip Kapleau, author of "The Three Pillars of Zen" and director of the Zen Meditation Centre in Rochester. For further information contact Sari Collins at local 3441.

Events for On Campus should be sent to Dawn Cotton, Department of Information and Publications, N817 Ross. Deadline is Monday, 12 noon.