

Conference spits in the face of Helms/Burton

BY DANIEL CLARK

While the United States prepares to enter the first stage of its controversial Helms-Burton law, Canada and Cuba are continuing business as usual.

Last weekend, 150 Canadians and Cubans of all ages met at Saint Mary's University's (SMU) Burke Education Centre for the Atlantic Canada-Cuba Friendship Conference (ACCFC).

The conference is one of a number being held to explore how the two countries' continuing partnership (uninterrupted through 34 years of US blockade) can expand and grow.

The Helms-Burton Act is a controversial law signed by US President Bill Clinton last March. The act is designed to punish international companies that might benefit from the property abandoned or nationalized by the Cuban government after the 1959 revolution. The Act is designed to not only compensate American and exiled Cuban nationals, but to transfer the illegal (by declaration of the United Nations) embargo onto other countries.

Unfazed by the harsh financial and logistical sanctions of Helms-Burton, the conference explored trade possibilities, student programs, general solidarity, culture, and other important issues.

"To be friends with Cuba you don't need to be Marxist Leninist, Social Democratic, or even Liberal. You only need to care about people and human rights," said Raúl Macías, head of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples' Canada Desk.

Marta Cabrisa Alfonso, a member of the Cuban National Assembly agreed.

"Our workers are labouring to put on the table the things which

unite us. We [also] maintain strong relationships with [trade] unions all around the world including Canada's Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)."

The conference was organized by a coalition of the Nova Scotia-Cuba Association, Oxfam Atlantic, Canada World Youth Atlantic (CWY), CUPW, and departments of Dalhousie, SMU, and Acadia. The ACCFC is the first in a series of regional conferences leading up to the Canada-Cuba/Québec-Cuba conference in 1997.

Although rarely mentioned in the ACCFC itself, the Helms-Burton law is still an issue. In a position led by CFS, CUPW, and Oxfam, conference organizers are urging Canadians to boycott Florida in an attempt to send a message to the Clinton administration.

Despite this boycott, the ACCFC focused on friendship and opportunities for Canada and Cuba.

"We [Cuba] are like a little baby in diapers taking very small steps. There are a wide range of scientific and technological opportunities in Cuba; we are just waiting for Canadians to get involved," said Oscar Treto Cardenaz, a member of the National Committee of the Union of Young Communists.

Cardenaz is also a science researcher and a nuclear chemist. While in Halifax he met with the Dalhousie Chemistry department.

In the discussion of economic and trade opportunities in Cuba, Graham Curren of Secunda Marine Services said, "There is a limited amount of money available in Cuba. National Priorities get most of the money; so you have to do research, and find your niche within that market.

"Is it possible for a Canadian company to enter Cuba and set up a chain of stores? Yes, because Benetton has done it. But it takes a lot of time, patience, and organization. Most goods are sold by the government in state-owned stores."

Dalhousie Dean Graham Taylor (Arts & Social Sciences), Aurora Perez, and SMU's Juan Tellez described some of the efforts being organized by the Universities and their Cuban counterparts.

One such project that has recently received Canadian International Development Association approval is a research initiative tied onto a Masters program in Cuba for a Coastal Management Exchange.

Marcías said that Cuba is all in favour of joint venture initiatives, and that Cuba, rather than dictate policy, prefers to say, "What do you think about this?"

Arciris Garay, from Youth for Social Justice, is in favour of programs aimed at youths, but warns against prepackaged concepts.

"It is important for youth to be involved in all aspects of the program. How can a youth program call itself successful without youths being involved in the planning right through to the execution?" Garay said.

The conference was not entirely devoted to serious discussion. Included in the program was an authentic Cuban lunch, an evening of dancing to salsa music and plenty of coffee. A new type of Cuban coffee debuted at the ACCFC; it was called the Helms-Burton blend, and held the tag line "Brew Cuban and make 'em boil."

Marcías best summed up the feelings and the theme of the conference when he said, "You are our friends."



BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Buying a pop on the Dalhousie campus has become an expensive venture.

Thirsty people on campus must now dish out \$1.25 to buy a can of pop every single time they go to a Dalhousie Food Services pop machine.

This is an increase in price of 25 per cent in less than a six month period.

Until last April, pop was \$1 a can on campus. In April, a 10 cent deposit was imposed on pop cans by the provincial government. At that time, the price of pop on campus immediately jumped to \$1.10 a can.

In September, the price was jacked up by an additional 15 cents bringing the cost to \$1.25 a can.

Although other groups on campus are selling pop for as much as 50 cents less than Dalhousie Food Services (DFS), and still making a profit, DFS representative Jan Morel said the latest price increase is simply due to increases in costs for labour and

food.

"We cannot purchase Pepsi products at the price you can in a grocery store because of contract pricing...We're paying a lot more."

Morel also added that for every \$1.25 people pay for pop, Dalhousie Food Services has to pay 28 cents directly to the government in taxes.

Although Dalhousie Food Services runs most pop machines on campus, there are still cheaper sources on campus for more economically conscious pop drinkers.

Residence canteens (student run) still sell pop for \$1 a can.

The best deal on campus can be found in the Chemistry Lounge. The Undergraduate Chemistry Society says it is proud to offer the cheapest pop machine on campus — only 75 cents a can.

Society president Dean Hickey said that even with the 10 cent increase, the society was able to keep the price constant. The group purchases its pop for 62 cents a can, so Hickey says the society can still make some, though not a lot, of money.

Howe Hall intramural boycott avoided

BY DINA GUIRGUIS AND REHAM ABDELAZIZ

Lack of communication was the reason for Howe Hall's threat to boycott university intramurals last week. The protest was called off after a meeting between Howe Hall executives and the supervisor of intramurals.

Last week, Howe Hall executives sent a letter to supervisor of intramurals Shawn Fraser demanding that five requests be fulfilled before October 7, or the residence would boycott intramurals.

Howe Hall Vice-President Andrew Ferns said the main issue was scheduling problems with the B hockey league.

Howe Hall has four teams in that league and in the past have always had two games a week. However, this year's schedule offered them only one game a week or three out of four weeks.

Ferns said the schedule did not support the Howe Hall tradition of two games a week, so the residence would not accept it.

Fraser said that the threat of a boycott was the first contact that he received from Howe Hall. As the first official notice of a problem, he said that it was consid-

ered a little extreme and unnecessarily threatening.

Although scheduling problems arise every year, Fraser said that this year's communication problem with Howe Hall was due to the fact that it did not have a sports representative for a long time. This created a gap making it very hard to resolve any house issues.

Sheriff Hall and Eliza Ritchie had some problems too, but Fraser met with their representatives on the first Tuesday after frosh week.

Ferns said that communications (with Fraser) broke down on Howe Hall's part. However, he added that Fraser is not very approachable.

"We have to second guess everything he says," Ferns said.

The vice-president feels that there is a lack of respect, on Fraser's behalf, towards Howe Hall.

He said that at the time, Howe Hall decided that a boycott was necessary to get Fraser's attention.

"I don't want my residence to miss any sports, but we felt we had a big enough grievance to go ahead with the boycott," Howe Hall president Jeff Legrow said.

This year there are 36 hockey

teams and only 14 time slots available. In order that all teams get a fair amount of games, four teams must sit out once every four weeks.

Fraser said that to be fair, this is done on an alternating/rotation basis. This way every team plays an equal number of games.

Howe Hall demanded priority, but Fraser said that he is obligated to look out for the interests of all teams, especially since interfaculty teams tend to be less vocal.

Howe Hall suggested he limit the number of teams that play hockey. But Fraser said that is not possible since everybody pays the sports fee and has the right to play.

After meeting with Howe Hall's president and vice-president, Fraser was able to work out a schedule that pleased all groups involved.

"All they had to do was come and ask and we could have managed to eventually work things out," he said.

Fraser has since agreed to attend a bimonthly meeting with the Howe Hall council.

"All anybody has to really do is invite me."

CASA still embroiled in FitzPatrick controversy

BY GORDON LOANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN
(SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE)

Fredericton — Members of the Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations (CASA) are demanding an explanation from the Crown Prosecutor in Fredericton on whether charges will be laid in connection with allegations against Pat FitzPatrick.

Until last January, FitzPatrick was the interim national director of CASA and chief organizer for the ill-fated national conference on post-secondary education slated for last February in Fredericton.

CASA members allege about \$10,000 is unaccounted for dur-

ing the period FitzPatrick was in charge. Slightly over \$8,000 of this money is associated with efforts to organize the Fredericton conference.

Fredericton City Police conducted an investigation into the conference spending.

Matthew Hough, the new National Director of CASA, says police turned over their file on the investigation to the Crown Prosecutors in April.

Hough attempted to contact the Crown Prosecutor's office last week, but he said that his call went unanswered.

Meanwhile, FitzPatrick, the person at the centre of the controversy, spoke out for the first time last week.

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