

New deal for the north?

Mel Watkins, political economics professor at the University of Toronto, former economic advisor to the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T., editor of the newly-released book, *The Dene Nation: The Colony Within* and former member of the *Canadian Forum* editorial board, was on campus Monday to present a talk on "Land Claims and Pipelines: Recent Developments in the Northwest Territories."

Gateway conducted a short interview with Professor Watkins Monday afternoon, which follows:

GATEWAY: How much land are the Dene asking for?

WATKINS: The claim is for their traditional lands—about 450,000 square miles of land, which is somewhere around one-ninth of Canada.

GATEWAY: How much land do you think they will get in their negotiations with the government?

WATKINS: Well, they won't be getting land actually, since they're not asking for the land as such, they're merely asking for the right to political control of territory. It seems to me they're well-organized and it seems

many people in the South are sympathetic to their position, so I'm optimistic about their chances.

GATEWAY: Do you think, since negotiations have not begun yet with the federal government, that the gov't is stalling on the issue of land claims?

WATKINS: I can't comment on what's happening in a contemporary sense since I left the Brotherhood last year. But an important point to make is that we know, on the basis of a book by York University political scientists Edgar Dosman called *The National Interest*, that the federal Cabinet made a decision *not* to decide Indian land claims. Dosman obtained access to government correspondence from five or six years ago which shows that the Cabinet took the cynical view of stalling a decision on land claims, which would therefore leave them with the opportunity of pushing a pipeline through if the necessity arose—they could merely argue that they hadn't had time to settle land claims but that the need for the pipeline was urgent.

And the risk remains that the government may still stall. What

we know from their memos is that their argument, that they want to settle land claims but need more time, is a lie—they have set out a specific stalling policy. It may be that the current minister, Mr. (Warren) Allmand, may not go along with this policy, but...

G: What do you think the result of the Berger inquiry may be?

W: It's not fruitful to predict. But Berger himself has said he will find on the evidence presented to him. And the natives have presented a great deal of evidence supporting an equitable settlement to their claims. The pipeline companies did not present much evidence on their behalf. If Mr. Berger in fact finds on the evidence, then I think all will be well.

G: How many peoples inhabit the territory in dispute?

W: There are about 13,000 to 14,000 Indians in the area—about 10,000 to 12,000 whites.

G: How many tribes or native groupings are there in the area?

W: There are five main linguistic groupings: or "local groups" as anthropologists term them: Dogrib, Slavey, Chipewyan, Hareskin and Louscheux.

G: What would the consequences for the territory be if the natives are awarded political control?

W: They're asking for the right to have political institutions of their own in the territory but that the territory remain a part of Canada. They would see their control as not sufficient if they did not have the right to prevent a pipeline from being constructed in their territory, if they so decided. If you say to people they have control but not enough control to stop a pipeline it's a contradiction in terms.

The Dene are not asserting sovereign rights in the North, nor are the Inuit. They are basically asking for a new deal—they're asking the federal government



Mel Watkins

photo Grant W...

for a new distribution of power. They are a colonial people and they want to decolonize themselves.

G: Isn't it more accurate to say they want a first deal, instead of a new one?

W: Yes. There's never been any negotiated deal with them. Despite the Caveat Case the substantial question of land rights remains unresolved. (The Caveat Case began in 1973 when the Indians went into court to try and get a caveat on the 450,000 sq. mi. of land, and thus be able to prevent a pipeline at least temporarily. The Supreme Court of the N.W.T. supported them, but the decision by the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court in Ottawa was that you could not file a caveat on "unpatented Crown land," meaning land which no one had previously filed a title against. However, Judge Morrow did say he believed the natives had aboriginal rights to the lands. But the substantial question was never answered more than that. In any case, however, land claims certainly won't be settled just in the courts.

Whoever wins in the courts will enter negotiations with a stronger hand. And presumably after negotiations an Act of Parliament will be passed which would consolidate the negotiated agreement.

G: You've been accused of being a "white radical" interfering with native affairs. How do you react to that?

W: I think the people who say that are racist. I am white and I am radical. But I was never a policy maker with the Brotherhood—wasn't a political advisor, merely an economic one. All I did was prepare evidence for the Berger inquiry, and people who make the charges that I am interfering do so because they don't believe Indians are smart enough to politically organize themselves which is wrong. The Brotherhood people who made similar charges—such as former Brotherhood president James Wa-shee, have never advanced any evidence in favor of their charges, and Wa-Shee was not re-elected after his split with the Brotherhood.

TOURNESOL presents...

FREE DANCE IMAGES

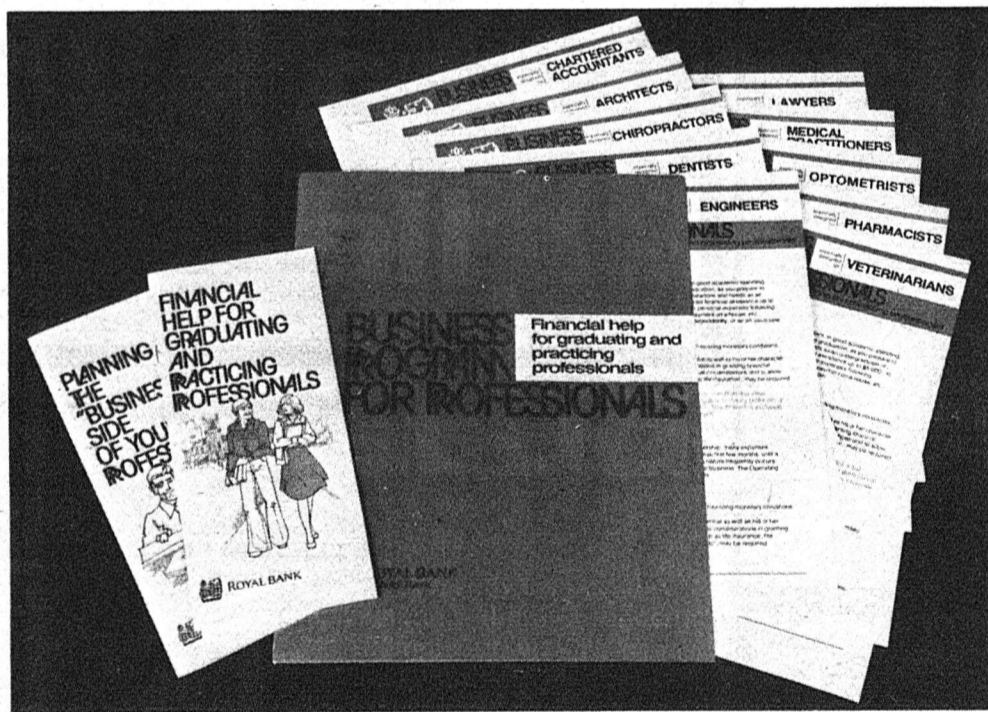
New works choreographed by Ernst & Carole Eder

FEBRUARY 11, 12, 13 — 18, 19, 20 8:30 p.m.

ESPACE TOURNESOL
(formerly Tournesol Dance Space)

11845 - 77 Street (located behind the Coliseum)

Tickets \$2.50 Reservations 474-7169



PROFESSIONALS SOMETIMES NEED TO SEEK MORE THAN JUST ADVICE.

All the good advice in the world won't pay the rent on office space, or keep the cash flow of an expanding practice running smoothly.

If you're a graduate, or have already started your career, the Royal Bank can help you to either get established, or progress further in the professional world. Your Royal Bank manager is qualified to give you good financial advice, and assistance in a more tangible form—up to \$50,000 where the circumstances warrant.

Speak to your Royal Bank manager about our Business Program for Professionals. Whether you're just starting out, or on your

way up, he can help you plan your future with practical solutions to your financial problems.



ROYAL BANK
the helpful bank

Eligible professions include: Accounting—Chartered Accountant—C.A., Architecture—B. ARCH., Chiropractic—Doctor in Chiropractic—D.C., Dentistry—D.D.S., Engineering—B. ENG., Law—B.C.L., LL.B., Medicine—M.D., Optometry—O.D., Pharmacy—B. Sc., PHARM., Veterinary Medicine—D.V.M.

STUDENTS' UNION
UNION DES ETUDIANTS

CINEMA

information after hours: 432-47E4

**SUNDAY FEB. 20
SPECIAL DOUBLE FEATURE**

7 PM **9:30**

**WINNER 1972 CANNES
FILM FESTIVAL
JURY PRIZE AWARD**

**Billy Pilgrim
lives from time
to time
to time...**

A GEORGE ROY HILL PAUL MONASH PRODUCTION
**SLAUGHTERHOUSE
-FIVE**
Restricted Adult

PSYCHO
Adult

SUB. THEATRE SHOWINGS 7 PM, 9:30 PM
DOUBLE FEATURES 7 PM