

# Editorial



—Why yes Virginia. You can always count on Canadians to do something symbolic.

If nothing else, the proposed November 5th nuclear blast on Amchitka Island has confirmed certain commonly held theories. Initially, the decision to conduct the test, in spite of repeated warnings by scientists of possible serious repercussions, proves that King Richard and his band of military advisors are indeed in need of psychiatric treatment.

Secondly, the reaction to that decision on the part of Canadians provides another glaring example of the apathy and phony liberalism that typifies and pervades Canadian political perception and participation.

Aside from the Stanley Cup playoffs, Canadians unless directly affected, tend to be insensitive to issues. The further removed from an issue the less concerned we become and involvement assumes the shape of symbolic gestures rather than direct political action. Amchitka, provides a classic example of this attitude and behavior. After all, Amchitka is neither a unique nor isolated incident but rather it is another in a series of nuclear tests that the United States and other nations have been conducting since the end of the second world war. We do not recall that Canadians became particularly incensed over nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean — so why now? The point is that we are not contesting the notion per se but rather the location of this particular nuclear test. It seems to us to be a sad but accurate commentary on our collective mentality that another nation has to threaten to detonate a bomb in our backyard before we undertake any form of direct political action.

This attitude of apathy and indifference is further evidenced by the location and nature of protests now being conducted by Canadians, over the Amchitka blast. Initially, the federal government formally protested the American action. This is the political equivalent of casting the King a dirty look at a dinner party. Meanwhile demonstrations in British Columbia, the area immediately endangered have involved operation "Greenpeace," circulating of petitions and picketing of various border crossings. Similar demonstrations have taken place in other Western centers.

As one moves eastward there is a marked decline in the scale and intensity of demonstrations, with those on the east coast reduced to symbolic gestures

or expressions of "solidarity." Persons residing on the east coast of Canada are not overly disturbed by the problems being encountered by Western Canadians in much the same manner that Canadians generally were not concerned over the notion of nuclear testing until it happened close to home. In addition almost all Canadian demonstrations to date have avoided the politics of direct confrontation preferring to emphasize formal, legal and peaceful approaches to the problem with the consequence that those individuals who profess to be concerned become engaged in essentially pointless operations such as Project Plant-A-Tree.

We can imagine the stir that Project Plant-A-Tree will cause in Washington:

—Mr. President, the Canadians are protesting the Amchitka blast.

—I know, I got their note.

—Yes Sir, but this time they've gone further, — the Canadian people themselves have begun to protest.

—have begun what. Don't tell me they've burnt our embassy!

—Well, no sir, but....

—You mean they've kidnapped our ambassador?

—Well, not quite sir.

—Well then, what have they done?

—Well sir, they've taken to planting trees sir.

—What! Good gracious how terrible! Planting trees you say. Well, what kind of trees?

—I don't know sir.

—Well you'd better find out, its probably significant. Damn clever Canadians.

No doubt we will be accused of being a trifle unfair in singling out this project for ridicule but it provides such an excellent example of our uptight middle class attitudes. The point being that unless forced, Canadians will not demonstrate or take any form of political action and secondly that if we do act our activities will most probably be of a symbolic or token nature — forceful yet tasteful as they say. The implications for the political future of this country are at once obvious, far-reaching and somewhat frightening. The implications for students are similarly obvious — traditionally students have constituted a vanguard force for social change, in this area students might legitimately be termed a vanguard for apathy and tokenism.

## FEEDBACKFEEDBAC

Dear Sir:

To Jacqui Good and Paul Erhlich a question: have you ever heard of a blue-print developing into a building as a fetus develops into a baby?

"Dewy-Eyed"

Dear Sir:

I would like to comment on the article on Bawku, Brunswickan, October 22, 1971. I appreciate attempts to help us learn something of the way of life of others around the world, but this article attempted to say too much in too little space and it was not written or corrected by someone very familiar with the culture. With a little care such errors as the name of a city, the unimportance of English, and the spelling and value of the currency would have been avoided. Peso should read pesewa, Accra — Tamale. However, these are minor when considered next to the exaggeration about such phenomena as wife beating and suppression of

the female. In our society the female has subtle ways of making her views known and accepted. So it is there. As well, wife beating, though perhaps more frequent there than here, is certainly exceptional behaviour.

I think an article like this should not try to cover such a broad perspective, but should elaborate on one or two elements. For example, what does the reader learn when he is told that pite bars are commonly found all over Ghana? What is pite?

Also, some of the writer's language is rather subjective. For example, by stating "As you can see health conditions are deplorable" gives no credit to the great strides that have been made in personal and public health. Secondly, we have not been supplied with enough information to "see" that health conditions are deplorable. People line up waiting for doctors here as well.

B.L. Kinsley.

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