

Priest exposes smokescreen

ANTIGONISH (CUP) — In 1965, Father Buddy Smith heard Voice of America on shortwave radio praise the efforts of 22,000 American soldiers battling to protect democracy in the Dominican Republic.

At the same time, he watched the first of the United States' helicopters land.

"We are the victims of a real smokescreen," said Smith, saying the North American commercial media show images of Central America which are "far from reality".

He says that picture makes it difficult for Canadians to find out what's really happening in that part of the world.

Father Smith lived in Santa Domingo for 22 years, working for the Scarborough Missions society. He recently spent time in Nicaragua, and related his

experiences to a group of students at St. Francis Xavier University.

Smith spent an "illuminating" three days working in a potato field with members of a farming cooperative during his tour. There he began to understand the sentiments of those who must defend themselves from attacks by the American-backed Contra rebels.

"The Contras are not fighting the Sandinista government, they are attacking the villages," Smith said.

He said women carry automatic weapons into the fields with them.

"Women are the mainstay of labour and the revolutionary force. There's no drive if they're not there. The strength of will is in the women."

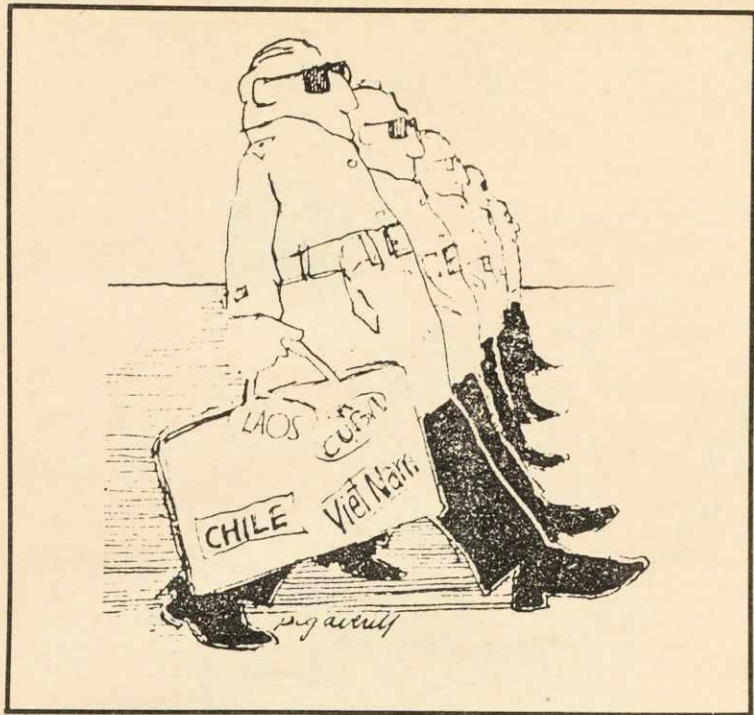
Smith said the Nicaraguans

are fighting for a chance to live the way they want to live: if they cannot do this, then they may as well be dead. He said suffering and danger have become second nature.

Smith said he believes the Nicaraguan government is doing everything it can to help its constituents.

"There is so much being done to put into the hands of the people the things they need. I felt really comfortable with what I saw there."

Nicaraguans respect President Daniel Ortega because of his forthrightness and honesty, according to the priest. When compared to the Hollywood polish of Ronald Reagan, Ortega lacks decorum, but his awkwardness is effective. Smith said the leader comes across as truthful, if a bit blunt.



Community Colleges: New plan praised

by Geoff Stone

A new community college network for Nova Scotia will improve education in vocational and technical training in the province, according to most education groups and critics.

The three-year plan, which involves a coordinating network of six areas in the province, has been called helpful and well-overdue by the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) and the Nova Scotia Confederation of University Faculty Associations (NSCUFA).

But there are concerns about how the colleges will be represented. SUNS has criticized the report for not making the governing board autonomous, with representation from both students and the community.

John Darcy, executive director of NSCUFA, agrees that the regional boards for the colleges should include community and

college members, rather than being appointed by the minister of vocational and technical training, as the report suggests, "to ensure we have some sort of system that responds to local needs."

In the SUNS recommendations to the study committee set up by vocation and technical training minister Ron Giffin, the lobby group suggested that community colleges be accessible to part-time students.

SUNS also had concerns that the community college should not extend into the post-secondary university areas, since this would overextend the system.

John Darcy said that while the government is working on the community colleges, there is still drastic underfunding of higher education. "Nova Scotia needs to expand education at all levels and in all forms. All the sections need more money," he said.

Women Jailed for fines

SASKATOON (CUP) — About 40 per cent of women in prison are there for not paying fines, says the national executive director of a women's legal advocacy group.

"We must ask why Saskatchewan, with the oldest fine option program in Canada, contributes the most to this figure," said Christie Jefferson of Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), who spoke in Saskatoon recently as part of National Crime Prevention Week.

Offenders in Saskatchewan may take advantage of the fine options program, which allows them to work for the community in lieu of paying fines.

"Alternatives other than prison often seem to be aimed at male offenders," said Jefferson.

"Unfortunately, native women can rarely take advan-

tage of the program. Many are single mothers and can't afford a babysitter while they serve their term," she said.

Because there is only one federal institution in Kingston, Ontario, and one correctional centre in each province, women must be transferred longer distances from their homes than men.

"The majority of female

offenders are kept in institutions with a much higher security than can possibly be justified. The Federal Prison for Women in Kingston is a maximum security prison," said Jefferson.

Male prisoners have more programs available to them than female prisoners, said Jefferson. "If an inmate earns a transfer to a provincial correctional centre for good behaviour, her program options become highly limited.

Memorial students stranded at home

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Hundreds of Memorial University students were stranded across the island of Newfoundland when the province's biggest people-mover ran out of buses.

"They [the students] all wanted to come back on the same day, and that's physically impossible for us," said John Furlong, supervisor for sales and promotions at Terra Transport, a Canadian National subsidiary.

Furlong said that between 200 and 300 students were left behind by the company's 25 buses, which operated around the clock the last day of the break.

Furlong said that while stu-

dents leave on different days depending on their exams, they all want to return at the same time.

"For most communities, there are facilities present where our buses stop. Some have none. These people come out in cars and then wait for the bus. When they [the buses] were full last weekend, they had to go back and wait for the next day," Furlong said.

The company official said seat demand was back down to normal two days later.

Terra Transport is looking into a publicity campaign which would inform students they must stagger travel times.




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