

African Students' Union host post colonial talks

by Veda Bowlin

Wednesday, February 26, 1992, marked the beginning of a series of lectures organized by the African Students' Union of the University of New Brunswick.

The speakers George Eguakun and Keli Tamaklo, graduate students from Ghana, West Africa' gave indepth talks on the political and economic development of modern Africa, with particular emphasis on the post colonial scenario.

The evening's proceedings were chaired by Kwame Dawes, Jamaican doctoral scholar of the University of New Brunswick who also has

close connections to West Africa.

As Dawes remarked in his opening address "it is fitting that well-read, intelligent people from various countries should share their knowledge and skills with the university community."

He pointed out the fact that the concept of modern Africa is problematic and hoped that the lecture series would help people gain a more insightful perspective on "an incredibly rich and diverse continent" the future of which is expected to have a great impact on the rest of the world.

The evening's programme was presented in three parts: a video presentation on Chile

and Brazil, the lectures, and a discussion period.

The film focused on the machinations of various multinational corporations as they sought to gain increasing control of the world's valuable resources and made use of detailed historical and statistical information.

It examined the role of giant corporations such as Exxon, Mobil Oil, Gulf and Western and Coca-Cola in their worldwide acquisition of market control in mining and manufacturing industries; the switch to overseas investment by these enterprises in order to maximize profits even to the detriment of workers in North America; the exploitation of the labour supply and vast reserves of resources in the so called Third World Countries; the collusion between heads of corporations and government officials (both in North America and in developing countries) and the role of the CIA in propaganda and political warfare as they tried to destabilize various governments of Brazil, Cuba, Vietnam, Iran and the Dominican Republic. Graphic examples of attempted and successful destabilisation programmes backed by the United States government, were presented.

Very striking was the situation portrayed in Brazil in which the phenomenal rise in foreign investment which occurred following the overthrow of the legitimate government, was linked to the subsequent increases in unemployment, malnutrition and infant mortality rates as multinational corporations acquired large acreages of land, forcing off the local farmers and causing a switch from farming for local

consumption and productions to farming for export markets.

The film revealed the obscenity of the methods used by multinational corporations as they helped to destroy the socialist government of Chile's Salvador Allende, his assassination and the killing and jailing of thousands of Chileans was also seen as a direct consequence of Allende's nationalization policies.

George Eguakun based his lecture on the effects on Africa, of the fiscal policies of lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In his opinion it is doubtful whether much progress has been made since, according to a United Nations report, 55% of Africa's population live in absolute poverty and most of the countries have phenomenal debt burdens.

By comparing pre and post colonial Africa, he showed the transition from self-sufficiency, intertrading and relative peace to post-colonial Africa rife with management divisions, poverty and even complete anarchy all of which resulted from European control under the "land-grab" of the early and mid 1900's.

According to Eguakun the post independence era saw the adoption of structural adjustment programmes and market approach economics prescribed by the IMF; measures which resulted in devaluation of currency, inflation and massive injection of foreign investment leading to foreign control of natural resources.

The unemployment and inflation led to an erosion of the middle class in countries such as Zambia and Ghana where social services were reduced and the government suppressed radical groups

which opposed this political direction.

As Eguakun stated, many countries were forced to adopt western style political systems as a condition of receiving financial aid, he was clearly bitter as he ended his talk with a biblical quote which was very pessimistic about Africa's immediate future.

Keli Tamaklo gave a brief overview of pre-colonial systems of government which were practised in Africa, tracing the progression through to European style government which served to maintain a favourable environment for European investment and effect indirect rule from that continent. Tamaklo suggested that the institution of European style democracy proved to be a drawback for African territories.

Having identified the devastating depths to which most African countries have fallen with failed political systems, rabid corruption of government officials and even outright anarchy in some areas, it was surprising that very little focus was placed by either speaker on concrete strategies for the future of the African continent.

Very little was suggested about the manner in which these countries proposed to pull themselves out of the "black hole" into which many of them are disappearing. Eventhough Eguakun mentioned the strengthening of the South-South Commission, the audience remained unenlightened as to the manner this would be achieved.

In the audience were many African students, whose comments and questions clearly indicated conflicting

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Shown are (l-r) F. Gómez-Astudillo, Chair of the Dept. of Spanish, Dean of Arts, Peter Kent, and Richard Rice, Dept. of Education (NB). M.J. Piquer photo.

Workshop held regarding Spanish Education

Press Release

A workshop hosted by the New Brunswick Department of Education and the Department of Spanish was held on February 24, 1992 in Carleton Hall, UNB Fredericton Campus. The list of participants included New Brunswick High School Teachers of Spanish (Susan Arsenaault, Kennebecasis Valley High; Bruce Campbell, Saint John High; Mary Margaret Doucet and Jacques Theriault, St. Malachy's, Saint John; Juliette Ramzi, St. Vincent's Saint John; Don Pert and Dan MacDonald, Fredericton High), Second Language Coordinators (Donald Mazerolle, District 15, Moncton; Denise Daigle, District 20, Saint John; Karen Tweedie, District 25, Oromocto; Elisabeth Goguen, District 26, Fredericton) and Members of the Department of Spanish of the University of New Brunswick (Leslie Marcus, Saint John Campus;

Jeremy Forster, Francisco Gomez-Astudillo, Dexter Noel, Maria Oancia, Mariano Piquer, Fernando Poyatos and Alvin Shaw, Fredericton Campus), Dean Peter Kent and Associate Dean Brent McKeown, UNB Faculty of

Department of Education.

Dean Peter Kent and Richard Rice welcomed the participants at the opening of the workshop. The morning session, moderated by F. Gomez-Astudillo, Chair of the UNB Department of Spanish, was dedicated to an exchange of information concerning the various courses offered in Spanish in NB High Schools and at UNB, enrollments, teaching methods, audio-visual materials and human resources. The afternoon session, moderated by Denise Daigle Second Language Coordinator for District 20, Saint John, was devoted to an open assessment of common objectives and perspectives for Spanish teachers in the secondary education system and at the University of New Brunswick: recognition of Spanish acquisition in grades 11-12, options when enrolling at UNB, placement tests, creation of special stream in first year, etc. Practical avenues for cooperation were explored, from pooling resources, to common cultural activities, from exchanges of information concerning studies abroad, to the planning of periodical meetings of NB Spanish educators following this most successful and productive first meeting.

Student union budget highlights

by Mimi Cormier

UNB's budget for the 1992-93 academic year was presented to the Student Union on Wednesday night by V.P. finance, James vanRaalte. He describes it as "a fair budget," although several important changes in funding were outlined.

A significant cut was made to the funding being allocated to CHSR for 1992-93. The new budget reduces CHSR's operating funds by \$27,000.00. vanRaalte states that "a substantial part of the reduction reflects a decision by SU Finance Committee that students at UNB "should not be paying for a second full-time staff position" filled by a non-student at CHSR.

According to van Raalte, "a student could be doing the job." He points out that there is a strong "student commitment" at CHSR, and that there was some question about whether CHSR was remaining "student oriented or not" by filling the position of Programming Director with a non-student.

Funding was brought back

for UNB's Speaker Series and for the Comedy Series as well, after being absent for the current academic year. van Raalte credits this change with the successful comedy series held during Winter Carnival. an Raalte pointed out that the series was "well received" and that the university "shouldn't just let things die when there's a need for it." He also credits fears that UNB's lack of a Speaker Series could reflect poorly on the university.

Funding was greatly increased to cover conference costs for the SU. Van Raalte says that conferences were "a bigger priority" for the SU this year, but he also attributes the increased funding to

"better budgeting" than during the 1991-92 academic year.

One of the slightest changes made in the budget was to the Student Activity Fee, which was reduced to \$91.69 from the 1991-92 rate of \$92.31. Van Raalte says that students can expect an increase in the fee, however. Changes to the budget will probably be made at the March 25 reading of the budget, and final totals will not be known until the final reading of the budget on April 8. According to Van Raalte, he can say "safely" that the fee will end up being "more than \$93.00," but he does not predict that the fee will increase "by much."

