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1984 yet to come?

In 1948, George Orwell wrote 1984, a book about the dangers of totalitarian political states.

The year 1984 has come and gone, and there was a collective mental sigh of relief. Things weren't as bad as Orwell had prophesized. Countries were tending to be less totalitarian, not more.

They may have been looking in the wrong direction.

The recent trend towards buyouts and mergers of already large corporations suggests that we are heading towards a totalitarian market system.

A lot of people would defend the buyout

of Wardair by Canadian Airlines International Ltd., or Texaco Canada by Imperial Oil, or Carling O'Keefe by Molson's.

Business is rationalizing, they'd say. Business is becoming more efficient. The moves are necessary so that corporations can compete in the international market.

To put it bluntly, they're wrong. In their paean to the virtues of the market place, they're being inconsistent. And they haven't thought through the implications of this trend.

Don't get me wrong. I'm all in favour of healthy competition. When Henry Ford first started selling Model A's, he'd tell his potential customers they could have any colour they liked, as long as it was black. Pretty soon he had competition that was willing to give people a choice, in order to attract business. That's how the market is supposed to work.

But that's not what is happening today. The international scale mega-corps have overwhelming advantages in economies of scale, purchasing powers, research and development capabilities and distribution networks.

They even have a Ministry of Truth. Advertising gives us the latest version of NewSpeak and NewThink.

In a truly competitive market, anyone who can develop and market a product cheaper than the next guy should be assured of success. This keeps the competition honest; they try to reduce their prices as well. Prices are kept down, and, theoretically at least, everyone gains.

However, with the resources available to the mega-corps today, competition won't stay in business long. They either get bought out, or driven out of the market with artificially low prices.

The eventual logical outcome is markets supplied by a single producer. If you don't like the price, don't buy the product. But if it's a necessary product, you won't have a choice.

Don't look to government to change things either. Very few are effective in getting business to do anything. In fact, if governments fail to provide suitable "business environments," corporations can easily move to other countries, taking jobs, investment, and tax revenue with them.

So the economic and social stability of a country is held hostage to business interests.

Albertans should be familiar with the dangers of monopoly. In the early development of our oil industry, Imperial Oil was the only major oil company willing to invest in exploration.

If there were only one mega-corp in the oil industry, Albertans would have no choice about whom to sell their oil to.

If the merger trend continues, we won't have alternatives about whom to buy our gas from, which airline to travel, or what beer to drink. We'd have to pay the price set without reference to market forces.

The only possible advantage is that we wouldn't have to worry about advertising. In a monopoly market, there's no need to advertise.

We won't even have to make choices. If this isn't totalitarianism, I don't know what is.

Ahh, what the heck. Why don't y'all drive over in your McCar, and we'll drink a few McBeer.

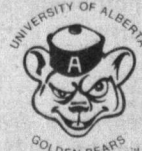
But remember...

Big business is watching you.

Whose side are you on?

The U of A vs.
NAIT at Northlands
Coliseum, January
31st at 7 p.m.

Tickets: \$5.00 (Blues)
\$7.00 (Reds)
Available at all Bass
Outlets, or call the U of A
at 432-BEAR or NAIT at
471-7730.



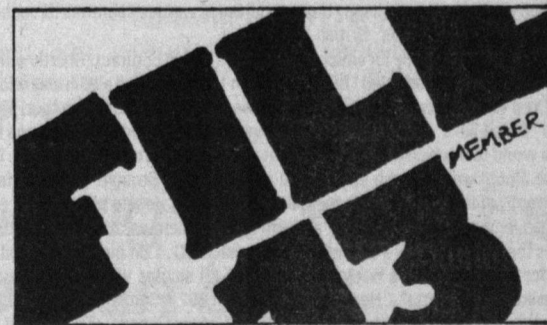
FACE-OFF '89



Pick a side and show your pride as the NAIT Ookpiks and the U of A Golden Bears go head-to-head at Face-Off '89!



Fifty cents from the sale of every ticket will be donated to Ronald McDonald House.



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ALTERNATIVE
NIGHT CLUB

FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:00 p.m.

JR. GONE WILD

and

KENTUCKY CHURCH BUS

8004 104 Street
Park Hotel

\$6.00 Tickets at South Side
Sound, Sound Connection,
Park Hotel

FM88
CJSR FM Cable 104.7