

## INDIANS DEMAND LEGAL RIGHTS

by Elsie Ross

"There will be no basic human rights for Indians until their cultural and legal rights are protected as well".

This statement was made by Roy Peipenberg, education consultant with the Indian Association of Alberta and former education superintendent with the Indian Affairs

Department. He was speaking at a Students' Union sponsored teach-in on Indian affairs Thursday night.

About 300 persons, both students and native people turned out to hear speakers hammer home the right of Indians to self determination.

Mr. Peipenberg accused the federal government of keeping

the Indians in a state of colonialism. They are now trying to experience democracy which they have never experienced before, he said. Since 1947 when the program of school integration was begun parents have little or no say in deciding whether or not they want their child to attend integrated schools.

Mr. Peipenberg said that although federal Indian money has been spent on off-reserve schools quotas on Indian students have been set in the schools. The provincial minister of education has almost a complete voice in these matters. If quotas have been exceeded then frequently Indian children are placed in "opportunity classes" for slow learners.

Chief Ralph Blackman of the Cold Lake Reserve then told the audience why his band had initiated the school boycott. In 1926 a residential school for the reserve had been promised within two years. Twenty years later a day school was built but by then it was too small. With little consultation with the parents the Indian Affairs

department integrated the students into the Cold Lake and Grand Centre schools. The Indians were then promised decent roads for school buses. These too did not appear. They were told there was no money.

Living conditions were bad and did not improve -- school water came from a nearby slough. Six weeks ago the Cold Lake band finally got tired of waiting and pulled the children from school. "We do not intend to let the kids back in school until we get a firm commitment for schools on the reserve. We are not totally against integration but we are against pushing it on people when they are not ready for it", Chief Blackman said.

The third speaker Chief Gordon Youngchief of the Keehiwan Reserve hit on the poor living conditions on the reserves. The main source of drinking water on the reserve is a dirty slough. There is no power on the reserve. Often the poor condition of the roads prevents bus drivers from picking up students. Chief Youngchief spoke too of the tension

between the Indian students and white students in the Bonnyville schools. Indian students often feel this pressure and drop out as early as possible. Indian money goes into building the schools yet the Indians have no voice at all on the Bonnyville School Board.

Adrian Houle, a student who had been through the Indian school system then recounted his problems. He did not learn to speak English until Grade Three; He had started school speaking only Cree and then French-speaking nuns had tried to teach him English. He was then taken to an integrated school in St. Paul. From that time he was subject to subtle and not so subtle slurs on his race by both students and teachers.

David Greyeyes, regional director of the Indian Affairs Department, branch in Edmonton bore the brunt of the attack against the federal government. He maintained that Jean Chretien had promised the Alberta Indians that he would be out here in three weeks if the Indians went to Ottawa to see him. Mr. Greyeyes warned the Indians that the longer they put off the trip to Ottawa the longer they would have to wait for Chretien.

He said that Jean Chretien had promised improvements on the reserve but the Indians had rejected them. The Indians had rejected them though because they felt they were only piece-meal operations.

In the question period which followed the speakers. Mr. Greyeyes was asked if he was an Indian. "Yes, I am" he said. "Then how can you justify selling out your people to the federal government," the questioner asked.

There was no answer.



"The Federal Government is really doing something" David Greyeyes informed a group of cynical people Thursday night

## HS students protest Amchitka

Edmonton high school students may stage a walkout to protest the proposed Amchitka nuclear blast.

At a meeting yesterday, Edmonton high school student council presidents voted to publicize November 3 as a day of protest against Amchitka and as a date for the walkout.

The individual student councils will decide if their particular schools will participate in the mass class walkout.

The representatives at yesterday's meeting felt the

majority of city high schools would participate.

The presidents also supported the November 6 day as a day of protest against the Vietnam war.

Duncan McLean, chairman of the Student Action Committee Against Nuclear Testing, a Vancouver-based group outlined to the Edmonton students the organization of the October 6 high school walkout in Vancouver which filled the downtown area with 15,000 marchers. He urged Edmonton high schools to follow Vancouver's example.

"The Vancouver walkout was the largest demonstration to date and it got a lot of publicity in the States and across Canada. By having cross country demonstrations we can really add weight to the protest," McLean told the students.

Mike Carmody, a student at Victoria Composite High School, elaborated on the details of the proposed walkout. He said the committee was in the process of contacting interested lawyers who would act on the behalf of any students who might be expelled if the school administrations disapproved of the walkout.

This prompted a remark by one of the council members, John Ross, to the effect that such planning would be waste of time as most lawyers would not be interested. "My father is a lawyer," he commented, "my father doesn't want me out of school."

Carmody explained to Ross the importance of having legal

aid available for the students. He told how, in one school in Vancouver, sixteen students were suspended for participating in the walkout and a few were expelled. Some Vancouver high school administrations sentenced hundreds of students to detentions lasting up to a week.

The high school demonstrators will march from their high schools by different routes to the Federal Building where a rally will be held.

Several marches will pass

through the U of A campus and the protest organizers hope university students will join them.

On Wednesday October 6, five hundred U of A students marched to the Federal Building protesting the Amchitka blast.

The blast, although postponed by President Nixon, is very much alive and can be set off in a matter of hours with possible grave effects on the environment and the lives of West coast residents.



Edmonton student council presidents met Monday night to discuss whether or not to support the proposed walkout of Edmonton high schools on November 3. On the extreme right can be seen the famous Gateway reporter, Rick Grant.

## Wendy !

Wendy Yurchuk is the new education rep on Students' Council. She decisively defeated Wayne Madden in a Students' Council Election Friday. Miss Yurchuk polled 495 votes to Mr. Madden's 180. Only 675 students, or roughly less than 25 per cent, of the eligible education students voted in the election.

Referendums on a trimester system and a Spring Term "reading week" were held in conjunction with the election. Eighty-four per cent or 1937 students voted for a spring term reading week which would probably occur sometime in March.

\* Due to the mid-term exams, there will not be an edition of the GATEWAY on Thursday. \*