

THE COMING CRISIS IN THE ABORIGINAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: FROM COLONIALISM TO NEO-COLONIALISM TO RENAISSANCE

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This paper has been written in the belief that a bad handling of Aboriginal rights and Native self-government questions could lead to severe setbacks and perhaps tragedy not only for Native peoples but also for wider Canadian society. Since this paper will be rather critical of current tendencies in the Aboriginal rights movement, let it be clear at the outset that the author wholeheartedly supports all those Native groupings that seek political dignity and economic self-reliance through the strategy of Aboriginal rights settlements. The author supports the struggle to regain land that has been pilfered, fishery rights that have been eroded by large canning companies, hunting resources that have been depleted by sport hunters, as well as the quest for entrenched health care and education. This paper will, however, be pointing out some dangerous shortcomings in the Aboriginal rights/Native government strategy--the strategy of "decolonization."

The paper will also cast a critical eye on some varieties of leadership in the Native movement. Therefore let us point out at the outset that the great majority of staff and mid-level leaders in the Native organizations are remarkably sincere and dedicated people working in very arduous conditions. For example, one finds a great sense of mission and selflessness in the teacher education programs and in other education and development projects where commitment extends far beyond a nine-to-five day. One sees the remarkable staying power and the frustration of Native leaders struggling by every means to get some economic development in their communities--not to enrich themselves as leaders but to bring their people out of poverty. The author has also known many of the founding leaders of the current Native movements and has shared their anguish as they watched their movement's original ideas crusted over by bureaucracy and

careerism. It is for these sincere people that this paper is intended, and one expects many of them to take part in a rejuvenation of the Native movement after the coming crisis.

This paper is a response to requests for popularization and updating of some working papers that the author developed for the Dene Nation and other Native organizations in the early 1980s. They included, "Dene Nation: Middle Class Dream or Working Reality?" and a "Criticism of the C.O.P.E. Overlap Agreement" negotiated by the Innuvialiut of the Mackenzie Delta. Sadly, many of the fears that were expressed in those papers have come to fruition in the current Aboriginal rights settlements. Many of these settlements have been concluded under the pressure of the current economic crisis and the collapse of prices of those very resources that were meant to be the backbone of Native economic and political self sufficiency. These pressures and settlements are discussed below. The two papers articulated the fear that the settlements would not produce enough wealth or autonomy to create self-reliant Native communities with a positive symbiosis of wage labour and small business occupations (including the "small businesses" of fishing, trapping and other "traditional" livelihoods). One feared that the settlements would provide only enough to run a bare bones welfare economy, that resource royalties would primarily be spent on infrastructure for the extraction of resources. Most of the wealth that trickled down from profits of the multinationals would end up in the hands of a few Native leaders and entrepreneurs, including those who would turn their political "capital" into actual capital by various government grant schemes and by selling their own sub-contracting construction and services and consulting firms to the overall corporation that was nominally owned by the Native "nation." It was feared that the cooperatively owned Native corporation set up as part of the settlement could actually run at a loss while the various Native and White subcontractors made substantial profits; that a very well-heeled Native leadership would enrich itself and increasingly lose touch with the rank and file who would remain on the reserves and in the cities in the usual mixture of fishing, trapping,

welfare and chronic unemployment. One saw the possibility that many White and Indian intellectuals would apologize for, if not actually glamorize, this unemployment with rationales about Indians losing their culture if they took part in wage labour. The paper argued that the workers of Brazil, India, Japan, Turkey and China were not all rendered identical like peas in a pod by working at modern employment. Today one feels rather like Cassandra, the Roman prophetess who was cursed to make prophecies that would always come true, but which no one would believe in time to prevent the disaster foretold.

Of course these papers were not just a prophecy of gloom, for they also put forward several practical strategies to avoid the various forms of corporate graft and class polarization which were alluded to above. Such strategies included the need for a very open and democratic running of any Native corporation with very strict guidelines regarding the profitability of Native subcontracting firms and the salaries of staff and leaders. The strategies included conflict of interest guidelines with teeth and jaws far more powerful than the hypocritical and weak counterparts in federal politics. It was suggested that such guidelines were much in tune with the deepest principles of Native society--a kinship-based communal society with egalitarian and cooperative values far more vital than mere dialect, dress, diet and dance (the four "d's" of multiculturalism). That these proposals were not utopian dreaming was backed up by the example not only of the then-president of the Dene Nation who in 1981 in expensive Yellowknife was earning only \$18,000 per year, but also of the president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers whose salary was limited to that of a postal worker. Other examples were put forward that demonstrated that there can indeed be committed leaders who seek to help their people rather than enrich themselves.

We also discussed such strategies as what one might call "global budgeting" for Native communities. This would mean that Native communities could pool all resource revenues transfer payments from the government (including education, health and welfare benefits) into a central fund which could then be

subdivided to give worthwhile employment to all who were willing and able to work to build schools and senior citizen centres, to deliver necessary services, to take care of the needy and so forth. Communities would decide democratically on a regular basis (even as democratic as weekly discussions on where to best assign work crews) how to use their resources to employ and make self-reliant the greatest proportion of the people. Freed from outrageous consultants' fees and managers' salaries imposed on them by the external market and the salary expectations of White professionals, they could distribute their financial resources in a way to utilize their best resource--their people. Such global budgeting strategies could also incorporate the natural produce of fish and game and lumber to free up funds for those things which can be bought only from "outside" for cash.

These ideas were all very attractive to the rank and file who heard them. For example the Dene rank and file formally demanded to take part in wage labour coming out of the Mackenzie corridor developments, despite the White experts who warned them of the supposed evils of a decent job.¹ The proposals for salary ceilings on the leadership came close to being formalized in the organizational charter. The supposedly "utopian" idea of global budgeting described above is seriously being considered by open-minded development planners in the Department of Indian Affairs, not because it is "radical" but because it might actually be more effective and cost-efficient than the current jumble of programs that often fall into the demobilized welfare communities. In other words, the "idealistic" may turn out to be more practical than the current pragmatism of individual careerism and official programs that always seem to leave the common people untouched. Indeed it would not be the first time in history that a bit of "idealism" was the only thing that worked.

These ideas and strategies struck a positive chord in the rank and file at the time for indeed most of the ideas came from the people themselves and their original founding leaders before the days of government funding and the endless bureaucratization of the struggle via battles with the National Energy Board or

with the lawyers hovering like plump bumblebees around the constitution, the charter of rights and Aboriginal claims courts. Such bureaucratic and legalistic battles sapped more and more of the energies of the movement until simple survival of the organizations seemed to become paramount, and early principles of the struggle were overshadowed by spectacular court battles and meetings "with the minister." The economic crash of 1981-82 and the fundamental reorientation in Canadian politics from economic nationalism to free trade (discussed below) meant a further weakening, though not an extinguishment of the early aspirations for a better, not just a richer, Native society.

The awakening of the original principles will await the playing out of the current period of get-rich-quick schemes wherein leaders claim salaries which place them far away from their masses, and top-heavy organizations fight to survive as only bureaucracies can. One of the first steps or rejuvenation will be an anti-corruption "clean-up" campaign from within the movement itself as well as within DIAND and other government agencies. Such steps are already underway, with mixed results and conflicting interests within the Native and governmental bureaucracies. Presently the Assembly of First Nations is leading the way with strict internal audits and checks on consulting fees.

What we are describing is not unique to Canada but part of a worldwide phenomenon of the movement from colonialism to neo-colonialism. All the elements are there--the early, courageous and unpaid leaders who work for "independence" or "de-colonization" in extremely adverse conditions often oppressed by the colonial authorities (DIAND, the Church, the RCMP) and often scorned by their own people. The struggle warms up, the highest ideals of egalitarian, cooperative democracy are held out as part of the national struggle--often in socialist, nationalist or tribal and religious expression. A brave and self-sacrificing mid-level leadership comes forward. The authorities react first with savage repression. One can recall not just the distant Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya, or the struggle in Algeria,

but also the savage beatings of early Native activists in Kenora at the Onishinabe park, the "internal exile" of Jim Brady, the blacklisting from employment of countless others who were psychologically and socially destroyed--the unsung martyrs like Patsy Fineday and Jonas Favel.² Recall how the RCMP in the late sixties listed the Native movement as the main threat to Canada's national security (Brown and Brown, 1973). When the movement reaches such a stage that it can no longer be repressed by police action and harassment, the state moves to co-optation, the selection of "moderate" more amenable leaders, or the taming by financial ties of originally militant leaders. The co-optation does not go unnoticed, with Malcolm Norris, the bedrock leader of twentieth-century Metis nationalism fighting literally to his deathbed against the state-funding of the leadership (though of course he fought for state funding of medical care, education, employment and other government programs). The state funding creates a series of bureaucracies which become one of the only routes to upward mobility for young Natives, since the actual productive wealth remains in the hands of the multinationals except for some sub-contracting spin-offs. Politics becomes a paid vocation. Although there initially may be many challenges to the original "Party" of the independence struggle, the usual pattern is for one or two organizations, movements or formal parties to become the governing apparatus. The shortest route to a decent career then derives from the "governing party," while wealth comes from government contracts and consulting distributed by the "party." Access to resources comes from membership in the dominant organization and the young Native leader who criticizes the new "establishment" soon finds him/herself with few career prospects, ostracism and ridicule or worse. This is the classic scenario whether it be Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya or the prairie provinces and northern territories of Canada. Critics of the new and what is now clearly the "neo-colonial" establishment are called national traitors and dismissed as being no longer part of the people. A Canadian example would be Harold Cardinal's remarkably heated denunciation of the Dene "radicals" who are supposedly fractious

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trouble-makers who have abandoned the Indian way of consensus .

Indeed, as the early promises of the independence movement start to wear thin, an even greater part of the governing "party's" energies go to the isolation if not active repression of dissidents. In Canada one can meet many honest young Native intellectuals who find themselves in this position, unable to carry their ideas forward in the official organizations, yet too weak to provide an alternative outside the official organizations. In world perspective again, this is what happened in Tanzania, Zaire and Uganda once the honeymoon of independence was over. One wonders what lies in store once Indian Government in Canada is finally achieved, and the last agreements of aboriginal title are signed.

In the period of early independence the mainstream intellectuals of the movement have been most welcome to talk about independence and "de-colonization," but dare not mention the concept of "neo-colonialism" and the neo-colonial Native elite. Non-Native scholars who dare to point this out are labelled as racist and ostracized from polite company. This has been the story again and again in Africa and the Carribean, and the author can personally attest to the parallels in Canada.

The phenomenon of bureaucratization of the movement and co-optation of the leadership is at the core of so much that we see as inefficient, corrupt or incompetent in our stereotypes of Third World governments and economies. The more obtuse scholars blame this on cultural backwardness or other faults of the people. More astute observers, whether in Africa or northern Canada, realize that the painful slowness and bumbling derive not from the people, who may indeed lack some confidence and experience, but above all from the lack of any real power over their resources. The lack of wealth and power focuses much energy into growth of a bureaucracy which, when it all boils down, also has little real power but a lot to keep it busy, and a lot of jobs to protect. Those nations that have achieved some real economic and political power over their national wealth do not have anything like the problems we associate with inefficient third-world or "fourth-world" bureaucracies.

In spite of all these problems--here and in the Third World--some things do move forward. Native teachers and other intellectuals are trained. Many leave the reserves and Metis settlements for wage labour in the cities. Others, like the countless peasants of the third world, will continue to make do on a desperate mixture of fishing, trapping, hunting, wage labour and welfare. This lifestyle has been glamorized by some, for in good times it is a life of great variety, challenge and freedom. In bad times it is a very hard life. Here too, as in the Third World, many leaders continue to romanticize the old ways since they have no strategy for the thousands entering the city. While one emphatically agrees that everything possible must be done to aid and enrich the lives of the remaining trappers and fishermen, the vast majority of the people are the new Native working class in the urban centres. They are the invisible, inaudible majority of Native politics, far overshadowed by constitutional and resource royalty issues. One is now hearing the voices of Native women who are entering the workforce at many levels ranging from the professions like teaching and social work to working class positions as domestic workers. Their demands are often very different from those of White women who claim to speak on their behalf. Rather than seeking to end the nuclear family, they are trying desperately to hold onto the extended and everchanging Native family that is under attack by unemployment, alcoholism, prison and child apprehension. They show little interest in breast feeding and home-childbirth but in proper clinics and medical care in their communities.⁴

A sub-class of street people has developed as well. So from the original "classless" kinship-based communal Native society come many classes, and they do in fact come in conflict as a result. Native businessmen declare that a Native carpenter's union is "un-Indian," Native managers insist that their secretaries and staff members cannot unionize or demand better conditions, for the same supposedly "cultural" reasons. The new Native upper class insists that it is by nature incapable of exploitation, since Natives never exploited before, and that unions, financial checks and balances on the leadership

and checks against their powers are therefore un-Indian. How familiar these evasive claims are to those who have followed the protestations of the Third World neo-colonial leaders who have dismissed their own accumulation of great wealth and power behind the curtain of "African Socialism," "Arab Socialism" or some tribal or religious veil.

Eventually, however, the truth is out. Not all the young intellectuals and entrepreneurs can fit into the dominant official organization and its sub-contracts. The rank and file's conditions may have improved politically and psychologically with formal independence, the end of the Indian agent, cultural renaissance and "mental decolonization" of red power or black consciousness, but their basic economic needs for employment and dignity remain unanswered. The old rhetoric rings hollow, and the sincere activists who have remained outside the establishment suddenly find an audience for their criticism and a new attempt at the problem. Often it means a revival of the original principles of the early, unpaid, "idealist" leaders, now chastened by a decade or two in the real world of co-optation, bureaucracy and differences of class. That is the period which we are just entering. Sincere Native intellectuals and mid-level leaders and staff will welcome this wave of rejuvenation. Movement careerists will not. The "third wave" of young leaders outside the establishment (after the first wave of original leaders and the second wave of salaried establishment bureaucrats) is a worldwide phenomenon that is making itself felt from Jamaica to Ghana to India. In Canada it is making alliances with heretofore conservative forces like the mainstream churches. The churches are not only supporting Aboriginal rights but also actively seeking a new economic order of full employment, appropriate technology in harmony with the ecology and the need of people to work humanely with their available resources. They seek a new social contract that places human dignity above the need for corporate profits or the drive to lower wages to the level of the Haitians in order to "be competitive." Such ideas are coming from the United Church, the Catholic Conference of Bishops, and a trade union movement

that has re-discovered its social activism after the McCarthyite purges and in the midst of Reaganomics. So rather than being an isolated irrelevant force, the third wave of critical Native leaders will have many allies. The original principles of Native egalitarian communal society can be reborn in concert with those many people who seek to build a decent humane, democratic, mutually respectful community in Canada and abroad. This renaissance too is an unfolding international phenomenon—not just the stagnant phase of neo-colonialism we have described in such depressing detail.

Of course in the real world of Canadian politics there will likely be no neat victory of one world view on Aboriginal rights and Native development. Yet we can outline some possible scenarios based on current trends—some positive, some mixed and some very negative indeed. Ironically, the scenario which is most widely shared in Canadian politics is also the least likely to succeed. It is the liberal/social democratic project for Native upward mobility through resource megaprojects and state funded creation of large and small entrepreneurs of "red capitalism" (O'Malley, 1980) in the Native communities. It is unlikely to succeed if the definition of success includes the lifting up from misery of the great majority of the Native population. It is indicative of the pervasiveness of this model that even the main marxian and other radical critics of Canadian state policy confine their criticism to the inadequacy of government grants, the insufficient use of retail cooperatives or other reform measures planted squarely within the liberal agenda of upward mobility for a few who would bring along friends and relatives in their wake. One does not mean to impugn the motives of the many consultants and mid-level Native community leaders who see this model as a means to satisfy the desperate need of their people for the dignity and self-reliance that jobs bring even to an exemplary minority in a welfare-ridden setting. One also applauds the courage of those leaders who are able to temper the rhetoric of cultural and religious nationalism with the realization that wage labour does not in itself destroy cultural identity.

Yet a serious look at recent changes in the Canadian and world political economy makes us question whether the liberal agenda remains plausible. First of all, one must note that the severe downturn in the world economy in about the fall of 1981 saw a major shift in the political and economic strategies of the western powers to various national forms of "Reaganomics" -- measures to dismantle the welfare state, to "free the market" and to sweep away "particularist" nationalist impediments to multinational commerce. In Canada this took the form of the defeat of the Trudeau Liberal government and even a defeat within the Liberal party of those leaders associated with Trudeau's project of a national capitalism. The project included a national energy policy autonomous from world oil prices, a national industrial strategy, an import substitution policy, a vigorous multicultural subsidization and a social security "net" supposedly the envy of the western world. To put this all in global perspective, Canada's attempt at an autonomous national capitalism, built in the latitude granted by the transnationals in expansionary times, has been terminated in the "bad times." Thus the Trudeau epoch can be seen as the somewhat belated, rather timid Canadian expression of the social forces which brought to power and then defeated Nasser and Nkrumah in Africa, Arbenz and Goulart in Latin America, Mossadegh in Iran and so forth.

This dramatic turnabout in the strategy of the ruling groups in the Western orbit is anything but an abstraction to Canadian Native peoples. It has meant drastic cutbacks in social services including health, education and job creation. Those Natives who no longer can survive off the land--the great majority by far--are in an extraordinarily vulnerable position to the dismantling of the modern welfare state. The new embracing of free trade and unregulated global pricing means that Indian and Inuit groups in northern Canada have been hit hard by the world decline in oil prices, forest products and even uranium prices. Groups like the Dene Nation and Innuvialuit (Mackenzie Delta Inuit) have been rushed into very dubious Aboriginal rights settlements by the combined events that have

drained financial and political leeway from the system. The crisis has forced changes within the leadership of such Native organizations whereby the early leaders, the allegedly utopian "theoreticians" of a building block in a better Canadian society, have been replaced by "pragmatists." At least one millionaire Native entrepreneur has been created from the avails of the James Bay settlement, and a few wealthy Native individuals are being created by the oil wealth percolating down from multinational subcontracting and labour contracting in northern Canada. Allegations of extreme corruption and misuse of funds⁶ abound, hovering just outside of the courtroom.

One of the first acts of the highly principalled past-president of the Dene Nation when he was elected president of the country-wide Assembly of First Nations was to launch an audit into illegitimate financial practices. Indeed, the former research director of a northern Native organization has stated that one of the author's articles (Daniels 1981c) that warned of dubious consulting subcontracting and other practices that could drain the lifeblood from a resource settlement has become almost "a manual for corruption"--identify schemes to be copied rather than practices to be avoided. At the risk of prejudging this period we believe it will be remembered as one of great disappointment, bitterness and despair by the great majority of Native people who will be left behind--like the peasants of Africa and Latin America--while a few scramble into the neo-colonial elite, after abandoning the principles if not the rhetoric of the early ideals of the "de-colonization" movement.

A third wave of dedicated, young Native leaders is already coming forward from the more successful education programs and the new Native working class. For example, over one hundred Natives attended the Native socialist coalition that recently met in Manitoba. It remains to be seen if this generation of potential leaders will be able to root themselves and to withstand the rivalry and repression that may be visited upon them when they challenge the "official" Native organizations. The Canadian Native movement has had its share of violent or unexplained deaths (the Ile-à-la-Crosse school dispute, the

disappearance of Metis leader Jim Brady)⁷ and it is not inconceivable that Canada will have its Walter Rodney⁸ amongst those who dare to step outside the official movement.

Doubtless there are those who will accuse us of arguing from international generalizations to Canadian particulars. To this we plead guilty but do not retract what can be learned from such generalizations. The salient feature of global capitalism in this period is that it is not incorporating into its higher ranks the great majority of peasants and hunter-gatherers whom it is expropriating and displacing by the growth of multinational latifundia, inedible cash-crop plantations, energy megaprojects and free-trade zones. Singapore and Hong Kong are the exceptions in a world filled with shantytowns and favellas full of people displaced from the land. Why should Canada be such an exception in this regard, as Regina and Kenora swell with Native populations living on "transfer payments"? We are not Europe in 1750 awaiting an industrial revolution to employ the peasants, and the promise of the great computer revolution seems to be for far less rather than more employment. So considering the above global and national factors, the liberal agenda for economic assimilation and upward mobility for the bulk of Canadian Native people seems doomed to slim and exceptional successes. One wishes this were not so, since the forces for broader social reexamination are very weak at this time, but our wishes cannot escape the constraints of the period.

If the liberal agenda is improbable, then what is probable? Because of the high place of Canada in the world economic system, its high ratio of resources to population, and the still substantial surplus that can be taxed out of the middle classes, it is not likely that the welfare state will collapse completely, or that Canadian Native peoples will have visited upon them the kind of genocidal "solutions" unleashed on their kin in Guatemala and El Salvador.

However, political and economic structures rather similar to those of the Bantustans or homelands of South Africa seem to be growing up in the pursuit of Indian self-government.

Canadian scholars have recognized certain legal and demographic parallels between Canadian reserves and South African homelands (the Indian Act and the Pass Laws, the lack of land base etc.). What we see as new developments, however, are the increasingly negative aspects of "indirect rule" through the state funded chieftanships in both South Africa and Canada. These include the abandonment of some of the best features of liberal democracy in the name of that very democracy, or of pluralism. For example, federal and provincial Human Rights Commissions have been cautious to a fault in avoiding the application of their jurisdictions in Native communities where there are many examples of religious, kinship, gender and moral discrimination in the hiring of teachers, treatment of band employees or in economic programs.

Indian self-government is cited as the justification to abandon tenure for teachers, making the classroom in some cases subject to the whims of the band council since teachers can suffer instant dismissal. The author's ten year press file on Native labour relations contains countless examples of anti-labour, anti-union practices, including occupational health issues, all justified under the aegis of nationalism, the claim that Indians don't exploit, or that labour organizations and conflict are "un-Indian." We are hard pressed to think of positive examples in this field. Some of the first legal battles over Aboriginal rights have been by Indian and Metis organizations trying to exempt themselves from the Canadian labour code. Recent cases have revolved around the rights of Indian reserves to avoid provincial legislation over bingoes and gaming houses, as though the local Native entrepreneurs were attempting to lay the foundations for a Canadian Sun City, a Swaziland pleasure resort for Canadians subject to more puritanical legislation.

Lest one think that these tendencies are random flashes, they all came together at the Native Business Summit in Toronto at the end of June, 1986. There, the leading chiefs and entrepreneurs of the mainstream Native movement made their agenda quite clear. Lacking the necessary capital and

managerial skills to develop their natural resources (and many reserves lacking even natural resources) the leadership saw that they had two main assets to market themselves into partnerships with the multinationals: inexpensive labour and the legal and political means to make sure that it remains inexpensive. Thus, because labour by Indians on reserves (and in some cases by Indians off reserves employed by an Indian industry) are not subject to federal and provincial income taxes, Indians can be apparently paid less by the multi-nationals and still leave a relatively high "take home" wage. This formula could be expanded if deductions for the social programs such as Canada pension, unemployment insurance, and workman's compensation, were dropped. Further savings of course could be made by ensuring non-union labour, and that issues of occupational health and safety and environmental protection were skirted. In short, the "red capitalists" have opted for the free trade zones of South East Asia and other parts of the Third World. Time will tell whether this model will also include the dreadful social and economic conditions that tend to appear in those free trade zones, or whether Canada will somehow be an exception to these tendencies. The devastating political and economic effects of such free trade zones on the rest of the Canadian labour force would create ripples that could whip up into a real storm, unleashing not only intelligent, multiracial, pro-labour responses but also demagogic racist reactions. It would indeed be tragic to see the political gains of liberal democracy reversed by the kernels of backwardness contained in the economics of the "pure" liberalism of free trade zones, all allowed by "liberal" exemptions from the nation's labour codes and other ordinances in the name of multi-cultural pluralism. Is it ipso facto outlandish to imagine, therefore, a Canada with an Anglo ruling class, a Euro-Canadian middle class and the superior section of the working class with some non-Whites in it, and a largely Third World immigrant and Indian-Metis representation in the lower reaches of the working class, many of the latter working in the superexploitation of the new free trade zones set up for Native self-government? We should note

rather darkly that the United States prison system, in the name of privatization of the state sector, has put its largely black and Hispanic prison population to work for its keep punching computer cards, making satellite dishes for television, computer disk drives and mail sorting machines (Berch, 1985). Is it so unthinkable that Canada could not seek to "solve" its high Native prison incarceration problem with similar measures in the holy war against the deficit?

A third scenario involves thinking the unthinkable. Even though it is not likely in the immediate future, the descent of a civilized country into barbarism is not without precedent in this century. Native Canadians and some Third World immigrants would be amongst the first victims of such a descent. A further deterioration in world economic conditions could bring about exacerbation of the tensions mentioned in scenario two, and a rupture to the social contract of the multicultural welfare state. The avowed racists who have been chipping away at the liberal consensus for some years could find a wider audience. The collapse of the left, which now seems obsessed with moral campaigns against pornography and prostitution, and the absence of a liberal agenda for full employment and economic growth, would make the task of the right easier. Finally there is a great danger in the ambivalent attitude of some Native leaders who refuse to commit their political energies to bring their people substantially into the working class, and who prefer instead to concentrate on resource royalties, small business partnerships with the multinationals and other middle class attempts to avoid entering the working class. For example, at the recent "Working Together" conference of business, government and Native organizations in Regina, some leaders even opposed affirmative action for the hiring of Natives in mainstream "White" industries, demanding instead the creation of Native businesses that would presumably solve Native unemployment. This vacillation, plus the objective difficulties of incorporating Natives who are not fishermen or trappers into the workforce, could finally unleash a full racist campaign. This would range from the final attack on the welfare state—"Those

who do not work, neither shall they eat"--to outright genocide --"Those who will not work, neither shall they live." This ambivalence to entering the working class, which has been discussed elsewhere in this essay, is one that deserves much further investigation given the extreme dangers implicit in such a stance.

In concluding let us state that the various scenarios that we have outlined for an unfolding of Canada's Aboriginal rights issues are not mere objects of chance like the throw of dice. The range of possibilities--from co-operative commonwealth to genocide--depends entirely on the balance of class forces in this country and abroad. Currently those forces appear far stronger on the right than do the forces for progress. We can help tip the balance in favour of humanity by honestly acknowledging the neo-colonial nature of the current situation facing Canadian Native peoples. Only then will we be able to seek a way out for the tens of thousands of ordinary Native people who wait on the sidelines while lawyers, businessmen and constitutional experts decide their fate.

NOTES

1

It is worth noting that a recent community-based study in the Dene Nation shows an overwhelming willingness of the Dene to take part in wage labour. See the Dene Gondie Study: Dene Perceptions of the Impacts of the Norman Wells Project, Dene Nation Library, P.O. Box 2338, Yellowknife, N.W.T., X1A 2R9, April 1986.

2

Jim Brady was a Native socialist who was active in Saskatchewan from the early days of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to the 1960s. His mysterious disappearance has not been explained even today. His life is documented in Murray Dobin's biography One and a Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981. Patsy Fineday was a very bright young Native woman who was active in the 1960s in the early radical period of the Native movement. She became disaffected with the official leaders and retreated to work at the local level. She died in a car accident typical of the many meaningless deaths that are still so much a part of reserve life. Jonas Favel was a much loved man with a great joy in life and a wry sense of humour. He was a local leader of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan (later the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan) in Ile-a-la-Crosse at the time that local progressives were trying to get the first Native locally controlled school board in Northern Saskatchewan in the early 1970s. He came under extreme pressure from the Church-Bay-RCMP axis which ran the community, and several witnesses report that the local priest actually prayed for harm to come to him and other "enemies" of the church. In the prime of life and health he was struck down in an alcohol-related

incident. To his friends it is entirely clear that he was persecuted to death, a casualty in the struggle to bring democracy and dignity to his people.

3

See Cardinal, 1977. For a further analysis of this phenomenon see Fanon, 1963, especially the chapter entitled "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness."

4

For a further analysis of this important problem see Kenyatta, 1983. In Canada the split between Canadian White middle-class feminists on the one hand and Canadian Third World and Native women on the other has become very wide. For example, at the briefing conference in Ottawa for the International Women's Conference in Nairobi, 1986, the two tendencies broke into separate and often hostile caucuses.

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See, amongst others, the United Church Observer, their monthly magazine, and G. Baum.

6

See the Canadian Press stories on the Northwest Territories settlements, Regina Leader Post, July 28, 1986: "Berger Report - Ten Years Later," "Decade has Seen Many Changes in the North" and "Progress Being Made in Settlement of Land Claims."

7

A relative of the progressive camp was stabbed to death by the status quo camp. Jonas Favel died from this struggle as well, as discussed in footnote 2 above. Many Native people still feel foul play was involved in Jim Brady's disappearance.

8

Walter Rodney was a brilliant young Guyanese activist and intellectual who wrote How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974). After the formal independence of the British Caribbean islands he became the conscience of their nominally socialist heads of state. He dogged them for their many compromises with imperialism, their privileges, neglect of the poor, and the use of ethnic divisions in party politics. He was assassinated for pointing out these many uncomfortable truths.

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