



1986

Woodworkers support Haida

Diamond, Sara

Suggested citation:

Diamond, Sara (1986) Woodworkers support Haida. Fuse Magazine, 4 (5). pp. 11-12. ISSN 0838-603X Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/1878/>

Open Research is a publicly accessible, curated repository for the preservation and dissemination of scholarly and creative output of the OCAD University community. Material in Open Research is open access and made available via the consent of the author and/or rights holder on a non-exclusive basis.

The OCAD University Library is committed to accessibility as outlined in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and is working to improve accessibility of the Open Research Repository collection. If you require an accessible version of a repository item contact us at repository@ocadu.ca.

observer suggested that, while OPIRG certainly has all the resources necessary to organize conferences, it was treading on politically unfamiliar territory with the issues of pornography and prostitution and there were bound to be problems. No doubt they were concerned about alienating any of the many constituencies to whom they had hoped the conference would appeal. And it is easy to seek the appearance of fairness by trying to represent all sides, without considering who you might be oppressing in the process.

Conference literature emphasized the significance of the proposed new anti-soliciting and anti-pornography laws and yet, because they sponsored the conference for educational purposes, OPIRG felt it was "not appropriate to take a side," according to spokeswoman and conference organizer Dianne Roberts. For this reason, the conference was unable to initiate or endorse action around these issues, apart from giving participants the opportunity to sign telegrams protesting the prosecution of Pages bookstore and the imminent passage of (anti-soliciting) Bill C49.

Dianne Roberts has no doubt that the conference was an unqualified success. Feedback from the approximately 400 registrants was, on balance, "very positive." Although "everyone with a strong position on the issues" had problems with the clash-of-opposing-forces format, OPIRG "would take the same approach again [because] it was balanced and fair." According to her, the biggest achievement of the conference was "the opening of people's minds to the fact that prostitution and pornography are feminist issues."

Most people attending the conference had no idea of the treatment most local sex-trade workers felt they received. That notwithstanding, some people got a lot out of the strong points of the conference — the diversity of interesting people and material available to them, and the over-due examination of the sex trade as a whole. What remains to be seen is whether or not sex-trade workers got much out of it, especially concrete support to help them in their resistance to the new anti-soliciting laws.

Chris Bearchell

Woodworkers Support Haida

LYELL ISLAND — The ongoing confrontation between the Social Credit government and the Haida restates the fact that B.C. is "Indian land." Virtually no treaties exist between Native bands and the provincial and federal governments. The province has adamantly refused to negotiate land claims, although these are constitutionally guaranteed.

As T.V. viewers have seen, the forest companies have begun ripping trees off of the Queen Charlotte Islands, a hitherto unexploited natural environment. They threaten the self-sufficiency of Native bands who rely on salmon spawning grounds and forest resources. The shocked Haida, rightful owners of the island, were in discussions with both the B.C. Lands and the the Environment Ministers when the cabinet lifted its logging freeze and the chainsaws swung into action.

Lyell Island became the centre of the fight because it is sacred land covered by virgin forest. Haida leader, Miles Richardson, explained the crisis: "We don't want a confrontation, we've been working through the due process for one hundred years." But when Western Forest Products and their Socred supporters would not back off, the Haida



had no choice but to block logging, despite an immediate injunction against their presence on the island.

Three women elders were arrested by the RCMP, then other protestors, including NDP Federal Justice critic, Svend Robinson. Since October 30, seventy-two Haida have been charged.

While the Socreds won't intervene to negotiate, they have plenty to say about the Haida's resistance. As soon as the blockade appeared to be serious and arrests began, Attorney-General Brian Smith chastised the RCMP for only laying "mischief" charges and insisted that these be changed to contempt of court.

He then applied for an injunction that smacks of apartheid. It allows the RCMP to stop Haida before they even reach Lyell Island to ask them to promise not to block logging. Indians who refuse to take an oath can be arrested or diverted! According to Smith, police would, "work outside the area of conflict — stop Haida in fishing boats or wherever they were found." Responding to this injunction, John Dixon of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association noted that search, questioning and the interruption of innocent activities on the basis of race was against the Charter of Rights.

When the trial began, the Attorney-General lobbied for prison sentences for those convicted. The Haida were then refused the right, by Chief Justice McEachern, to provide their own defense, as they had been doing in hear-

The Dawn of the Living Wage

ings on the injunctions. The judge lectured the Haida throughout the trial, telling them to keep their land claims

"I'm not pleased to be caught between your sense of law and my sense of justice, but I cannot betray justice for law."

and their politics out of the court and bring them into meetings with the government. This was absurd, given the Socreds clear refusal to consider the issue of aboriginal rights. Michael Nicoll, one of those convicted, responded to the Chief Justice, "I'm not pleased to be caught between your sense of law and my sense of justice, but I cannot betray justice for law." In a jammed courtroom, the Haida were found guilty of contempt and given suspended five month sentences. Robinson was also convicted.

The Haida have provided a powerful symbol, both of the racism endemic to the Social Credit government and the kind of fightback necessary in B.C. At the recent B.C. Federation of Labour convention, the nine hundred delegates unanimously supported the Haida's demands. Even the International Woodworkers of America, a union that in the past has favoured logging over Native land claims, endorsed the resolution.

The Haida do not intend to abandon their fight. In a recent move, Native leaders have called for a boycott of EXPO '86. The provincial government has banked on anti-Native racism and support for their traditional tough guy stance to carry the day. It hasn't. Finally succumbing to pressures from the public, the Native movement across Canada and the Conservative government in Ottawa, the Socreds have agreed to a preliminary meeting with the Haida. The outcome is yet to be seen.

Sara Diamond

Support the Haida Fight

Send cheques to:

Council of the Haida Nation
Box 1, Rural Route No. 1
Queen Charlotte, B.C.
Canada V0T 1F0

TORONTO — In late November the Independent Artists' Union (see Fuse Vol.8, No.6) met in Toronto for its first provincial meeting. The agenda included ratification of its constitution and workshops to plan a province-wide organizing drive as well as future negotiating strategies. Eighteen months earlier, the union had existed only as a topic of tavern talk and kitchen conversation. But in subsequent months, with the back-handed help of the Ontario Censor Board and the Mulroney government's cultural cutbacks, the

furthering the general goal of artists' self-determination.

The basic premise presented in the union's constitution was that "...art production is a social and economic necessity," and thus the purpose of the Artists' Union is "...to secure a living wage and job security for all artists as well as the fundamental rights enjoyed by workers in Canada..." Essentially, the union has stated that if Canada is to have a continuing, vital and living art, then those who produce it must have the ongoing economic means to do so.



need for a union and not merely a lobbying association became even more pressing. The first local was formed in Toronto and grew rapidly in membership as it became painfully clear to many visual artists that they needed their own independent collective voice, separate from that of government-funded lobbyists. Artists felt the need to represent themselves when speaking out against state restrictions in censorship laws or on economic restrictions affecting their continued ability to survive as working artists. The constitution passed by the membership at the meeting set out the I.A.U.'s basic philosophy, fundamental goals, conditions of membership, and operating structure, and can be counted as a major step forward in

How the union will achieve these ends involves the recognition that the main economic support for the arts in Canada comes from the various levels of government. The conditions attached to individual arts grants enmeshes the artist in what is essentially an employer-employee relationship with the government, yet at the same time lacks any of the security or benefits which usually accompany such a relationship. To secure its demands, the union will have to negotiate with those governments and their appropriate public agencies.

The initial decision to form a provincial union came after the Toronto membership's discussion of some pragmatic questions. Originally the goal

Continued on page 14