

begin to force irresponsible industries to pay the total costs of their operations, there will always be victims."

As the months passed, it became obvious that the Canadian government, which funds any number of Indian athletic teams and "cultural efforts," had no intention of funding a legal/scientific effort to alleviate pollution problems caused by several of the world's multinational corporations where the victims were Indians. Finally, the Band Council formed the St. Regis - Operation Survival Fund to pay for the medical investigations which had already begun. The Native American Rights Fund also announced that it has agreed to represent the Band Council in a suit against Reynolds.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the river, in what is called by some the "American side of St. Regis," the multinationals and the U.S. federal government have not been entirely inactive. William Seneca and Maribel Printup, both Senecas who were active supporters of an aborted attempt to establish a Fisher-Price toy factory on Seneca lands in 1972 (Seneca was president of the Seneca Nation at the time,) appeared at Akwesasne to discuss a plan by Reynolds Metals and General Motors for an aluminum scrap reclamation plant to be built there. That particular development, coupled with the problems experienced by the Mohawk people living on Cornwall Island, has stirred new discussions at Akwesasne about the nature of U.S. colonialism on Indian lands.

The process of colonialism in this Indian community is readily visible. The U.S. government and New York State were instrumental in establishing an "Elective System" (read neo-colonial government) at Akwesasne several generations ago. Around 1950, the people of this community voted overwhelmingly to return to the Traditional form of government, but New York State troopers returned to impose the Elective government by force.



For most of the time since then, Akwesasne has been the recipient of what has been called "benign neglect" by sarcastic government officials. Or at least, that is the way it was until recently. During the past few years, the St. Regis Elective system has been the recipient of ever increasing grants. Today, that government employs nearly one-third of all the eligible wage earners living at Akwesasne. The process of colonization at Akwesasne is similar to that of debt peonage directed at Native people in South America, except that the Patron in this case becomes the Elective system and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Huge grants come into an area. The Indian people are hired to fill jobs. They become accustomed to those jobs, and soon enough the people must support the elective system in order to maintain the new lifestyle they have become used to. The process in both Native communities and the Third World is the same: in order to keep the grants coming, the Indian governments

SLU BOOKSTORE

Located on the St Lawrence campus, near the Park St. entrance

OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY 9am - 5pm
TUESDAY WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY 9am - 8:30pm

Cloth & Paperback Books for all ages & interests
Artist Materials!

Amateur & Professional photography supplies
LARGE Record department, Indian tapestries,
wicker, Rugs & Pottery
Come visit with our **PLANTS!**
And much more! Come see for yourself.

become essentially pawns in the federal-multinational chess game. Sometimes the multinationals want minerals and stripmining, sometimes they want water, and sometimes they simply need a place to dump their wastes. For whatever purpose, they usually need land and labor, and once established, they bring a second kind of debt-peonage, this one focussed on the use of credit available through such conveniences as your Master Charge Card.

In much the same way that the International Monetary Fund forces Third World countries into positions of dependency, the huge BIA grants force Native people into a kind of sinister economic dependence on the U.S. government. All over the country, grants are available for projects of dubious social or other value. Once the project is completed, the people who were hired for the project still require some way to make a living, so new proposals need to be submitted. The original project becomes self-perpetuating. Soon enough, it becomes clear that the purpose of the grant is not to meet some need of the communities, but, from the side of the grant proposers, the purpose is to find grant moneys to support people, and from the grantors, the purpose is to exercise some considerable control over the lives and economies of the communities. The process is extremely successful.

At Akwesasne, it is possible for an Elective system, which has no other legitimacy except the force of New York State arms and the money from the grants, to apply for and receive huge grants. The sole purpose of those grants is that they set up the community for penetration by the multinationals. At Akwesasne, the plans call for a possible St. Lawrence Seaway Port, and the construction of an aluminum scrap reclamation plant. And as a dumping ground for flouride wastes. So far.

The proof that this is the way it really is can be found through simple deduction. Although there are no moneys available for the defense of Indian land, there is lots of money available from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration for "Law enforcement" which is directed at the Indian people. And even though members of the Elective system at Akwesasne have been under investigation for misappropriation of funds, there has been no serious effort to conclude the investigation, and General Motors and Reynolds feel safe enough in this regard to move ahead with plans for major investments within Akwesasne territory. Law enforcement, in these terms, is solely directed against Indian people who might oppose multinational interests.


General Motors and Reynolds have been holding secret meetings with the Elective system. G.M. and Reynolds have already

issued letters of intent saying that they would both supply dross (a scum which forms on the surface of molten metal) and that G.M. would purchase aluminum from the facility. The two companies stand to save substantial sums of money in the venture. It would be possible for General Motors to purchase aluminum at lower costs than from other aluminum plants because of transportation costs savings, and Reynolds would realize great savings for the same reason. Reynolds stands to profit from an additional benefit of a political sort — the existence of a Reynolds plant of Mohawk land can be expected to contribute to the neutralization of efforts to combat flouride pollution of the north side of the Mohawk territory.

Employment at the proposed plant is projected at from 8 to 35 persons. Reynolds Plant Manager Temple Brown said that Reynolds is committed to the project at Akwesasne. He also said, interestingly enough, that Reynolds wasn't interested in building such a plant on its own because *the volume of metal involved wasn't worth the investment.* Money to build the plant (\$1.8 million) will probably be sought from the federal government, which explains the presence of Seneca and Printup in this scenario. The usual procedure is for tax dollars to provide the actual construction of the plant under the veil of "economic development for a poor Indian community." The plant is usually built with a grant to the Indians, and then leased to Reynolds or whatever company at very favorable terms. In this way, the Indians find themselves in some kind of debt, and the multinational company finds itself occupying a very nice facility at a very low rate of investment to itself. Who says that the federal government doesn't use tax moneys to support private industry? Who says that there is no collusion between the federal government (including the B.I.A.) and multinational industries? Who, indeed?

EDITORS NOTE: When the aluminum scrap reclamation plant came up for a vote at Akwesasne it was overwhelmingly defeated.

Srihi Chain Saws & Jonsereds Chain Saws
American Woodsplitters



Sales, parts & Service
BLACK RIVER TREE SERVICE
Cowan Rd. Canton, N.Y. 13617
phone (315) 386-8120

The Damage Close to Us

PART TWO

Flouride is a by-product of the aluminum smelting process. It causes a sickness in grazing animals which makes them weak and sluggish, and causes them to lose their teeth. It has also been identified as a cause of damage to vegetation, and is suspected of contributing to the health problems of the human populations which are exposed to it.

Health surveys show that many Indians at Akwesasne are "unquestionably suffering heavy exposure to flourides." Many suffer from abnormally high blood pressure, hypertension, bone and respiratory ailments. Over the past 20 years, more than 25 million tons of flouride has been dumped on Akwesasne. In April, Dr. Bertram Carnow and Dr. Shirley Conibear called for an immediate reduction of emissions from the Reynolds Metal Co., along with a full study of the nature and extent of damage to human health. Reynolds Metals, a multinational aluminum producer, is located 1,000 feet from the Akwesasne Territory.

Lawrence Francis, who heads the St. Regis Band Council (the Canadian-side elective system at Akwesasne), has been actively seeking some kind of relief for the human, animal, and vegetable life of Cornwall Island and the rest of Akwesasne. He hasn't found much cooperation from the Canadian government, which rarely helps Indians in fights with any kind of industrial entity, Canadian or American. And he has been very vocal about his frustration.

There has been a pattern of consistent violation of New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation air quality standards at sites downwind from both Reynolds and Alcoa plants located near Akwesasne in Massena, New York. People living on Cornwall Island, which is in the path of the prevailing winds blowing from the direction of Reynolds and Alcoa, have complained of "extensive" pollution from the plants. The DEC has also stated that virtually all its testings downwind from the plants and in the direction of Cornwall Island also show flouride readings which exceed the permissible standards.

This Spring, Francis fired off a letter to the Canadian government, stating, "you and your Cabinet colleagues have irresponsibly weaseled out of your obligation to protect the lives and land of Canadian Indians... We have been confronted with bureaucratic delays, broken promises, and the usual do-nothing responses characteristic of this federal government." He also charged the government with blackmail, saying that government officials have threatened to withdraw financial aid if the Band continues to consult their U.S. environment experts.

Canada has been anything but constructive in its approach to the flouride problem. Hugh Faulkner, the head of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, responded to Mr. Francis' barrage of complaints by handing the responsibility of investigating the flouride disaster to other governmental departments. He then stated that the flouride issue would be ironed out with the U.S. Secretary of State.

But the Indians were excluded from bilateral meetings set up between Canada and the U.S. in Washington. When representatives from Akwesasne explained their problem to the Human Rights Department of the Secretary of State of the U.S., the U.S. agency agreed to brief the Indians concerning the Canadian flouride presentation to the U.S. government department. Thus did the U.S. government become the sole source of information to Native people who are living on Cornwall Island concerning a Canadian government presentation. (Canada claims that Cornwall Island is a part of Ontario. The Mohawk Nation says that it is part of the Mohawk Territory at Akwesasne, and does not belong to Canada.) Actually, the whole matter was a disappointment. The State Department reported that very little time was spent meeting with Canada on the flouride issue.

"This was because the Canadian government didn't have a position on the flouride contamination," said Francis. "It's unfor-

tunate that the Canadian government fails to have the wit and wisdom to present an adequate flouride presentation to the U.S. Government," he said wryly. "It is even more unfortunate that in the meantime the Reynolds Metal Co. will continue to dump its deadly waste on our island. Our economy, our lands and health, are in jeopardy."

Recently, Mr. Francis elaborated further in a statement to a Canadian Labour Congress Conference on Jobs and the Environment:

"It is becoming obvious that Indians and Labour share a common problem — the problem of unsafe environments. We also often share the same opponents in our fight to improve environmental health. Both the Labour movement and the Indian movement have run head-long into insensitive industries, and foot-dragging governments when we've pushed for environmental cleanups... Even when the scientific evidence documenting the need for drastic action is overwhelming, the victims of environmental pollution have had to wage pitched battles before greedy corporations and irresponsible governments can be jolted out of their complacency. Governments and industries are clearly more interested in covering the tracks of their past environmental mistakes than in taking the bold steps necessary to rectify a particular tragedy."

"Simon Fobister, the chief of the mercury-plagued reserve of Grassy Narrows specifically asked me to cite the mercury crisis in Northwestern Ontario as an example of this short-sightedness and procrastination. Reed International has made a fortune in the pulp and paper industry. But Reed has also ruined the economic, social, and physical health of the communities of White Dog and Grassy Narrows. Reed has poisoned the fish of the English Wabigon River System with mercury pollution."

"... Indians and Labour have long been used as guinea pigs to see what level of poison our bodies can withstand before caving in to death and disease. Years ago, coal miners brought canaries into the mines because canaries acted as an early-warning system for the miners. The birds would suffer the effects of deadly vapours in coal mines before humans would. When a bird suddenly keeled over and died, the miners knew it was time to start scrambling for the surface... And in many ways, our (Indians) are very much like the canaries the coal miners once carried underground to test the air. Our members unwittingly serve as modern day, toxic-substance early warning systems. Governments and industries continue to conduct human experiments with Indians and Labour. They knowingly



allow our people to be exposed to certain levels of industrial contaminants. Then, when human carnage becomes so great the levels of exposure can no longer be justified, the government sets a new exposure limit for the general population."

"The St. Regis (Akwesasne) farmers have watched their cattle eat the flouride-loaded vegetation. They have watched their cattle die. The latest tests conducted by experts from Cornwall University's school of veterinarian medicine, show that practically all of the St. Regis cattle run the risk of becoming ill with flouride poisoning. Many of our farmers have been forced out of business because of Reynolds' flouride."

"Reynolds has robbed us of our natural heritage. The... Mohawks have traditionally lived in harmony with nature. We have lived off the land. We have fished, farmed, and hunted in the St. Regis area as long as man can remember. Our culture, religion, and way of life are intimately bound to the land, the animals, and the changing seasons ... Reynolds is committing cultural genocide in St. Regis."

"... In closing, let me remind you that all of us are victims when corporate giants are allowed to impose pollutants on us. And it is the victims of this nonsensical arrangement who must apply pressure to force companies to pay the total cost of doing business. Not just their labour, machinery, and manufacturing costs, but also the costs that you and I pay in terms of ruined vegetation, decreasing land values, and deteriorating health. Until we