

In Brief...

- The government of NB has decided to raise the minimum wage and not go ahead with a proposal to implement a two-tiered minimum wage. The Alward government announced that it would go ahead with increasing the provincial minimum wage rate by 50¢ on April 1st, bringing minimum wage rate to \$10/hour. “Let’s hope that the government takes a similar approach when it comes to the provincial budget in March. NB needs to stop its program of corporate welfare and reintroduce a progressive tax rate for both individuals and corporations. Otherwise the gap between the rich and the rest of NBers will continue to grow,” said Sandy Harding, First Vice-President of the NB Federation of Labour.
- The chief of Attawapiskat, a First Nations community facing a severe housing crisis, called for revenue sharing with the nearby De Beers diamond mine located near James Bay, Ontario. “Great riches are being taken from our land for the benefit of a few... Our lands have been stripped from us and yet development on our land area in timber, hydro and mining have created unlimited wealth for non-native people and their governments,” said Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence.



Fredericton airport workers have been on strike since Feb. 13th. Contrary to Airport Authority claims, the union advises the traveling public that this strike could disrupt airport operations and access to the airport. The public and all union members are asked to not cross the picket line. Still outstanding are numerous issues related to compensation and classification. The employer has yet to withdraw clawbacks the union finds unacceptable. The 24 airport workers have been without a collective agreement since May 2009.

Temporary foreign workers

(continued from page 1) ...and use false information [Ciarula Taylor, Toronto Star, July 20, 2009]. Migrant workers who are not able to get an offer of employment in Canada sometimes have no other choice but to come to the country as an undocumented worker, which is a very precarious route. Huesca notes that the route to immigration through economic need is not currently available in Canada.

Besides entering Canada as a worker, entrepreneur or student who contributes to Canadian corporate and state coffers, immigrants can enter Canada in a program that reunites them with family members with status in Canada or as political refugees. However, according to the immigrant justice group, No One is Illegal, the Canadian government is reducing family class immigration by 15 percent, which is estimated to reduce the number of spouses and children immigrating to Canada by 4,000 per year. Immigrant rights advocates blast the increasing restrictions being placed on these programs by the Harper government. They say that Canada is inhumanely closing its borders and deporting people who are seeking escape from torture and murder because of political repression in their home countries.

Huesca says that whether people are driven to migrate by the point of a gun or by their stomachs, both are legitimate reasons to be granted sanctuary in Canada.

Real bodies are not photoshopped

By AYESHA ALI

Should the promotion of anorexia through the use of websites be criminalised? This was the question at the heart of the French documentary Arresting Ana which followed the life of Sarah – an anorexic and Pro-Ana (short for pro-Anorexia) blogger. The documentary, shown at Cinema Politica Fredericton on February 10th, also depicted the attempt of passionate legislator, Valerie Boyer, to render the promotion of eating disorders illegal in France by punishing or fining magazines, blogs and websites that present extreme thinness as an ideal beauty trait.

According to the director of the 26-minute film, Lucie Schwartz, the goal of directing and producing such a documentary was to give the authors of Pro-Ana blogs a face and an opportunity to explain why they do what they do.

Arresting Ana made for some uncomfortable viewing by highlighting disturbing and potentially dangerous information available on these websites as well as the extreme isolation and need for support experienced by individuals during the early stages of anorexia. The documentary explained why those who have eating disorders may turn to an online sanctuary, away from the surveillance of people whom they know; a place where they are able to say what they are not able or ready to express to family, friends or medical professionals.

Arresting Ana did not solely focus on Pro-Ana blogs but the question of liberty and freedom of speech. The documentary provoked a discussion among the viewers at Cinema Politica as to whether or not it is plausible to legislate online content and potentially criminalise those with a psychiatric illness. One of the central themes of the group discussion was, “At what point does expressing yourself become dangerous for someone else?”

In a study of 235 female undergraduates conducted by the University of Missouri, it was discovered that participants who were exposed to a Pro-Ana website for 25 minutes (as opposed to a website on home decor and another website on fashion but with healthy body mass index models) exhibited significantly lower self esteem, lower belief in their own competence and perceived themselves as heavier. Additionally, the participants who were exposed to the Pro-Ana website reported a greater likelihood of exercising and thinking about their weight in the near future.

Clearly, the findings of this study are worrying, however, when looking at Pro-Ana websites, what struck me was that many of the images of thinness found on these sites are mainstream images of celebrities and fashion models such as Kate Moss, Nicole Richie and Mary Kate Olsen. If these particular celebrities were not familiar to us, it would be extremely difficult to discern between the “deviant” anorexic images (of unknowns) and the images of bodies that are considered “normal” in popular culture. This highlights the glaringly contradictory messages that women of all ages are receiving

about what constitutes a healthy body.

Although eating disorders are highly prevalent in society, there is still stigma and shame surrounding eating disorders, particularly when it comes to men. There are many misconceptions about eating disorders being a "girl's problem" or "self-inflicted". This can easily discourage many who struggle with eating disorders from seeking support or assistance. As a society, we need to encourage dialogue about the issue of eating disorders and educate ourselves on the misconceptions surrounding them. Only through dialogue can we even attempt to reduce the secrecy associated with eating disorders and work towards making it “safer” for individuals to reach out for the support that they need.

Servers like Yahoo and Google do shut down Pro-Ana sites, but such an approach targets the consequences and not the cause. The websites reappear elsewhere, renamed. An abolitionist approach to Pro-Ana websites seems disingenuous when much of the content on these websites is obtained from mainstream and legal media images of female celebrities. As opposed to enforcing punishments “after the event”, as we need to collectively demand proactive (not reactive) legislation that proposes a framework of media ethics which severely limits the use of digital alterations on human beings; which bans any attempts to alter the proportions of any body, be that male or female. We need to demand that our governments invest in providing free services and treatment to those with eating disorders within our province as soon as an individual is diagnosed. We should also demand that our governments invest in media literacy campaigns for children and adults to help de-construct the false beauty ideals that many of us have grown to believe are real. If we fail to act collectively, eating disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa will continue to claim more lives than any other psychiatric illness. It is estimated that 10% of individuals with Anorexia Nervosa will die within 10 years of the onset of the disorder.

Finally, it is our responsibility to not only oppose psychologically and physically damaging representations of the “perfect” male or female body, but to refuse to accept these representations for ourselves. We can do this by taking little steps such as questioning every representation of body and beauty ideals that we see. Real bodies are not photoshopped. As feminist, Hanne Blank has said, “There is no wrong way to have a body.”

If you are suffering from an eating disorder or think you know someone who is, you can call the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) at 1-866-NEDIC-20 (1-866-633-4220). NEDIC will be able to provide you with support, information and resources as well as up-to-date information on what treatment is available and where it can be accessed.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

No More Blood: The Struggle for Peace and Human Rights in Mexico. Four respected Mexican human rights defenders will visit five Canadian cities to tell their stories about their efforts to protect rights and dignity in Mexico amidst an enormous increase in threats and violence. Speakers: Vidulfo Rosales Sierra is a lawyer with Tiachinollan Human Rights Centre and works with Indigenous communities in Guerrero State; Dolores González Saravia is director of SERAPAZ that works on conflict prevention and peace building via social justice; Yolanda Moran Isais is a member of FUUNDEM, an organization formed by families whose relatives have been disappeared; Alberto Xicotencatl Carrasco is director of the Casa del Migrante shelter in Saltillo, Coahuila, recipient of last year’s prestigious Letelier Moffitt Human Rights Award for their work with migrants. In Saint John: Mon, Mar. 12, 2-3 pm at Ganong Hall 215, UNB Saint John and Mon., Mar. 12, 6:30-8:30 pm at Grand Hall (uptown), UNB Saint John. In Fredericton: Tuesday, March 13th 4:30-6:30 pm at Carleton Hall, Room 139, UNB Fredericton. Contact: Hepzibah Munoz at hmartine@unb.ca

International Women's Day Coffeehouse with Norma Herrera on Stopping Femicide in Guatemala. The special event will also include a short film presentation of Strength, Survival, Sisterhood: Power of Women in the Downtown Eastside about missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls; and a short presentation and display by the NB Silent Witness Project. Tues, Mar. 13, 7 pm. Cedar Tree Café, 418 Queen St., Fredericton. Organized by the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network. Supported by the Fredericton Chapter of the Ibero American Academy of Poetry, Fredericton Peace Coalition and UNB Women's Studies. Contact: info@frederictonpeace.org

Cinema Política's documentaries take us to places like Afghanistan, Palestine, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, indigenous territories and prisons where dehumanization and destruction wreaked by capitalism and colonialism warrants our examination, analysis and action. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays at 7pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John Street. In Sackville, films are screened at Wu Centre, Dunn Building at Mt. Allison University. Cinema Política chapters also exist in Sussex, Bathurst, Moncton, Taymouth and Saint John. Check out film schedules here: www.cinemapolitica.org



About 55,000 students marched across Quebec against tuition increases in February. A Quebec-wide student strike in 1996 lead to an almost decade-long freeze on tuition hikes in Quebec. A 2005 strike forced the Jean Charest Liberal government to reverse its plans to slash \$103 million from bursaries granted to students. Photo by Paul-Émile Auger.

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