

# SECOND WIND

An occasional column of opinion by Gateway staff

by Ron Friesen

Justin Clark may be handicapped but he is far from helpless.

By winning his court fight for independence last week, the 20 year old cerebral palsy victim from Ontario struck a blow for physically handicapped Canadians across the country.

He also called our whole attitude toward the handicapped into question.

For the record, Justin Clark has been severely disabled by cerebral palsy since infancy. Eighteen years ago, his parents placed him in the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls, Ontario, an institution for the handicapped. Recently, when Justin wanted to leave Rideau for a group home in Ottawa, his parents said no. Instead, they wanted to have him declared mentally incompetent so that a legal guardian for Justin might be appointed. As a result, Justin and his family went to court against each other. At stake was the issue of whether or not Justin had the right to control his own life.

On November 25, in a major ruling, Judge John Matheson found Justin mentally competent. Justin is now free to decide where he will go.

There are no villains in this drama. Everyone behaved with dignity and compassion. Everyone had Justin Clark's best interests at heart. But Justin wanted to decide his own best interests.

He won. But he had to go to court to do it. And that's the irony.

The most distressing thing about this case is that it should ever have gone to trial at all. Justin Clark is not mentally retarded and never was. He is physically handicapped. He has normal — some say superior — intelligence. He has all the hopes and aspirations that go with that intelligence. But he is trapped inside a dreadfully crippled body. He cannot walk, talk, feed or care for himself. He has spastic movements which he cannot control. He has all the classic symptoms of cerebral palsy, caused by brain damage during or soon after birth. As a

result, he was, at first, considered retarded and uneducable. Just as many cerebral palsy victims are.

Like Justin, severely physically handicapped Canadians face this discrimination every day. Like Justin, they, too, are often told they cannot go to school, make decisions, go where they wish. Like Justin, they live lives of quiet frustration. Unlike Justin, many who decide to choose independence never get their chance.

It's true many need constant, intensive care. It's also true many never seek the kind of self-determination Justin Clark sought. All the easier, therefore, for society, with the best motives, to decide that the severely handicapped have little or no mentality. Too often we ignore the cry of the handicapped that they are not what we see. We stop with surface impressions. And the label sticks.

The result is a national disgrace. Up to 80 percent of the handicapped in Canada are unemployed. In tough economic times, social

programs for the handicapped are often the first to go. Underfunding for institutions and group homes is commonplace. For those handicapped persons who, with courage and tenacity, succeed, many more are stymied.

While individual cases make the headlines, most handicapped persons live in obscurity. They have little political clout. They have limited influence on decision-makers. They get a few concessions such as ramps and the occasional handrail. But efforts to incorporate the handicapped into every facet of society, more often than not, go begging.

Justin Clark got his rights. He proved he was a thinking, able human being. But that proof had to be demonstrated, not in the mind of society, but in the words of a county court judge.

How long will the Justin Clarks of this country have to resort to extraordinary means to get those rights that are automatically theirs by birth?

## Pros tell us no cure, nuclear - caused sickness

MONTREAL (CUP)—Nuclear war may be today's number one health threat and there are no remedies for its medical consequences.

That was one of the observations several hundred Montreal-area health professionals studied at a recent conference on the medical consequences of nuclear war held at McGill University.

A nuclear holocaust could be "the final epidemic", according to the Health Professionals for Nuclear Responsibility (HPNR), the local chapter of the international Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Dr. Donald Bates, a McGill University medical professor warned that Canadians should not feel immune to nuclear war. While Canada does not possess nuclear weapons that would invite a first-strike attack, there are at least four American nuclear silos near Canada, he said.

The fallout from an attack on these silos would seriously threaten Canada, he said.

Furthermore, the Canadian population and military centres would come under attack because Canada is an important supplier of raw

materials, arms and energy to the U.S. and because of our membership in NORAD and NATO, said Bates.

Dr. Michel Trudel, a local pathologist, said 80 per cent of Montreal's medical facilities and 60 per cent of the province's doctors would be destroyed if a one-megaton bomb, relatively small compared to most modern nuclear warheads, was dropped on the city.

About 80,000 of Montreal's two million population would be killed immediately, while several thousand others would be pressure-cooked in their shelters by raging firestorms, said Trudel.

Many more of the immediate survivors would die within weeks from radiation poisoning, he added.

It has been estimated that survivors of the first weeks following a nuclear war would experience uncontrollable epidemics such as cholera and the plague, according to Boston physician Dr. Jennifer Leaning. This would result in an annual death rate of up to 40 per cent for the first several post-war years, she said.

Millions of human corpses would serve as a breeding ground for bacteria

from the contaminated environments and alterations in the ozone layer.

Soviet participant Dr. Galina Savelyeva, a member of the Soviet Academy of Medicine and Science, said the academy has also issued a warning about the consequences of and disease-fighting white blood cells

would be depleted, said Leaning. Malnutrition and famine would result as most food will be irradiated and inedible.

The long-term effects of direct irradiation by the blasts would be compounded by continued irradiation nuclear war to the Soviet people.

American and Soviet physicians agree that there is no treatment for the death and illness caused by nuclear war, said Savelyeva.

Nuclear disarmament as prevention is the only approach to this illness, said Dr. Bates.

## Greenhouse dies off

by Gilbert Bouchard

Surrounded by CAB, Physics, and Geography, the Old Greenhouse slowly fades into history.

Run by the Faculty of Agriculture, administered by plant science and used by the folks at plant science, entomology, soil science and forest science, the Old Greenhouse is slowly going the way of the Dodo.

The plant science people are moving out to a new greenhouse just north of SUB in the Agriculture Forestry building, (connected to SUB by a pedway on the third floor).

Bruce Alexander, horticulturist in charge of the building, furnished a few miscellaneous details about the administration of this quarter-century

old building. "The building is 15,000 square feet large, and the majority of the space is for research. The rest is for class material for the horticulture students."

Research projects include germinations in cold temperatures, cross pollinations, and entomology experiments.

As soon as the new greenhouse becomes fully operational, the Old Greenhouse will be completely occupied by geology students. The Geology building is chronically overcrowded. Rumor has it that a new Geology building will be built on the site, but that is probably a few years down the line.

## Please help yourself

TORONTO (CUP)—Cutbacks at the University of Toronto have forced a class of 130 political science students to hold their own official tutorials.

The students in Modern Political Thought should have a tutorial and an opportunity for discussion, said Bennet Kovrig, political science department chair, but in "the political science department, the resources are not adequate to the demand."

Gad Horowitz, who teaches the course, said it had tutorials in all sections last year as in the past. The

course is a prerequisite for a "specialist" degree in political science.

Students in the course petitioned for a tutorial through the political economics course union but were told by the undergraduate secretary funds were unavailable. As an alternative, the secretary suggested the professor teach the tutorial in his spare time.

Horowitz said he might have done this anyway but protested that "the more we compensate for the lack of tutorials, the less likely we are to get them."

## Chair thieves nabbed after sneaking out of RATT quietly

by Jens Andersen

Campus Security personnel nabbed three very drunk thieves by Stadium Carpark, at about 12:45 a.m. Wednesday morning.

The three were trying, unsuccessfully, to stuff themselves and

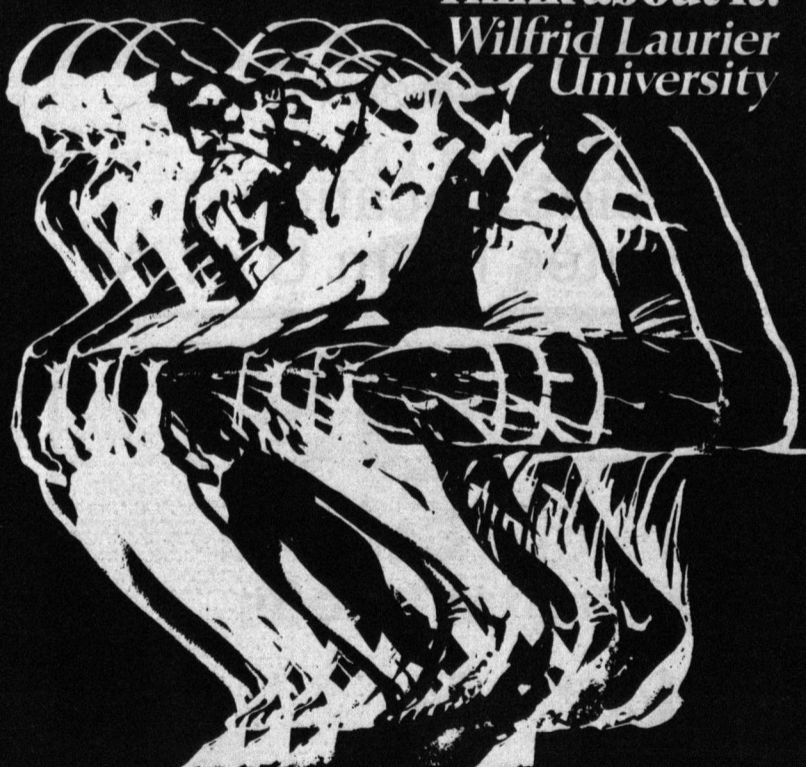
three stolen chairs into a small Toyota when they were caught. The chairs had been taken from the Room At the Top.

Apparently only one of the three was a student. The Students' Union is considering laying charges.

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