

# Marijuana laws still cost

(CUP)—There are 7,000 people languishing in Canadian prisons for simple possession of marijuana. They are victims caught in a twilight zone between public acceptance and the time it takes for politicians to codify that acceptance into law.

More Canadian citizens are arrested per capita for possession than in any other country in the world.

Ted Seifred is a Vancouver lawyer and, as a coordinator for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), is fighting what he feels are bizarre narcotics laws. Seifred says it is an "absurdity" that 90 per cent of all convictions under the Narcotics Control Act, which includes possession of heroin, morphine and LSD, are for simple marijuana possession.

Half of the 7,000 people in jail for possession are serving

"time in default", meaning they have been arrested after having forgotten to pay a fine.

"In the case of time in default," Seifred says, "the judge didn't really mean for them to go to jail, but because they don't have any money they wind up serving time for reefer. This is absolutely bizarre."

NORML claims that decriminalization will save money because it says more than \$400 million has been spent in the past 10 years in Canada to enforce possession laws. The American figure is \$600 million annually.

Attempts to decriminalize marijuana, an action endorsed by the Le Dain commission, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Bar Association, have been met only with scattered promises and bureaucratic delays from federal Liberal governments.

Seifred says decriminaliza-

tion is being delayed because only about 15 per cent of Canadians smoke marijuana.



"On the other hand you're dealing with a lot of young people in Canada; you're talking about 2 to 3 million people. The government agrees these people shouldn't be going to jail, they agree

they shouldn't be getting criminal records, they say they're not arguing with us.

Pauline Jewett (NDP—New Westminister-Coquitlam) calls the Liberals' refusals to amend the Criminal Code a "betrayal of what they earlier said they would do."

NDP justice critic Svend Robinson is even more pessimistic. He says decriminalization is "a long time coming." Seifred says that "ever since the Le Dain commission came out in 1972 calling for decriminalization, they've been saying, 'we're going to do something about it really soon.'" But the fact remains that they still aren't doing anything.

In 1969, possession was broken into indictment and summary conviction. Indictment was still seven years, while summary conviction was a \$1,000 fine or imprisonment for six months, or both, for a

Today, partly due to marijuana's increasing acceptance, a person charged with possession receives a fine between \$100 and \$250. Yet they still receive a criminal record.

Another problem working against decriminalization, says Seifred, is the presence of fundamentalist religious and other lobby groups. "The mail after the Liberal's comments on decriminalization has been strongly against it," he says.

Fears that decriminalization will encourage the use of marijuana have been largely disproved in the U.S., where 11 states have decriminalized possession.

Says Seifred, "from a cynical point of view you can almost say Canada is going to change its drug laws after the States does. When the States acts federally, then we'll follow in their footsteps. But unfortunately, not until then."

# Council nominations

by Paul Creelman

Nominations for the presidential team of president and vice-president of the Student Union have opened as of January 26, according to the chief electoral officer Umesh Jain. The nomination period ends on February 20th at 5:00 p.m. Nominations for faculty representatives opens February 9th and closes February 20th.

Although the date of the council elections have tentatively been set for March 11, Jeff Champion, the present vice-president, has suggested that they be held on both the

11th and 12th. Two day elections are used on other campuses in order to ensure better voter turnout.

The president and vice-presidential positions are the top executive positions in the student council, and bears the load of administration of the Student Union. The president, being the chief executive officer of the Student Union, sits on the Board of Governors, the Ombudsman's selection committee and the Senate of Dalhousie as a student representative. Along with the vice-president, the president

also represents the Dal student body at the National Union of Students (NUS) meetings and the Students Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) meetings.

The positions for faculty representatives and members at large are liaison positions between Council and the societies, according to Umesh Jain.

"It is the faculty representatives job to attend the Council meetings and to be a representative member of their society on any particular policy question that will come up",

says Jain. "For instance in the science society we have written into the constitution a requirement that the science reps come back to the society to find out what the consensus is before they vote."

In addition to the representatives primary role as the grassroots liaison, Jain adds that councillors have a unique opportunity to get involved in committees and organizing meetings that affect students on campus.

For instance, Jain points out, if you were concerned about the issue of rape or

security on campus, then you could sit on the security meetings as a student representative.

The remaining positions to be elected are student representatives to sit on the Senate and Board of Governors of Dalhousie. These positions are usually filled by experienced councillors who have to grasp of the issue being discussed on the two bodies. (The Senate is a university body which deals with all academic matters, while the Board of Governors deals with a wider range of problems ranging from financial decisions to management of Dalhousie as a whole.) Qualifications for these positions are a knowledge of the issues the BOC are discussing and the candidate, should be articulate and have a real interest in administrative policy.

Umesh Jain is pessimistic about the turnout for election: this year.

"Last year, for instance, we only had 17.5% of the student body vote. This is really bad, mean really, really poor. So what's the reason for this? Well there's two possibilities. Either no one knew, or no one cared, I think that there's a good possibility that no one knew the elections were on."

Jain says that even though posters are printed and distributed, the only way to ensure that the students are informed about the elections is for the councillors and societies to distribute the information to the students.

He plans to emphasize the publicizing of student elections this year.

Jain also adds that anyone interested in tending ballot boxes for \$3.00 per hour during election day should contact him in the science society office on the fourth floor of the SUB.

# Dalplex needs defining

by Susan Hayes

Defining the role of Dalplex was the major problem seen by the Presidential Advisory Committee on Dalplex Operations which met on Saturday for an open forum to appraise the complex.

Dave Ness, building manager of Dalplex, said there is a need to define the function at a facility, whether Dalplex is a community facility or a university facility. He said a lot of problems could be solved once the role is defined.

On Saturday morning, January 24th, most of the input was from Dalplex community members. Committee member Ken Bellemare said he saw the forum as a good opportunity for the community members to air their complaints. Only one student showed up to voice his complaints. Bellemare said the students have other avenues to go to, whereas the community members do not. The students have their student representatives on the Committee, Kevin Feindel and Marie Gilkinson.

One of the major problems is seen to be that of the clean-

liness of the building. The building is clean at seven o'clock in the morning, but by noon, it's filthy again. Dave Ness says the cleaning is acceptable, but never great. He said the problem is with Modern Building Cleaners. They clean from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., in which time they are under no control. Ness said when the building first opened, there was a supervisor assigned to Dalplex, but once he left, the quality went down.

Community members said they would like to have the complex open on Saturday and Sunday nights, or if not both, then one of the nights. They realized the problem in getting staff for these extra nights. Ted Wickwire said members may have to be prepared to pay for these extra hours.

Another major problem was seen as the closing of the field house when varsity games were being held and there being no way for a member to find this out until they had arrived at Dalplex. Ken Bellemare said things are being

done to alleviate these problems. They were going to try keeping one part of the field-house open and the other half closed during varsity games. Display cases and bulletin boards are going to be put up with schedules of events.

Parking was another complaint. Presently, in order to obtain a visitor pass to park at Dalplex, you must go to the physical plant. Bellemare said they were trying to arrange to have tickets sold right in the Dalplex parking lot by the Security.

One member complained about the danger in the slippery areas around the pool. Also the amount of water on the stairs leading down to the pool, made it easy to fall. Bellemare said there was a rough surface to be put on the stairs in the design, but it hadn't been done.

Ventilation in the running track was bad according to one law student. He said there was a more serious problem with the monitoring of the weight room. Although there is a monitor in the equipment

room, he said no one watches it. If someone gets a serious injury, there is no emergency button to call someone to the weight room.

Other problems included the positioning of hair dryers in relation to small children. Bellemare said chairs would be placed in the locker rooms to tackle this problem. The open areas of the field house posed problems with balls coming from other areas. Partitions are going to be set up as a solution to this problem, Bellemare said.

In all, members said Dalplex is working, giving members what they want. Positive comments by the contributors were in agreement that the staff was both congenial and helpful. The clothing service was also seen to be good.

There is going to be a type of suggestion box set up for future comments on Dalplex. The Presidential Advisory Committee on Dalplex Operations report should be out in a month with a full list of recommendations for improvement.