

Unresolved questions

Foetus is a "legislative void"

by Dan Falk

Neural tissue from aborted foetuses may be of great value as a potential cure for neurological disorders, including Parkinson's disease, says Dalhousie Student Union President Dave Shannon.

At a lecture to graduate students in the Tupper Medical Building last Thursday, Shannon, a third-year law student, presented a strong argument in favour of research into such transplants.

Shannon stressed the "substantial human good that these experiments appear to be leading towards," specifically "the amelioration or cure of conditions associated with neurological disorders."

Shannon is aware of the objections people raise regarding the issue. Many dismiss it as unethical. Some have suggested that using foetal tissue for transplants would encourage women to have abortions.

Shannon said the former health minister, Jake Epp, has called experiments involving foetal tissue "immoral" and "unethical." The experiments are currently on hold within Canada, but are being carried out in other

countries.

The use of foetal tissue in transplants is clearly linked to the abortion issue. The tissue used would generally come from foetuses aborted after eight to 12 weeks.

Shannon described the current state of Canadian law regarding the foetus as a "legislative void." New, more explicit legislation is needed, he said. One of the critical unresolved questions is whether a foetus has, or should have, legal rights.

Consumer organizations must become better organized, he said. Groups such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association and the Parkinson's Society must "come to a more articulate address of their position."

Shannon concluded his presentation with a set of suggestions for making foetal neural tissue transplants acceptable. Any transplant of foetal tissue should require the consent of the mother, a doctor, and a neutral third party, he said. Any coercion of the mother to have an abortion would be strictly disallowed. And the names of those involved in any transplant procedure, especially the mother and father, would be kept strictly confidential.



photo: Rochell Owen

Dave Shannon and Rob MacLeod tackle a tough moral issue

And the public must be made aware of the facts concerning the issue, he said, so they can make reasoned decisions.

"An eight to 12 week old foetus may deserve profound respect," Shannon said, "but as the foetus

would be discarded [in the case of an abortion] and persons seriously debilitated may receive direct benefit from surgical intervention, an informed public should support legislation that allows these procedures."

Other methods of treatment of neurological disorders should also be pursued, Shannon said.

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Do it now! Question authority

by Peter N. Ross

The Dalhousie Public Interest Research Group organizational club hosted its first public forum on Monday, with a presentation by Robert Upshaw, executive director of the Black Educators Association.

Upshaw presented the film, *Myself, Yourself* and gave a lively half hour speech on the structure of racism in the public school environment and on progress being made towards changing it.

In his speech Upshaw presented simple tokens of racism like gift cards and wedding cake decorations, with all white characters.

He drew a larger analogy to the problem of teaching racial equality without proper support materials. Neither the white majority nor any of the minority groups have adequate materials to sensitize them to social contributions by non-Europeans.

Upshaw said the problems are compounded by well-intentioned

people who are simply insensitive to the impact of their socialization. Even this reporter was caught (and thankfully forgiven) for being his unwitting racist self.

In an era poised for change, Upshaw said, we are all still fighting our parents' battles: racism, sexism, intolerance and fear of strangers. In the same way Catholics and Protestants accept each other, it is high time for all of us to enjoy and celebrate our differences rather than fearing and despising them.

For the fledgling Dal PIRG perhaps there is a lesson too. Modelled after the successful PIRGs in Central and Western Canada, Dal PIRG is hoping to become a non-aligned 'public conscience' that works to disseminate information normally held in confidence by corporations and government.

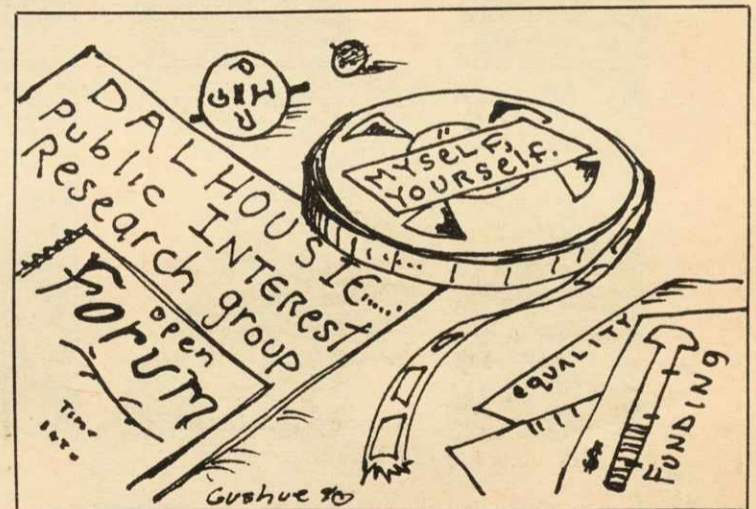
With their motto, "Question authority," the PIRG hopes to make business, bureaucracy and politics more accountable for their decisions. Like Upshaw,

they hope to address problems directly, to investigate and appreciate options, and in the end, negotiate for a better deal. For the PIRG as well as Upshaw, the means are the ends.

Later this semester, Dal PIRG will be requesting special funding from the students in a student union referendum. If they get approval, each student will pay \$4 per year to the maintenance of an office and one full-time employee. The volunteer Dal PIRG Organizational Club is now in the process of drawing up a constitution and petitioning the student body for support.

Consisting largely of law students, the Organizational Club is anxious to draw students from other faculties into their fold. Students of environmental science, social science and journalism would find the PIRG to be a gold mine of information, resources and contacts.

Dal PIRG has meetings every Tuesday evening at 7 pm in SUB Rm. 304. Everyone is welcome.



Our apologies

In an article in this newspaper on January 11 we reported comments made by Paul Shields of CKDU in relation to the dismissal of Steven Balyi from his position with CKDU. The comments attributed to Shields are in no way the opinion of this newspaper and we regret including these comments in the article. While we do not wish to pass comment on the veracity of the statements made by Mr. Shields, we do wish to apologize to Mr. Balyi for any embarrassment caused to him by this article.