

EDITORIAL

Weeds of wisdom

In the immortal words of Peter Tosh, "don't just criticize it, you've got to legalize it."

Tosh was referring to the private use of marijuana. And while the RCMP deem it illegal to promote the use of narcotics, nobody ever said anything about pushing for legal reform.

All scientific evidence points to the fact that

marijuana is a simple mood-modifier and not an addictive drug.

Lumping it into the same category as hard drugs like heroin and cocaine is just wrong.

Classifying marijuana with these drugs ignores the principle of equality before the law.

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Marijuana has been found useful in treating AIDS and cancer patients, glaucoma, epilepsy, asthma and a host of other health problems.

Doctors have found it has non-addictive painkilling properties that make it far superior to morphine based drugs. It shouldn't be bound-up in red tape where scientists can't get at it.

Not only that, but hemp could solve a lot of other problems too.

A recent *Harrowsmith* feature proved that the fibre and pulp from the plant can be turned into paper more cheaply and effectively than by using wood. This could ease the intense pressure on the logging industry to cut down the world's forests.

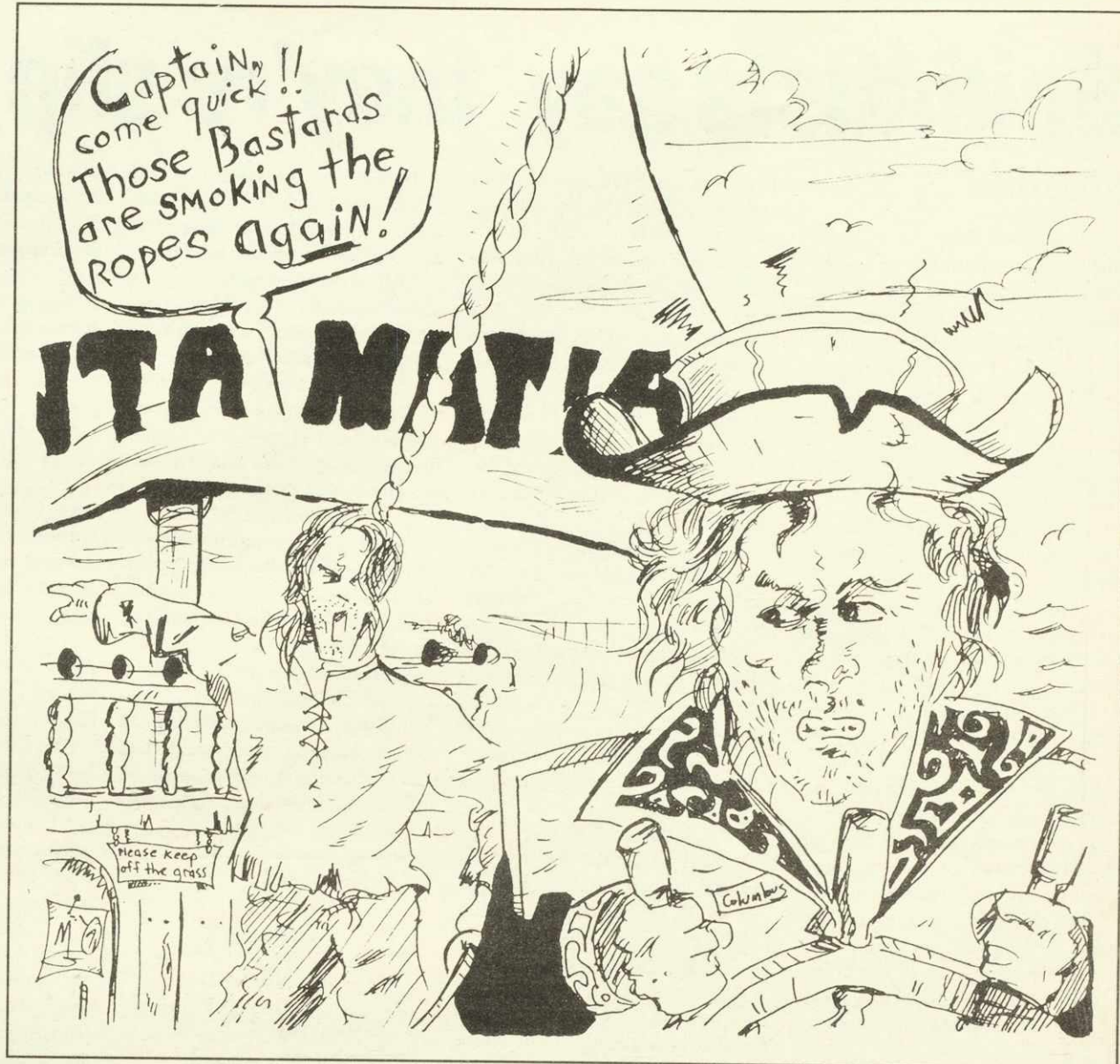
People are guaranteed freedom of conscience in the constitution.

This is a democracy in which we should be able to make moral decisions for ourselves.

Not to mention the fact that alcohol and cigarettes are far more harmful to people's health than marijuana. If you're going to ban marijuana, you might as well eliminate the grey areas and ban alcohol too.

People have the right to lead their own lives. It's only because we've been socialized to accept some drugs and to spurn others that we have these disparities in the law.

Columbus never would have discovered America if it weren't for the legal use of marijuana. Both the sails and ropes on all his ships were made from hemp. He wouldn't have got very far without them!



OPINION

Opinions expressed in **The Gazette** are not necessarily those of the staff or editorial collective of the paper. We welcome opinion pieces; they should be typed, double-spaced and no longer than 500 words.

Fundamental problems in university structure

After reading the *MacLean's* article on post-secondary education in Canada (ranking Dalhousie University ninth out of 46) and Stuart Smith's conclusion that Canada's universities are "fundamentally healthy and serving the country well," I feel compelled to inform the general public about the reality of post-secondary education at Dalhousie, with special reference to the Biology Department. Inadequate funding from both the federal and provincial have left Dalhousie University with no alternative but to raise tuition (now among the highest in the country) and reduce expenditures. Although the university has provided infrastructure (money, equipment, facilities) to support leading edge and innovative research (Gene Probe Lab, Ocean Production Enhancement Network), it has reduced faculty and departmental budgets. To make matters worse, the administration has been unable or unwilling to ensure that faculty reductions are proportionate, and

faculty members in all departments are sufficient to provide quality undergraduate and graduate programs.

In the Biology department faculty numbers have been reduced from 39 to 28 (39 per cent) since 1987, while the number of graduate students and biology majors have increased by 12 per cent. Predictably, this discrepancy has undermined the ability of the Biology Department to offer an undergraduate curriculum of sufficient diversity and content. This trend has also been evident in the graduate program where courses in certain disciplines are sporadic or non-existent, and the amount of supervision given by faculty members is continually compromised by increased commitments to undergraduate teaching or administrative duties. To alleviate the difficulties concordant with the loss of faculty members, the administration has provided limited monies to hire sessional professors and instruc-

tors, or has further reduced essential course offerings. Full professors are being replaced with \$2500 a term sessional appointees many of whom are graduate students (the only ones who can be found to work for this pittance). Although partial replacement alleviates some of the problems directly related to undergraduate teaching, sessional appointees are of a limited function. Sessional appointees do not contribute to the graduate curriculum and rarely participate in committee, administrative or extracurricular functions. This leaves the remaining faculty members with an unmanageable burden, which impacts on the undergraduate program, the graduate program and the departments research capability. Concomitant with the indisputable reduction in the capacity of the Biology Department to function adequately, is a perceived degradation of the quality of the academic environment that this department

provides. In turn, this makes it exceedingly difficult for the department to keep existing faculty and to attract new faculty members with superior teaching and research credentials. In the last year alone five respected members of the department have resigned, and an additional two faculty members opted for early retirement.

Although I cannot make direct comments regarding the specific conditions in other departments or faculties within the university, they are surely experiencing many of these same difficulties.

It is time that the public (especially students) became outraged about the state of our post-secondary institutions (including Dalhousie) and put real pressure on the federal and provincial governments to actually renew their commitment. It is also time that universities made hard decisions about cutting programs, so that they can at least offer a quality education in the programs that they still provide.

Kurt Gamberl

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