



editorial

No halfway measures in the smoking debate

The recent attack on smoking in the Student Union Building has left smokers freezing cold, teary eyed, and nostalgic for that time, only days ago, when smoking was permitted indoors. And some smokers, in their haste to do something about protesting this policy, are getting greedy. Never mind that they want to be able to smoke everywhere in the SUB, what about inside buildings on the rest of campus?

The question was raised the other night at a gathering of Gazette staff members: Was there ever smoking in classrooms?

We all laughed. Yeah, right. Smoking in classrooms. Can you imagine?

And then, coincidentally, while looking for information on something else, one of our staff members came across an article in the September 23, 1976 issue of the Dalhousie Gazette entitled: *In class smoking, eating -out.*

Valerie Mansour reported that the Dalhousie President, Henry Hicks, made an announcement in a letter which he wrote early in September of that year that smoking, drinking, and eating were no longer permitted in Dalhousie classrooms.

The reasoning was that the university would be able to save money in reduced ventilation and cleaning costs.

Smoking and drinking and eating all in the same category and with nary a mention of health risks or environmental illnesses — oh, how times have changed.

Tobacco is a hot topic these days. Every time you take in a little bit of media, you see someone talking about cigarettes. Even Rick Mercer took a stab at it on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* this past week.

It seems strange, that at the same time that the statistics show that smoking seems to have stabilized at a number somewhere close to 30% of the Canadian population, the people in charge appear to be intent on getting rid of it entirely.

Or are they?

The efforts to abolish smoking seem to be focused in a rather odd way, if you think about it

OK, so what's being done? There has obviously been a reduction in the places you can smoke.

Those few places that are covered by a roof are off-limits; however, the rest of the world still seems to be up for grabs.

I find the newest project to send underage kids into stores to buy cigarettes to catch those folks who are selling tobacco to minors to be an amusing one. "OK kids, here's some cash...go buy the government a pack of cigarettes, willya?"

And then there are those big, ugly, scary warnings on cigarette packs. "Smoking can kill you" being the most requested in the collectable designer line.

Is any of this curbing that which seems to be the problem — the fact that people are still starting to smoke?

When I was in high school in Ontario, cigarette prices were wandering their way up into the \$7 range. Now THAT was an effective way to get people to stop smoking.

Everyone I knew was quitting then. When your allowance is only \$20 a week, \$7 a pack is a little rich for that pack-a-day smoker.

Then the government realized that smuggling was increasing, and that they were losing money from taxes. So the prices dropped, and people started smoking again.

A friend of mine, who had al-

most quit when the prices went through the floor told me that she had to start smoking again while the prices were low because she was saving so much money.

And now, for another slap in the face to those who would see smoking banished to the pits of hell, is that recent challenge to legislation that restricts tobacco advertising. It looks like ads could be all over the place.

You have to ask, will any of this have any effect? Will more people start smoking? Will clamping down on underage purchases stop the kids from getting their 'legal' friends to buy their tobacco for them?

It all seems doubtful.

It's human nature, as long as something is legal, people will continue to do it, and as long as governments are making a bit of cash from allowing the use of what we all know is a harmful substance, it will be legal, and nothing will stop it.

So I guess the battle to be fought is not where to allow people to use their harmful but perfectly legal substance, but whether to allow its use at all.

What battle are you fighting?
JEN HORSEY

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Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the Gazette is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the Gazette is published every Thursday by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all students of Dalhousie University are members. The Gazette exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. All editorial decisions are made collectively by the staff. To become voting staff members, individuals must contribute to three issues. Views expressed in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff. Unless otherwise noted, all text © 1996 the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society. ISSN 0011-5819

letters

Intramurals

To the editor,

I don't really know if this is the way to go about thanking a huge part of the university, but I think all the people involved (in some way or another) with intramurals deserve recognition and appreciation for their efforts and hard work.

A couple of weeks ago I injured myself at an intramural basketball game. The intramural committee members, including the referee and convener, were very helpful. They helped get my mind off of my injury by making some jokes that were supposed to be funny, and of course I laughed (nothing personal guys!). Once I was at the hospital, these people made sure I got home by calling the residence in which I live (which happens to be Bronson House, Geoff!). The day after, I received a phone call making sure I was okay from Shawn Fraser, whom I have never formally met.

Once this incident was over, I started to think about intramurals, and the people who run them. I started to wonder if they ever get the recognition they deserve. This is what made me write this.

I came to the conclusion that almost every student on the Dalhousie campus has, at one time or another, taken advantage of the wonderful intramural activities that Dal has to offer. I also decided that the success of this program was due to the many great individuals who devote their evenings to helping run the sports — the referees and the conveners, and of course the big boss himself, Shawn Fraser. Most of these people are regular Dalhousie students who are themselves trying to earn degrees and get involved in university life, which are much of the same goals as those students who play intramurals. But those of you who do play, have you ever thanked the guy or girl who referees your game, or the person on the other side who puts the games together in the first place? I think I speak for all those people when I express my appreciation for all the hard work that goes into one of the most elaborate and functional intramural programs around. Thank you for helping me, and the rest of campus, keep in shape. And yes, I hope I'll be back playing all those sports again really soon.

C. Sabiston

the smoke is mightier than the sword

To the Gazette,

In response to the non-smoking policy in the SUB, and the inconvenience it's causing to the "smokers." Has anyone even thought about the inconvenience it is for the employees in the building who either don't smoke, have allergies, or are expect-

ing!! You may only come over to the SUB for a half hour a day to get something to eat or drink and have a cigarette; we have to work in this building from 9—5!! The fact that there is a non-smoking policy in this building is a milestone; however, now that the Green Room has been designated as a smoking room, the air coming through the vents in our offices is *asphyxiating!!!* Our windows (and thank God we have them) are constantly open, which creates a bit of a problem when it's minus 18 degrees out. Our eyes burn, our throats are sore, we have constant hacking, and we smell like a cigarette butt when we leave at the end of the day!! Smokers can go outside to smoke; we can't go outside to work!

It never ceases to amaze me how smokers can justify the right to cause illness to other people! I have never heard a legitimate argument to justify making other people miserable and sick because of your bad habit or your addiction. I'm tired of hearing smokers say "I can't stop, I'm addicted." Their addiction is their problem, not mine. If they can't take responsibility for their own health, they should not have the right to inflict bad health on me. I take responsibility for my health, and it is so frustrating because all the responsibility in the world on my part is useless if people around me are doing something to harm me. We all know about second-hand smoke and what it is capable of doing. Our cause is not to ostracize smokers from society (I don't hate smokers, I hate cigarettes!!!), but to keep the awareness of the effects that cigarette smoke has on those individuals who don't smoke. I don't want to concern myself with whatever other people do to their bodies, just if what they are doing is affecting mine.

A sick and tired Dalhousie Employee, SUB

To the editor:

In response to John Cullen's "Smoke 'em if you got 'em": this smoker claims smokers have two opposing sides about smoking amongst the public; one side "feels guilty" while the other side is careless. Non-smokers have two sides as well; one side doesn't intrude while the other side says, "why should I put up with someone else's unhealthy habits affecting my own health?" Smokers are not the only ones to be forced away. Non-smokers often must move from an enjoyable dinner table or rush out of bathrooms, all to avoid smoke. Non-smokers don't follow smokers to cause trouble. But your habit's emissions travel across a room as large as the SUB cafeteria.

Smokers complain the DSU's regulations are an "inconvenience," meaning they may have to stand outside (the fresh air would do your lungs good!). Please try to understand, most non-smokers push restrictions NOT to control your habits, but to protect OURSELVES. You place restrictions on non-smokers — allergies are painfully instantaneous and prolonged, asthma sufferers have difficulty breathing, cold sufferers experience coughing, the smell is unpleasant, heavy smoke reduces the visibility (contact lenses), and the odor lingers in clothing and hair. We know smoking is an addiction, but please don't have the rest of us suffer from YOUR fault. We know you are not trying to kill us; however, you are a key contributor to lung cancer, whether you intend to or not.

Let's make a deal: non-smokers will respect your right to continue your habit and "have sympathy" on your addiction. And smokers can take sympathy on the effects we suffer from cigarette pollutants and you can respect our right for doing everything we can to eliminate one less thing that may kill us too young. Let us have the right to smoke; we have the right to live healthy.

Lilli Ju: thanks for the new regulations. We can only hope for a smoke-free, social atmosphere (Corner Pocket) next!

Name withheld

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