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LETTERS

On Risk

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Sir: When one speaks out in public on a controversial and important issue, one runs a double risk. In the first place, those whose views one has criticized will certainly fight back; this sort of public argument to me seems both enjoyable and socially useful, since from vigorous controversy truth will emerge. The second hazard lies in an inaccurate reporting of one's statements in the press; this has caused me considerable embarrassment and is in general of some danger to society itself. This misrepresentation in the case of the reporting of my views on radioactive fallout is usually not deliberate, but comes from a lack of appreciation of the subtleties of the problem itself; occasionally, as in the case of a recent interview with the Winnipeg Free Press, it has taken the form of removing one of my statements from context, and cutting out the various qualifications with which I had surrounded it. While it was possible for me to offer a correction

in the columns of the Free Press, it was not possible for me to do so in all the newspapers from Halifax to Vancouver which carried the Canadian Press version of this deceptively reported interview.

Naturally, I am especially sensitive to misquotation in my home grounds, so I hope you will allow me to correct some of the statements attributed to me in the article which appeared in your issue of March 2nd. I suspect that some of these inaccuracies are not your fault but stem from material which went out over the Canadian Press wires from Winnipeg.

I could not have said that "the public is given vastly over-simplified statements on radiation by self-appointed 'experts,'" for to have done so would surely have invited the comparison of the pot and the kettle. What I have persistently criticized has been the incomplete and often misleading information given the public by the officially appointed experts whose job it is to inform the public accurately and honestly. I have also criticized the assessments of hazards to man from fall-out, which have been prepared by perfectly honourable physicists who are simply unaware of the complication of the biological problems which they now find themselves tackling. Such distinctions as those between irradiating a few individuals and the whole human species, between genetic and somatic damage, between external and internal irradiation, between whole body irradiation and intense irradiation of certain cells and tissues which specifically concentrate some of the fission products, etc., have often not been appreciated by those charged by the various governments with the responsibility of assessing the present and future dangers to mankind of nuclear bomb testing.

I did not say that "the number of deaths from leukemia is enormously higher in areas where bombs have been tested". I have frequently called attention to published work showing significant increases in death-rate from leukemia in survivors of the Hiroshima disaster, pointing out that it had increased significantly even in those who were one and one-half to two miles from the site of the explosion and who received about 50 roentgens in one burst. Also, I have called attention to recent studies of the enormous increase in death-rate from leukemia (n.b., not to the enormous "number of deaths from leukemia") in certain counties of England and Wales, (n.b., not "in areas where bombs have been tested"), following explosion of the first hydrogen superbombs.

Finally, I must make a mild grumble about the prominence accorded (by both the Gazette and the Halifax Mail-Star) a rather irrelevant remark in answer to a rather irrelevant question about hazards from industrial use of nuclear energy made during a half-hour television interview devoted to the problem of fall-out. I was careful to point to the great benefits to man of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but called attention to the problem of the biological concentration of radioactive waste from the effluents of nuclear establishments and the ecological imbalance which might result; I did not say this "is a serious threat to the health of millions".

It would be ungracious of me to conclude without offering my heartiest congratulations on your editorial, "Our Seeds of Self-Destruction"

To millions of downtrodden, forgotten people it holds out equality and "economic justice.";

To fractions struggling for independence, it is emancipation from "imperialistic masters";

To the pacifists, it is continual attack against warmongers, and petitions for world peace;

To the intellectual, it is the lure of social equality and international brotherhood;

To reformers, it is "the struggle against fascism."

Yes, it is an inviting philosophy to those who will not look below the shining face of propaganda. It believes in the manufacture of a world without weakness, in the ultimate supreme culmination of the species. It purports to the instrument of fate.

The price is the individual.

which appeared in the same issue. Surely it is time that Dalhousie students consider seriously the central issue of our day: ought the human race to survive and, if so, how can we reduce the very real danger of its extinction?

Yours faithfully,

J. G. Kaplan,
Associate Professor
of Physiology.

On Words

Sir:

In the last issue of *The Gazette* you editorialized: "Canadian legal history is studded with safeguards for basic human freedoms, and the constitution guarantees those rights as well—both by provision in the B.N.A. Act and by the tradition of English law". These sweeping generalities reduce a disturbing and complex situation to an absurd and misleading simplicity. Such fatuous, though pleasant-tasting, bromides display an ignorance of Canadian constitutional experience which is, at once, both amazing and contemptible.

We live under a constitution which permits racial discrimination in business establishments; allows the deportation of Canadian citizens and the confiscation and sale of their property; that denies the right to vote on the grounds of race and religion; and which in no way prevents some of the most monstrous tyrannies conceivable during wartime government by order-in-council. Professor Frank Scott characterized the situation admirably in a recent CBC radio talk: "Let us not argue over the statement that . . . (these basic rights) . . . have always existed in Canada, because they certainly have not. . . Freedom of religion had to be fought for and is still causing difficulties with Jehovah's Witnesses, Doukhobors and Hutterites. Freedom of speech and of the press did not exist in Quebec while the Padlock Act was on the statute books. Freedom of association was not much use to trade unions until the law forced employers to recognize them. And that freedom can scarcely be said to exist in Newfoundland so long as Mr. Smallwood's recent law against the International Woodworkers' Association remains in force. . . The equal protection of the law without discrimination by reason of race was not much use to the Japanese-Canadians the federal government was deporting in 1945."

I have never ceased to be impressed by the consistent inanity which you have so remarkably achieved in your editorial opinions throughout the year. It is my sincere hope that your comments on the Bill of Rights mark the nadir of your editorial ineptitude. I am by no means convinced of the necessity for a Bill of Rights such as the one proposed. However, I condemn your attack on it as a monumental disaster. (Continued on page 7)

NOTICE

Investigation has disclosed the source of statements made in the March 2 *Gazette* regarding the practices of a firm selling the "Universal World Reference Encyclopedia" on campus to be unreliable. The *Gazette* consequently apologizes to all concerned for its error in stating that the above-mentioned firm has indulged in unethical sales practices.

Sex

You started to read this one fast, didn't you. And the fact that you did is sure proof that there is, was and will be, perhaps, no subject more frowned upon, laughed at, sniggered about, revelled in, deviated from, stamped on, suppressed, censored, talked about, expounded, fared, loved and generally kicked around than sex. Girls giggle about it; men boast about it; and everybody dreams about it. Advertisers exploit it; psychologists just about live by it; and preachers decry it. In varying degrees of vulgarity, it appears on everything from the pages of Shakespeare to the walls of public washrooms. And if you will pardon our being so bold as to print the indisputable fact, damn near everyone, legally or otherwise, indulges in it. The point is, by whatever-oath-you-can-think-of-that-won't-shock-you-as-long-as-you-don't-see-it-in-print, we all love it.

So why the hushed and melodramatic gloom with which it is blanketed by spoilsport moralists?

Clearly, the sexual process, a combination of emotional and physiological elements, is a natural phenomenon. Clearly, too, (and if this is not clear to you, you are a rare college student indeed) it is an enjoyable phenomenon. Like everything else, of course, it can be harmful if indulged in to excess, but this is hardly sufficient reason to deprive moderates of their natural endowments.

Normal, natural, physiological and enjoyable; but still society insists upon degrading and smothering sex in an aurora of fearful morality. Society has hopes, but in most cases society loses, for we go right on enjoying ourselves. It is, in fact, amazing that we tolerate such an all-pervasive hypocrisy.

If, then, we are to reduce the question to its fundamental problem, we can find only one case for society's stand — the unwanted child and the inevitable dilemma that it produces. But it behooves us here to suggest that it is not the hypocritical sex more that prevents people from going, as the popular and colourful expression has it, "all the way" but rather the fear of the possible consequences that may result if there is a mishap.

The fact, in brief, are these: (1) Society frowns upon pre-marital and so-called "illicit" sex; (2) People, however, habitually break society's rules; (3) The result is an unwarranted and undeserved feeling of guilt and shame about perfectly natural behaviour. Why not, therefore, accept this reality and reject our antiquated sex prejudices for the hypocrisies they are?

Or is it just that the feeling of doing something wrong adds some extra "thrills" to the game?

The Lure of Communism

In all the discussion about North American Way of Life, very little has been said in college newspapers about the sweeping philosophy that has attracted millions of adherents in Europe and Asia, yet is less discussed at university than football coaching or overdue themes: Communism, an alluring doctrine with increasing appeal to a confused and seemingly aimless world.

The appeal of Communism is, in a word, direction.

Karl Max, whose antipathy toward the privileged classes of the mid-19th century moved him to first formulate the Communist doctrine, had much to write about. He lived in an era of change and of fear; most of the world's wealth was concentrated in the hands of the few; working class conditions everywhere were at their worst, and the privileged upper class rode roughshod over workers in the interests of profit. There was no balance, little reform.

The philosophy of Hegel taught Marx that the progress of history had always come out of the conflict of opposites, that society had always existed in vertical classes where privileged groups maintained themselves through suppression of the masses. Marx vowed to change the world, and the way seemed quite clear to him: international revolution.

The ends of such revolution were simple: the ruling apparatus must be abolished. This included the church, which kept the masses in subjection by offering them the solace of a future life while denying them the good things of this world,—and the idea of any future life, declared Marx, was but a useful superstition; it included the taking of property and the means of production out of private hands and placing it at the disposal of the State. The abolishment of private privileges, Marx suggested, would remove all temptation for personal gain—and thus would be achieved the dream of ages, the ideal classless society.

The revolution of reform, said Marx, was not the answer. There must be complete, violent and ruthless revolution which leaves no power anywhere by which a counter-revolution might be organized.

And Russia, while she does not strictly follow the Marxian line, talks about "peaceful co-existence" while she stockpiles atomic weapons and awaits her chance.

This incredible reconstruction of society along a horizontal level in place of a vertical one, Communism's aim, carries considerable appeal to those with whom the present society has not dealt kindly—the oppressed, the poverty-stricken, the frustrated. To the weak and hopeless it offers chance of a share in the world's wealth, through aggression and a completely ordered life.