

Letters

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leaving their fulltime program, whether they are employed or not. Many graduating students who started making loans three or four years ago when rates were around 10 percent will be locked into repaying those loans at 15%, the rate set for 1982/83, and a rate which does not reflect the recent drop in interest rates. That is not right.

It is my belief, and that of the New Democratic Party, that the federal government should require the banks to allow renegotiation of student loans to reflect the lower rates which now prevail. In the future loan rates should be established on the basis of a weighted average of the loan rate in effect every year that the students makes a loan. The interest-free period of grace should extend to until the student has found a job.

Young Canadians have been encouraged to take up post-secondary education by the availability of supposedly low cost student loans. The combination of the government's high interest rate policy and the inflexibility of the administration of the Canada Student Loan program yields a situation where students, who face youth employment rate of 20.7 per cent and are often unemployed themselves, are required to repay student loans at inflated rates. The only party which benefits in this situation is the banks who are collecting the interest.

Should the government not comply with our requests to lower the Canada Student Loan rate, students should be aware that if they can delay the consolidation of their loan until after July 31, 1983, the new and hopefully lower 1983 84 rate would be applicable to their loan.

Yours sincerely,
David Orlikow, MP
Winnipeg North

In support of RD House

To the Editor:

The Ronald McDonald house marathon deserved less criticism and more praise than outlined in Ken Burke's personal overview of the success of Dalhousie's Winter Carnival.

I believe that Ken missed the point of the intended purpose behind the marathon. It wasn't organized to follow a stringent schedule, nor was it set up to accommodate the inebriated nocturnal set with a place to crash after Cabbagetown closed. Its purpose certainly wasn't to impress or entertain Ken Burke. What then? The 18 industrious and gregarious couples who participated will tell you that they donated their time and effort to raise money for a worthy cause and to have a good time dancing the night (and day) away.

Brian Jones graciously performed free of charge for the event prompting student participation and to encourage support for the marathoners.

The idea did not lack validity, it provided over \$4000 for Ronald McDonald house in Halifax. The underlying benefit (happiness) that will be brought about by the house can only be imagined.

Two questions remain in my thoughts however; why does Ken Burke have such a contemptuous attitude toward Neil McCarney and why does he feel compelled to enlighten the entire Dal Student population of this fact?

Jennifer Flinn & Robert Jeffrey
Dance Marathon Supporters

Not equality

To the Editor:

Whatever happened to advancement based on reasons of merit? It appears that some people here at Dalhousie find "affirmative action" and "equality" to be the same thing. As Geoff Martin reported ("Affirmative Action . . .", Gazette, February 10), it appears that Professor Judith Finguard, History Department chair and DWFO Vice President, is another victim of naivete. How can she justifiably say that "there is still a need for hiring more women?" I'm not against hiring more people, if the Department so chooses, but whether they should be men or women is another question. Hiring more women simply to keep the statisticians' ratio nice and neat is blatant discrimination, in every sense of the word. A person should be hired on the basis of merit only. Whether the employee is male or female is irrelevant, provided the person has the necessary attributes to do the required job. That's equality.

Donald Sutherland
BSc '84

editor's note: Due to a technical error, Mr. Martin's article did not appear in full. This may have caused some false impressions. We apologize for any inconvenience. The entire text of the article, and part II, will be printed in a future issue of the Gazette.

Magic mushrooms now illegal!

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP) — Students will be among the thousands of Canadians affected by the Supreme Court's recent decision to make "magic mushrooms" illegal.

The hallucinogenic mushrooms, which grow wild in several provinces, were previously legal to pick, sell and eat because they were considered natural substances. But the court ruled in November that these activities are now crimes because psilocybin, the "magic" in "magic mushrooms", is a restricted substance under the Food and Drug Act.

During season, thousands of people, many students, comb rural fields looking for their "natural high". The 'shrooms grow wild in British Columbia, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

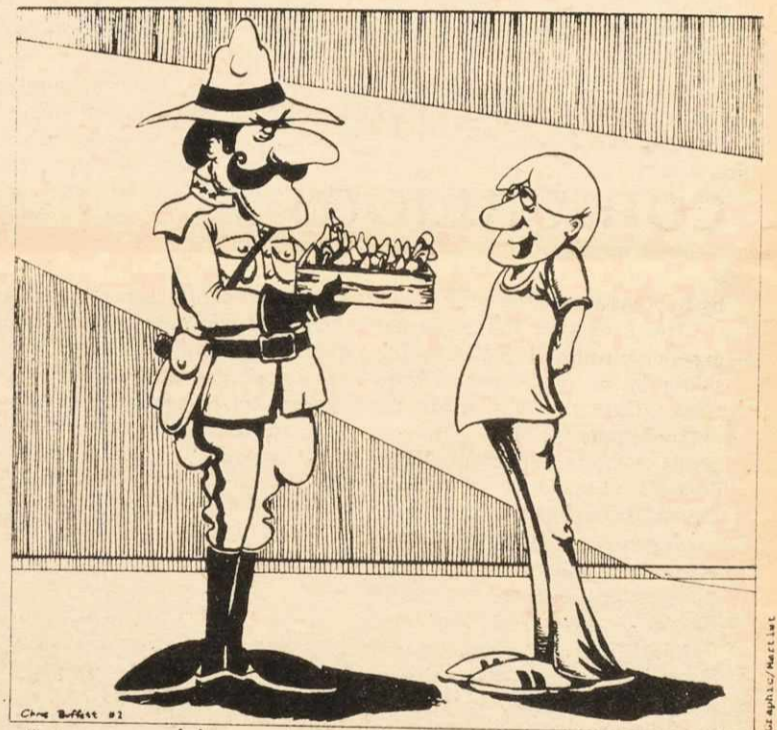
Prince Edward Island's fertile farmland is a haven for mushroom pickers. Until now, police were powerless to stop Islanders and outsiders from picking them. The court ruling means people could be fined up to \$3000 for possession and jailed up to ten years for trafficking.

Sgt. Saulnier of the RCMP drug

squad in Charlottetown is pleased by the ruling. "This will give us some teeth. We will be enforcing it... We have been waiting for this decision for two years."

But an RCMP officer in Newfoundland said police there will concentrate on other tasks. "I guarantee we won't be rushing out and hassling magic mushroom pickers. We won't be chasing people around the fields."

Magic mushrooms were at the centre of a controversy at the University of Victoria just before the ruling, after a residence don seized and destroyed mushrooms from students living in residence. Residence officials there plan a major crackdown on drug use among students, so this ruling could give a boost to their campaign.



"Um, would you believe those mushrooms are for my biology class?"

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