

Canada to import biologists

Science scene suffering severe setbacks

By JOANNE CIRILLO
The Canadian government has reduced university research grants while simultaneously increasing government and overseas research grants said Dr. Kenneth Davey, chairman of the biology department last week.

There is a deliberate government

policy to freeze amounts allocated for grants, and to let inflation decrease their value, he said.

According to Dr. Davey, "York University has the best biology department in any Canadian university, bar none!" He sees this threatened however as he does the intellectual life of all Canadian

universities. "Good teachers become better teachers by virtue of research," said Davey.

Davey explained that the defacto freeze of university funding since 1969 could lead to a desperate shortage of Canadian biologists within the next ten years. The number of students entering life science programs increase every year but the number of PhD students is decreasing because of a lack of money with which to continue their research.

Davey concluded that Canada will be forced to import biologists. Presently there is a glut of chemists and physicists he said, but there appears to be no good biologists out of work.

Not only may there be fewer biologists, the ones we have may be inadequately trained. Without the funds for new and costly equipment, they will be lacking technical skills that will prevent the utilization of information from foreign sources.

The government policy appears surprising in view of the superior art work produced in universities compared to work in government agencies. The work week for many

of the university scientists can run as high as 70 hours a week, while government agencies generally work a nine to five day, he said.

The national research council, responsible for university research funding, uses a peer-review committee to assess an applicant on his past performance. The committee, composed of fellow scientists, considers the quality and the quantity of this work. Government agencies which receive money for research have no such check on the performance of their staff, according to Davey.

The peer-review committee has managed to block almost all poor quality researchers from receiving grants, and the government is in no position to say the same.

The science council in 1976 stated that the biological problems related to Canada are unique and in solving these problems we must realize, "Nobody else will do it for us". The Canadian government, by its funding research policy, is managing to ignore and possibly destroy an area of society that has already proved its work in handling these problems.



Biology head, Dr. Davey

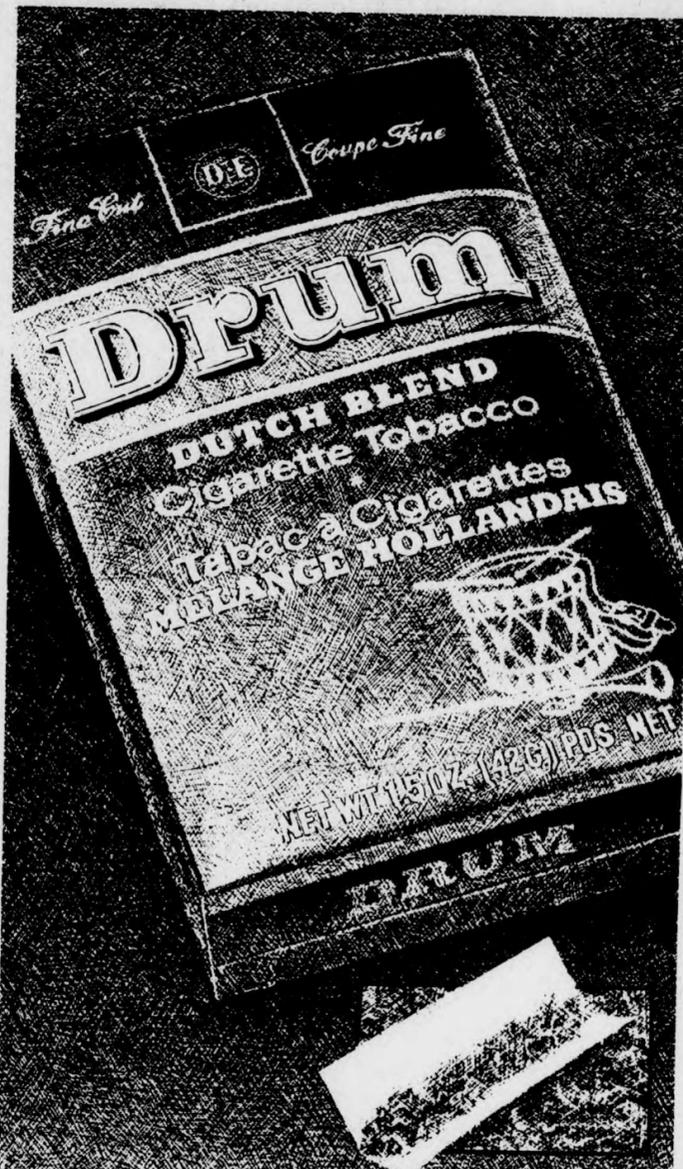
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