

# Demon in a bottle

"A chronic alcoholic would have difficulty surviving on campus," he said.

In other words, students whose patterns of alcohol abuse interfere with academic work, don't remain students for very long. The most common circumstances of alcohol excess, added Dr. Cookson, is "bout drinking", typically after a period of stress such as exam time. Although alcohol problem at the U of A isn't as serious as it used to be, and less so than many people may think, it does still exist. Since alcohol abuse is, by and large, a stress reaction, the solution lies in providing alternative means of coping with stress.

The Advisory Committee on Alcohol Awareness is using prevention through education as a way to solve problem drinking at the U of A.

Brian Andre, Assistant to the Dean of Students, says the programming of the committee is in the embryonic stage. Moderation and responsible drinking will be the major points the program will try to get across.

"It's very much low key," Mr. Andre. "The committee is not saying 'don't drink'. Alcohol is part of university life. We just want to teach students to be responsible."

Although much of the committee's work is still in the planning stage, a few programs are already available, such as a free seminar offered to campus clubs. The Party Management Seminar, available upon request, promotes responsible alcohol use at

Toni Fluker, the Health Education Co-ordinator at Health Services, says the reaction from clubs who have participated in the seminar is positive. However, she felt it could be promoted more.

Another effect the Awareness Committee has had is on the availability of soft drinks at this year's Orientation Week beer gardens. This is the first year that non-alcoholic drinks were made available at this event.

While prevention through education and advocacy of responsibility will eliminate some of the problems in future, there will always be students who, despite everything

**"It's a dangerous drug"**

else, develop a drinking problem.

For those who do develop a problem, Fluker's advice is to "Get Help!"

Jenny Rankin of the Chaplain's office suggested several channels through which one could get help with a drinking problem. Health Services, University Counselling, Student Help, and the Chaplaincy are all places one can turn to.

Dr. Cookson suggested a visit to a doctor should be included, to determine whether or not any physiological damage has been suffered because of alcoholic excess.

However, the most important factor in recovery is the recognition that one has a problem to begin with. If a problem drinker won't admit to a problem, little can be

**...prevention through education...**

done.

Understanding and compassion are important in helping someone to overcome their problem, says Rankin. "It's a cry for help."

Since drinking problems are often

a stress reaction, dealing with the cause of stress is the obvious solution. Rankin admits that it's not always easy to find out why someone is drinking.

The signs of a drinking problem are a little clearer than the causes. Dr. Cookson said things to watch for include a tendency to drink every day — getting progressively earlier in the day. Hiding one's drinking and drinking alone are also indicative of a problem, he said.

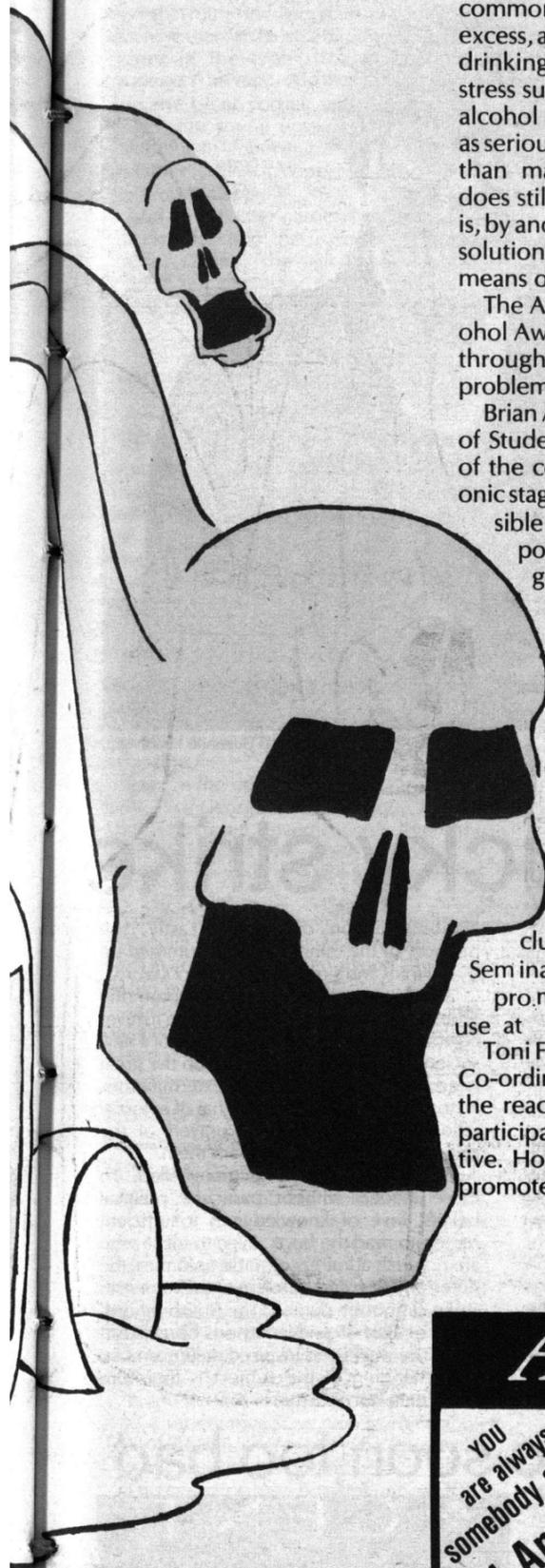
**...solution lies in providing alternative means of coping with stress**

With a well-developed awareness program backed up by proper counselling services, problem drinking among students should decrease in the future.

In the meantime, with a student population of approximately 28,000, there is every reason to believe that there are more than a few students at the University of Alberta with drinking problems, or potential ones.

Could you be one of them?

**Story by Glenn St-Germain**



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