

The Letters/Opinions section of the Gazette is meant as a campus forum for all Dalhousie students. The opinions expressed within may not necessarily be those of the Gazette staff or editorial board. We welcome all submissions, but reserve the right to edit for style and content. It is the Gazette's mandate not to print racist, sexist or homophobic material.

TAs and part-time instructors take action

The time is rapidly approaching when those of us who are TAs or part-time instructors at Dalhousie will have to make a decision that will affect every future TA and part-timer at this university.

The new wage scheme proposed by the administration and the implementation of standardized

salaries (which are lower than almost every other post-secondary institution in Canada) is soon to become a reality at Dalhousie if sufficient action between now and the end of term is not taken.

CUPE Local 3912, the union representing TAs and part-timers, has made a number of attempts

throughout the academic year to bring Dalhousie administration into negotiation over this proposed new wage scheme. The university administration has failed to reach any agreement with the union, and has misunderstood the demands and requests that CUPE has made to continue negotiations on behalf

of its union members from Dalhousie.

Although they have issued statements both to the public and to TAs, which suggest otherwise, the administration has not responded to CUPE's proposals for continued negotiation.

One of the biggest problems is convincing the administration, as well as undergraduate students who pay some of the highest tuition in the country, to reap the benefits of specialized instructors and TAs for courses in the Arts and Sciences, that the short term solution (cutting and standardizing wages in departments) will have a detrimental effect on academic life here at Dalhousie.

It will make graduate and post graduate work even more financially precarious than it is now. Among other issues, it fundamentally undermines the TA's and part timer's ability to vocalize their concerns, be heard by the administration, and make recommendations which are worth considering before the deal is stamped and sealed.

An example of this would be when Dalhousie president Tom Traves states explicitly in recent conversations with local media that negotiations over the future contract have been brought to an end by CUPE, suggesting that the administration was willing to negotiate further.

This type of colourful PR work has lessened the severity of the issue, as well as misrepresenting the formal statements made by CUPE

to continue with the talks. Obviously, things have come to the point where more action needs to be taken, and instructors have to be even more vocal in order to be heard by the Dalhousie community.

CUPE has developed a strategy aimed to include TAs and part-time instructors from all faculties and departments, that includes a schedule of events for the coming few months:

JANUARY 23 - General Meeting and Social. Room 224-226 Dal SUB, 3-6pm

JANUARY 27 - Canadian Federation of Students Rally (Time and Place to be Announced)

FEBRUARY 13 - Rally and March (Time and Place to be Announced)

FEBRUARY 18 & 19 STRIKE VOTE - Polling Stations at DalTech, Dalhousie, St. Mary's and Mount Saint Vincent (Time and Place to be Announced)

MARCH 4 - Strike

TAs and part-time instructors who have been active with union activity encourage all those who want to find out more to come out to these events. The time to get involved is now, before it is too late.

ALEX MCLEAN AND DEBORAH OSMOND

Pot is wrong, period

It is with disdain that I promulgate my feelings toward a rather serious issue, one which my associates choose to treat with the usual immaturity. Our counterculture seems hellbent on an insidious endeavour to legalize, and legitimize, the use of pot.

It is a steady, relentless effort of many lobbying groups to recognize the "medicinal" benefits of marijuana. Without one shred of evidence to be brought forth, they expect Ottawa to blindly embrace this drug use. Terms such as "medicinal" and "herb" are euphemisms being thrown around by the pot industry.

Allan Rock, Parliament's favourite wuss, has taken it upon himself to have an "open mind" on decriminalizing pot for medical uses. Really? On whose authority? And just what would substantiate "medical use"? At least Rock is willing to hold off until he sees some proof of its benefits, if there truly are any.

An Ontario provincial court ruled recently that Terry Parker, 42, was allowed to smoke marijuana to treat his epilepsy. Seventy-one plants that were seized from him had to be returned, even though he was also selling the stuff on the side. You might make a case for his health, until you got a look at this guy. He looked like a haggard, bleary-eyed unintelligible mess. His speech was beyond any comprehension. I guess he figured the only way to cure epilepsy is to destroy the defective organ, namely the brain.

Doesn't it strike anyone that these pot activists are selling you classic dope dealer lines? It won't hurt you, it will make you feel better, and on and on. How stupid do you have to be not to realize that this is what drug dealers have been saying for years? Think about it. These people profess themselves as some sort of social liberators, when they have only to gain from sales of the drug, while peoples' health is severely damaged.

The fact is marijuana can hurt and even kill you. Too many studies (not to mention common sense) show the damage it can do to your brain and your body. According to *Primetime Live*, ABC's news-magazine program, pot smokers are 65 to 85 times as likely to move on to heavier drugs like cocaine and heroin than non-pot smokers. It seems apparent that the ones with a vested interest in this pot smokescreen are the entire drug industry.

It's amazing how many times you hear it's not addictive. It works the same way any other drug does, by stimulating dopamine production in your brain. When

your brain runs out of that dopamine, it wants it back — only more. It's like any other drug, and it's effects are probably why people are so likely to ascend to heavier drug use.

It's these dealers who compare their drugs to things like caffeine and sugar that make me laugh. Are alcohol and tobacco bad? Yes, please don't drink or smoke at all. Are they even comparable to marijuana? Absolutely not.

It's a humbling event to have to stand up for what you know is right. It is with rare exception that people are willing to stand up to the pressure of others. Their incentives are to either sell you that fresh supply, or to drag you down to their level. Misery loves company.

All I can offer to those of you out there who haven't tried it is

you are not missing anything. Those who constantly immerse themselves in drugs, any type, are simply so void of any real purpose in their lives that it's just better to shut out reality. Marijuana doesn't make you enlightened, or funny, or even happy. Just very, very, idiotic.

If I take a lot of guff for writing this piece, I couldn't care less. It has suddenly become a crime in this country to care about other people, and I am sick of it. Who's left to stand up to the degenerates out there who are polluting our bodies and our minds? Drugs are by far the worst scourge to infest this planet, and I'll be cold and dead before they ever gain the approving eye of this country.

They don't call it dope for nothing, I guess.

ALAN LEBLANC

Dr. Zayid at Dalhousie

On Friday Jan. 9, 1998 I had the amazing opportunity to have my eyes opened. On one hand I could say that in a cynical world like ours, where we are constantly being bombarded by images, ideas and facts, it would be quite out of the ordinary to have an eye opening experience. But I have come to the realization that I am an idealist, and that I think everything may be resolved when people just speak to each other and listen in return.

At a talk sponsored by the Dalhousie Arabic Society, Dr. Zayid of the Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine, spoke about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I went to the talk because I feel that this is an important issue to me and because I wanted to hear another side of the story.

He had given the topic a significant title, "A Legacy of Dispossession and Ethnic Cleansing". This title was both alarming and intriguing to me and I had to hear what he had to say.

Dr. Zayid has a story. His story is interesting, compelling and at times very sad. Like I said, it opened my eyes; it gave the other side of the conflict a name and a face in my mind. He spoke to a group of over 80 people. The audience seemed to be listening intently to his personal anecdotes and historical facts. And after he spoke, the room was opened for questions.

As I said, Dr. Zayid presented one side of the story, because that was the purpose of his talk and that is the side with which he is most personally connected. When some members of the audience attempted to comment on another side of the

issue, there was definitely some tension in the air.

Suddenly it didn't feel like we were listening to one man's story anymore — the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was being openly debated right there. But no one was listening to each other. It became very stressful, at least to me.

Yes, we were there to listen to Dr. Zayid tell the Palestinian story. But what about the people who were not familiar with the other side? What are their rights? Do they have the right to know that not all of his comments and facts were in context? Do any of us have the right to speak at all if we are not directly affected by the conflict?

I really wanted to throw up my hands in despair. There I was, sitting at an informative lecture at Dalhousie University in Canada, and not even for one moment could people discuss and listen to each other peacefully, in relation to the issue of peace in the Middle East.

What are we to do? Can one person really speak for his or her people? Granted, I think that every person should make it his or her responsibility to become aware of such issues. But if you cannot listen to another person speak, if your ears are deaf to words and ideals that are different from your own, then really, are you any further ahead? I am not sure how valuable my idealism is in our world today.

I would like to personally thank and commend the Dalhousie Arabic Society for their efforts to promote awareness and knowledge of the Middle East, and the struggles that are present there everyday.

ERIN SPERLING

The Gazette staff meets every Monday at 4:30pm. New writers of all skill levels are always welcome. Come and see what your peers are talking about. Suite 312 in the SUB.

Travel CUTS offers you another exclusive deal!

Fly free to London!

Now, for a limited time, you can fly for free to London when you book a specific Contiki tour. Drop by your nearest Travel CUTS for details.

TRAVEL CUTS VOYAGES CAMPUS
Owned and operated by the Canadian Federation of Students

Contiki is the world's largest tour operator for 18 to 35 year olds.

3rd Floor, SUB
494-2054

Contiki HOLIDAYS

Participants must have a valid International Student ID Card (ISIC). Tours must commence by 09 May 1998 and must be paid in full by 31 March 1998. Valid for departures from Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal or Halifax only. Full details available at Travel CUTS.