

# Getting opium to masses

On June 22, 1757, 1,000 Europeans and 2,000 native troops under the command of Robert Clive confronted the army of Suraj-ud-Dowlah amid the mango trees at Plassey, not far from Murshidabad, the capital of the Mogul viceroys of Bengal. By sundown Clive had won the day for Britain's East India Company, which duly set about securing the revenues from its vast new assets, among which was counted the monopoly on opium cultivated in India. Sixteen years later the company wrested from the Portuguese the opium trade with China and by 1790 was exporting thither 5,000 chests of the drug.

The trade was not welcomed by the Chinese government. Importation was forbidden in 1796, and penalties as severe as death were imposed for opium smoking. But the opium ships were not deterred, and by 1839 the British were bringing 3 million pounds of opium a year into China. Emperor Tao-Kwang sent a commissioner, Lin Tse-hsu, to Canton to suppress the trade. Thus began the opium wars, at whose conclusion the British compelled the Chinese government to submit. In 1858 the importation of opium was legalized, and by 1880 the British were exporting almost 11,000 tons of opium a year into

China. On September 19, 1989, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative held hearings in Washington on the export of American-made cigarettes to Thailand and their promotion. Pivotal to the hearings was a piece of legislation, Section 301 of the revised 1974 Trade Act, that permits the government, if persuaded that U.S. exporters are experiencing "unfair" or "discriminatory" trade restrictions abroad, to take punitive action against the offending nation. The British East India Company would readily have understood the nature of the proceedings that

September day. The major U.S. tobacco companies were petitioning to force Thailand, which for twenty years has had a successful anti-smoking campaign and whose Cabinet in 1987 approved a proposal for a total ban on cigarette consumption, to admit American cigarettes under pain of serious sanctions if they refuse. Among the witnesses appearing that day was the Surgeon General, Dr. C. Everett Koop. Scheduled to relinquish his post a few days later, Koop had not cleared his testimony with the White House and said subsequently that had he attempted to do so the White House would cer-

tainly have quashed it. One can see why. There is, Koop said, the "perception" among ministers of health he has encountered at international meetings that "our trade policy is to push addicting substances into foreign markets, disregarding the sentiment of the foreign government and the future health of its population." Attempts to force Thailand to rescind "wise restrictions on cigarette use and promotion were "egregious," "deplorable," "unconscionable" and, apart from anything else, interference with the sovereignty of another nation. "Years from now," Koop concluded, "I'm afraid that our nation will look back on this application of free trade policy and find it scandalous, as the rest of the world does now ... at a time when we are pleading with foreign governments to stop the export of cocaine, it is the height of hypocrisy for the United States to export tobacco." "Consider these figures," Koop ended. "Last year in the United States, 2,000 people died from cocaine. In that same year, cigarettes killed 390,000 people."

# Dal team wins at debating championships

The Dalhousie team of Laura Stewart and Tim Daley has won the 1990 Canadian National Debating Championships held March 9-

11 at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. They competed against 80 teams from universities across Canada. This is

the first such victory for any Atlantic University in over five years and re-establishes Dalhousie as a dominant debating

school in Canada. Imperial Oil Limited provided full sponsorship of the three Dalhousie teams sent. Without the support of Esso, the teams would not have been able to travel and return with the national title.

Tim and Laura established a perfect 6-0 record in regular and quarter final rounds. They met a McGill team in the semifinal round before an audience of 100 and successfully argued a new approach to political education in primary schools. They then battled another McGill team in the final round before a crowd of over 200. In opposition they defeated the government proposal to restructure the treatment of mentally ill patients in institutions.

The topics debated over the weekend included mandatory retirement policies, enforcement of the Employment Equity Act, and the role of values in Canadian society. In the quarter finals, Tim and Laura defended a plan to save Via Rail.

All but two debates were impromptu, allowing each team ten minutes to prepare a case based on the resolution. Each team argues its side in a combination of logic, wit, style, and teamwork to convince the judges of the strength of their case. The clash of ideas is often an exciting experience.

This victory is the cap on a very successful year for Sodales. In September one of its teams won the prestigious Hart House Invitational Tournament in Toronto. In October, Tim Daley and Laura Stewart won the Atlantic championship. Over the Christmas break, four Sodales members travelled to Glasgow,

In the wake of President Bush's September 5 speech on drugs, 163 drug-related stories appeared on the three major network newscasts alone. No such saturation attended one of the most savage denunciations of U.S. government policy ever made by one of its own appointed officials. There was some coverage by ABC, the Today Show and MacNeil/Lehrer, but in the national newspapers, so far as I could tell, only *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Christian Science Monitor* reported on the hearings. The fact that the United States, as a matter of conscious national policy, is by far the most consequential drug trafficker in the world today remains largely obscured.

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Scotland for the World Championships and then to Kiev in the Soviet Union for the Canada/Ukraine Debate Congress. Finally, in February five Sodales teams travelled to Montreal for the McGill Invitational Tournament.

Sodales looks forward to another successful year. Difficulty in attaining sufficient funding from the university administration and student union should be by this year's many successes. They look forward to defending their titles in next year's Atlantic and National as well as participating in the World Championships and several other smaller events.



Laura Stewart and Tim Daley debating