

# A little harder than it seems

And so this Friday is Buy Nothing Day.

People have been talking about it a lot at *the Gazette* office lately. And I have been silent most of the time during these conversations. Not because I'm not interested but because I never really felt as though I completely understood the concept of this day.

But it's not a hard concept to understand. Don't buy anything for a 24 hour period. That's the essence of Buy Nothing Day.

But there's really so much more to it than that.

There are of course questions that Buy Nothing Day forces us to ask ourselves. I know if I were to buy anything this Friday I'd feel guilty without really knowing why.

Supporters of Buy Nothing Day tell us to re-examine our buying habits. As North Americans, we represent 20 percent of the world's population but consume 80 percent of the world's resources. That's the statistic I find most frightening.

So we are urged to examine our lifestyles. Think about what we're doing and what we're buying.

And then supporters of Buy Nothing Day are saying that at the end of the day if we find that there's a problem, do something about it.

Cut back all excess consumption by ten percent.

I took the plunge and had this conversation a few minutes ago with some people about Buy Nothing Day.

"What if it was a Buy Nothing Week?" one of them asked.

And he answered himself. "We'd be screwed."

And then there is the whole problem of defining what exactly excess consumption is?!

He looked at me.

"Does that mean not looking at the Lexus car, and instead looking at a Geo?"

The concept of not consuming for a 24 hour period is bad enough. But trying to imagine cutting back things within life or even the concept of not buying anything for an entire week are seemingly impossible.

He insists it's impossible.

I'm finding it a little bit scary that the idea of not buying anything is so horrendous for so

one that is widely publicized and discussed and the other that is talked about in quiet, dim corners.

The first says that Buy Nothing Day is a reaction to our increasingly consumerist society.

Multi-million dollar companies produce goods and convince us that we need all of these things to make our lives just a little bit better and a little bit more complete.

They tell us we're being controlled by corporate bigwigs who sit in their offices and direct society. They have the money and the power to control not just various, but nearly all, aspects of our lives.

It's a frightening concept, and makes people angry to admit that they may be controlled by a select group of individuals.

And then there is another concept, which is perhaps less discussed and less accepted.

It's just the flip side of the first concept.

It says that corporations are producing all of these consumer goods because there is a need for them. There is a demand.

Ever walked past an empty, but open, McDonald's?

The whole thing about this concept is that it forces us to lay the blame on ourselves.

It's so much easier to lay the blame at someone else's feet.

I'm not saying one concept is more justified than the other.

They're both equally as frightening.

Amy Durant

## EDITORIAL

many of us.

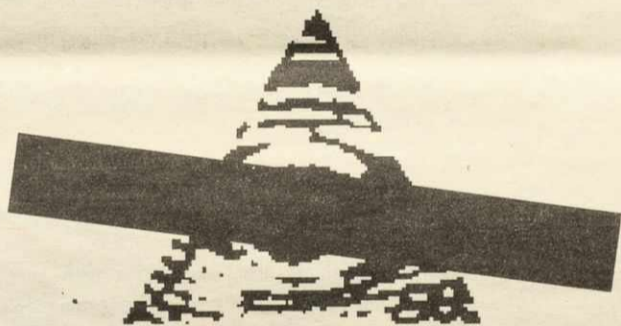
So I do what I always seem to do and put a human edge to it. And maybe that's just my way of making it easier for myself. Or more difficult, depending on how you look at it.

I'm buying products and clothes and CD's and whatever else I choose to buy, and yeah, that's totally giving into the Man.

But every store and every service and every place that sells me something employs someone, employs a few people. And so buying nothing won't just hurt me or make life difficult for me, it'll make it hard for that student trying to pay their tuition, or that single mother, or the 16-year-old kid who is so proud to be able to have their own money for once.

So what can we take from this?

As I understand it, there are two sides to Buy Nothing Day,



Correction:  
The letter to the Editor in last week's issue of *the Gazette* was written by Billy MacDonald, Red Tail Nature Awareness Camp Scotsburn, Pictou County, N.S.

## THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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## LETTERS

### More to 'Raves'

To the Editor,

I must say that I was quite pleased to find such a thoughtful piece as Glen Arseneau's "Rave" nestled within your pages. I was less pleased when "an honest look at love, sex and romance" turned into an opus for abstinence. Perhaps we should be thankful for this diversity. Diversity being one thing, tripe and prattle another. All told in the singular case of the rave article, there was an admirable attempt made to look beyond the surface of a persistent youth culture. However I do feel compelled to challenge a few of the assumptions presented there.

The first generalization is that "we are lost (because)...we are being force-fed anti-drug propaganda sprinkled with commercialism". If we treat Mr. Arseneau's perspective as valid regardless of his tenure in the rave scene — a stance which incidentally reflects the hollow raver acronym (PLUR) — then we are left with only the inconsistencies of his text. The argument seems to be that we've "lost sight of what's important" because a lot of people (including corporate interests and Mr. Arseneau himself) have jumped on the bandwagon and because the media have taken notice. Or perhaps we are lost/have lost sight because the various business interests and the media have portrayed the scene in a facile fashion. With regard to Arseneau's loose anthropological argument I must say that I generally agree with his tribal convictions.

Let me put it straight. Having been involved with this DJ/dancing culture since before there were actual raves in Halifax, I must say that I never really saw the virginal innocence that was attributed to our big/little scene. In ways, yes of course I could see something very vibrant and auspicious, but in other more tangible ways I saw only seediness and decay. What is more frustrating is a culture that fails to generate any sort of meaningful counter dialogue, or in this case an argument against prolonged bouts of hard drug use.

Don't get me wrong, I love the stuff but the utter lack of straight talk is dismaying. Simply put, the best intentions of independent writers such as Mr. Arseneau and the Coast's Ara Finlayson come off about as mawkish as the vocals on a sweet disco house track — that is to say feeble or insipid. At very best we might think of the bacchanalian frenzy of a rave as a glimpse into but not a viable path towards ultimate reality.

Heraclitus the pre-socratic philosopher spoke on this very topic when he said "do not revel

in mud". That is to say that those who would claim to have cleansed themselves by bathing in wine, blood or sweat stained halter tops, are in all actuality just getting dirty. For all of the quasi spiritual currents banded about in rave culture there is a fundamental disregard for the sheer self-absorption and delusion that this kind of exposure to hard drugs brings on. This is not to say that self-absorption is fundamentally a bad thing — I've rode that bus a million times — but let us not call it sacrifice when it is more truly indulgence. Much of what goes on at raves only serves to add more needless layers to our personality and to further insulate us from our own basic goodness.

In a really decent way Glen seems to be choking on what he means to say, for that I must applaud him. The relationship between corporate interests and youth culture bears much looking into.

Mr. Arseneau would do well to remain highly skeptical. In a certain sense what is most interesting about rave culture and electronic music is how it has ruptured the tidy circle of mainstream radio and video programming. It is hard to conceive of how one could track the economic vitality of the "industry" in terms of gold records and units sold. The whole ethos of actively participating and attending to music runs dead against the passive pulp of rush hour radio.

In a way it is not unlike what Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of Shambhala buddhism, described as the reaction of the setting-sun world to the Great Eastern Sun. A biographer of Trungpa Rinpoche's put it this way:

"The flat world does not wish to be perturbed. All of society is banded together on this point. Spirituality, or religion, is granted a reserve but if it steps beyond its stately petty precincts, it has to face the lynch. Just ask Jesus."

Oddly enough there are generations such as our own when spirituality again becomes the vogue. "It's a kind of jacuzzi spirituality, which makes you feel good, even glamorous, and it doesn't undermine the dearly beloved reference point of ego." Who could deny that the overriding sentiment at a rave is that "this is happening to me, I mean this is really happening to me!" I guess what I'm trying to say is that raving feels to me like a kind of jacuzzi spirituality, and I think you'll agree with me. While it is tempting to make much of all the pretty lights and colours it's probably best if we leave that one well enough alone.

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