

Disposable world: coming to an end?

With each decade comes a new fad: new music, new styles, new thoughts. More distinctly comes a new cause, a need for people to get up in arms.

In the past, a great deal of energy has been spent on the war against nuclear arms.

It is no longer the bomb that is the threat. It is our polluting society. We have the capability of surpassing any synthetic object in our damage.

The latest cause is the one in which we are to save the earth from ourselves. More popularly labelled the Green Movement.

To become affiliated with this

cause can generate sure success. It works for political parties in the polls. It is a great marketing device for selling more products. For the individual, it does wonders in creating a socially conscious image.

Sounds great, but what if this is just another passing fad the way so many other issues have been in the past. Besides, for the person wishing to make a difference, wanting to see visible results, the scale is usually too grand. For instance, the ozone layer, or the depletion of rain forests.

However, there is a facet of the problem which is as severe in its

effects, but manageable to everyone. That is plastics — something that we all use, and we all throw away.

Since the introduction of plastics, we have become spoiled. We have become a disposable society. Disposable cups, razors, diapers etc. Rarely does one think of where those items go when they are thrown away. There are currently 20,000 tons of plastic in landfill sites in the Metro area. That is where it goes — or into incinerators which pollute the environment.

Another marketing device contributing to the pile-up of plastics

is the myth of biodegradable and photodegradable products. It actually takes more plastic to produce these. The plastic is mixed with starch so it degrades into small pieces. Yet even this does not occur unless the conditions are ideal. Direct sunlight has to hit the spread out plastic. How often does this happen at a junkyard?

There are people throwing this plastic away, with the false sense of security that they are doing something beneficial for the environment. Back to the disposable mentality.

Fred Wendt, the recycling coordinator for Metropolitan Authority feels that "individuals must take direct responsibility in the unglamorous aspect of reducing plastic waste." No one is given credit for cutting back on their personal use of plastic, or for reusing their grocery bags. As menial as these tasks may sound, they are the most important.

Another way of cutting down on garbage is by recycling. The Environment and Plastics Institute of Canada has been created to work with industry regarding plastic waste disposal. They believe that recycling ranks first among the immediately available

solutions to the waste management crisis.

At this point it leaves the public's hands and becomes the responsibility of the government. It is up to them to enact legislation regarding a facility for plastic recycling. Currently there is not one in Nova Scotia. Mike Leblanc, from the Department of Environment, says there is no immediate plan for action.

Recycling has proven successful in other places. Parts of Europe and Japan have been doing it for over a decade. In the U.S. ten states have legislated mandatory plastic recycling. Perhaps it must be piled in our back yards before we gain the initiative to take action.

This is one issue that we cannot allow to fade away. Presently for every \$14 spent on the military there is \$1 spent on the environment. A change of focus would be a worthwhile alteration to our self-destruction.

Although we take more caution after learning from our mistakes, we may not get a second chance. Start thinking about where all of those disposables end up. Try making a difference, for your own sake.

Angela Van Amburg

e d i t o r i a l

Discrimination is no joke

March 21 is the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville South Africa, more than 70 peaceful demonstrators against Apartheid were killed and more than 180 were wounded. Six years later, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution proclaiming March 21 as the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

from the International Community Network newsletter

What is racist? Not many people will admit to being a racist. Not many people wish harm towards blacks. Rather, most racist remarks come in the form of "harmless jokes."

If a joke is at the expense of a particular group of people, is it racist? You bet it is. Just because the joke teller is not a member of the KKK does not mean that the joke is not racist.

Most of us at Dalhousie are white, and therefore we do not have a good grasp on what is

racist. If you are "against racism" and hear a friend tell a racist joke and don't comment on the fact that it is a racist joke, then you are, by your silence, promoting racism.

The most common slurs against women, against people of various races, against lesbians and gays come under the heading "humour". To dismiss a racist slur as "only comedy" is a dangerous mistake.

For this reason, some of our far-sighted predecessors drafted these policies and included them into our respective constitutions. They are there to ensure that the people who come to power in these organizations maintain this awareness.

For this reason, the Gazette runs a yearly Gay and Lesbian supplement, women's supplements and racial minority supplements to actively promote awareness of minority groups. For this reason, the DSU does not hire entertainers who promote, through "humour", racism, sexism or homophobia.

It is not enough to be "against discrimination." We must be willing to work actively against discrimination.

Sandy MacKay

To be "against racism" simply is not enough.

Many people feel strongly about discrimination. The Gazette has a (controversial) policy that states we will not accept racist, sexist or homophobic material. The DSU has a similar policy that states they will not hire entertainers who are sexist, racist or homophobic.

Why do we have these policies? Is it unnecessary censorship? Why does the Gazette run Gay and Lesbian supplements, and why won't the DSU hire Lambert and James?

racist. The holier-than-thou Gazette has been accused of racism, even with our policy.

To say "I am not a racist" simply is not enough. We must educate ourselves about how racism lives. It lives in the absence of courses that adequately deal with black history. It lives in poor accessibility for black students from North Preston (and abroad).

To be "against racism" simply is not enough. If you are against racism yet take no action against racism, then you may as well be a

l e t t e r s *continued*

continued from page 8

Christian position need hardly be stated. All religious denominations have the right to set standards of behaviour for their members. It is a gross exaggeration to call this discrimination. Mr. Shannon is too quick to identify standards with prejudices. Since the DSU now feels free to arbitrate on moral and religious

questions, may we now expect a list of other beliefs it does or does not find acceptable? If they feel free to describe central tenets of Christianity, such as original sin, as problematic, why do they not come out and say they oppose that religion as such? Such extreme action would not be inconsistent with the foregoing statements. In closing, we think that the DSU ought to stick to its

mandate and, in the future, refrain from making official statements on matters pertaining to private belief or, if they cannot keep from doing so, at least attempt to accurately understand the views they are discussing. Bernard Wills,

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