

# Maclean's poisonous

by Nick Smirnow  
for Canadian University Press

Maclean's, Canada's news-magazine, is always a little hard to swallow, but this time it was downright poisonous.

The article was routine enough; the standard cops and bad guys tale.

Gentle people picking psychedelic mushrooms on Van-

couver Island are being busted by zealous RCMP squads. The Maclean's magazine machine washes them in typesetting chemicals, squeezes them through the presses and the pickers emerge as "freak invaders" who "break fences, trample crops, and disturb the

cattle".

A Maclean's reporter waxes eloquent and coins a crop of new words: psychedelacy, hirsute harvesters, psilocybin silly season, etc.

He neglects to discuss the paternalistic legislation that makes possession of some mushrooms illegal. Nor does he ask why the pickers are being busted for possession instead of trespassing, destruction, or cruelty to animals and vegetables.

Ah well, Canada's own newsmagazine admirably fills the shoes vacated by Time. The editors and reporters relate easily to the authorities and have no trouble writing from their perspective. Al-

ways on the side of the law, blind to the plight of its victims.

So what else is new, right? I was expecting maybe I.F. Stone's weekly?

But ho, what's this? this accompanying portrait of "the magic mushroom", this bright brown spotted fat headed disk? It doesn't look a bit like the floppy slimy psilocybin runts I've seen that can do such mellow and colorful things on a Vancouver evening.

In fact—here my eyes narrow—doesn't that look quite a lot like an Amanita, also hallucinogenic, but more importantly, poisonous?

Poisonous! Now this is serious! Maclean's is turning people onto poisonous mushrooms! First it's parraquat in our dope and now bad trips for unsuspecting readers of Maclean's. Rage and conspiracy theories dance in my head.

And doubt. There must be some mistake. This can't be true.

I mean, who would believe a reputable Canadian magazine or the hazy memory of some freak who has no doubt fried half his brain cells, blown up fences and probably massacred entire farm families in his quest for an illegal high.

Right, me too. But there are still some hyper skeptical people who insist on harder evidence.

So I dug.

The British Columbia Provincial Museum's GUIDE TO COMMON MUSHROOMS OF B.C. A look-alike of the Maclean's mushroom is on page 24. Its name is Amanita Pantherina and the edibility information: "POISONOUS . . . most common cause of mushroom poisoning in the Pacific Northwest . . . the danger is especially great as the species frequently occurs on lawns and in woods of populated areas."

A GUIDE TO THE MAJOR PSILOCYBIN MUSHROOM OF B.C.—small booklet with lots of pictures. None of them bears the remotest resemblance to the Maclean's magic mushroom.

A prof and a technician in the U. of Alberta Biological Sciences building, both with considerable academic experience with mushrooms: "No way is that picture of psilocybin." Three mush-

rooms in their reference texts resemble the Maclean's mushroom. They are all Amanita. "The picture looks a little touched up, but it is clearly meant to look like an Amanita."

Now, skeptics and all, we can consider: How many kids, or adults for that matter, will remember Maclean's magic mushroom? Of those, how many will run across an amanita in their yard or in the park down the road, with no cattle, no RCMP in sight, and decide to find out why feeling mellow and seeing colours is illegal? And of those, how many will get sick, hospitalized or dead?

How did that picture come to be printed? Was it simply as little thought out as the article? "Oh, any mushroom will do George, they'll never know the difference."

Was it the only pic of a hallucinogenic mushroom around? Was psilocybin not graphically striking enough? Or did somebody decide that people who "have no respect" for the law may as well have a bad trip to cure them of their urge to explore their heads?

Irresponsibility, callous indifference, or cruel intent? Not an attractive choice of possibilities. It's probably a valuable lesson for anyone who trusts Maclean's high regard for its readers. Or those who think they are getting careful and thorough reporting and haven't yet recognized the glossy Timese style: witty, smooth and almost devoid of content.

Meanwhile, if you have any friends going to Vancouver Island, make sure they're not hunting for the wrong trip.

## McCarthy case to be investigated

by Valerie Mansour  
Canadian University Press

The 1973 disputed firing of Acadia University music professor Robert McCarthy should be resolved by March 15.

Acadia Board of Governors gave approval November 25 to university president Alan Sinclair's recommendations and rejected the president's resignation.

Sinclair had tendered his resignation October 18, only five days after his installation, because he wanted freedom to resolve the McCarthy controversy.

McCarthy was refused tenure in 1973 after teaching at Acadia for one year. An independent hearing com-

mittee had recommended he be retained for another year after which his contract would be reviewed, but he was formally removed in 1975.

Sinclair has recommended that a two person committee, one member chosen by faculty and one by the Board of Governors, appoint an investigator who will study and resolve the dispute. The investigator will be appointed by December 31 and must have completed his/her task by March 15, 1979. Oral and written reports by interested people will be received by the investigator.

"The feeling at Saturday's board meeting was quite good", said William Parker,

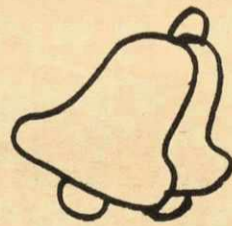
spokesperson for the Board of Governors. "People are looking forward to the McCarthy case being resolved for once and for all."

Roger Lewis, Acadia faculty association president, said that the faculty wanted binding arbitration all along. "Now we've come down to the nuts and bolts". Lewis said the faculty was concerned that the arbitration would be in private. "It will be important to have the opportunity to protect our position and challenge statements when necessary."

"But I have confidence in Dr. Sinclair", Lewis said. "I'm sure whatever happens will be accepted common practice in the country."



# CHRISTMAS DAY AT THE SUB



Thursday December 7  
noon hour

CHRISTMAS  
DINNER

TREE  
DECORATING

SANTA CLAUS

CAROLS