

# We Share the Air

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

High concentrations of chemicals in the air can have drastic effects on the health and well-being of many people. These chemicals are not limited to factories or laboratories, but are all around us. Cigarettes and scented products are constantly releasing such hazardous chemicals into our air. As the concentrations of these chemicals increase, more and more people are discovering related health ailments ranging from headaches to nausea and occasionally more serious illnesses.

Individuals working in "sick buildings" often develop chemical sensitivities over time. Others who suffer from respiratory diseases or migraines may be more sensitive to air quality at much younger ages.

As the number of faculty members and students known to suffer from chemical sensitivities at Dal increased, the questions that faced the Dalhousie University Health Safety Committee were: "What, if anything, can a University do to protect these people? What can we do to control indoor air quality?"

"We wanted to be proactive but practical by targeting something that we could do something about without huge costs," said Bill Louch, Director of Environmental Health and Safety.

The first problem dealt with

was smoking. Since 1991, the number of designated indoor smoking areas on campus has been decreased from 17 to 3. (This does not include private residence rooms or the Student Union Building, which is managed by the Student Union.)

The next topic on the committee's agenda was finding some means of controlling or reducing the use of scented products. Scented products release chemicals into the air which can be harmful to many individuals sensitive to them. A scent reduction program, *We Share the Air*, was decided on and officially launched last September by the University Health and Safety Committee.

Posters and banners sporting the *We Share the Air* logo have been posted all over campus. Faculty and staff are asked to avoid using products such as scented deodorants, aftershave, hairsprays, colognes, shampoos, soaps, or other scented personal care products whenever possible. As well, the Dalhousie Physical Plant has been asked to look for alternatives in custodial products, such as scent-free cleaning products. *We Share the Air* is a program, not a policy. There are no hard and fast rules governing it.

"We felt most people at the University will react more positively to being asked rather than told," said Louch. As an employer, the University may have to step in and enforce the policy in the

event that an employee is suffering from poor air quality in his/her work space.

Dalhousie's *We Share the Air* program is one of a few of its kind. The Safety Office has been receiving calls from universities all across the country concerning how and why it was implemented.

The posters we see across campus have been adapted and can be seen throughout North America.

The biggest challenge of the program will be to keep students informed on a year to year basis. The student body at any educational facility is a dynamic population, and constant promotion of the program is necessary to keep everyone informed. By displaying the banners and posters throughout the year, it is hoped that students will take notice and out of respect for their peers reduce or discontinue using potentially harmful products.

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# Justice

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their ways. Although this theory is still in the testing stages, results are very positive.

Christine Boyle, who was the third lecturer in the series, made such an impression on me that she made my personal list of women whom I highly admire. She was a very thought-provoking speaker. She lectured on sexual equality in the evolution of such crimes as sexual assault and the extreme intoxication defence.

"No means No. Some judges should take a refresher course on this issue," she said in relation to

sexual assault.

In the case of the extreme intoxication defence, the point made was that different societies view alcohol consumption as socially unacceptable, yet in Canada it is used as a defence. People need to practice restraint.

It is not surprising that the "Crime and Punishment" theme drew the largest crowds ever to the annual lecture series. In closing, Mother Teresa's words come to mind: "Those who are made to feel unwanted, unloved, and uncared for become a throwaway of society. That is why it is important to make everyone feel wanted."

Nobody wants an unproductive society.

## ANNOUNCEMENT/INVITATION

As part of its routine planning process, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences conducts periodic reviews of all academic departments. In 1996-97, Review Committees are examining the departments of Philosophy and Spanish. Students (undergraduate or graduate, current or former, majoring in these fields or studying them as electives) who would like to comment on the curriculum or future development of these departments, their experience as students within these departments, or any other aspect of these department's activities, are cordially invited to meet or to write to the appropriate Review Committee. All communications will be treated as strictly confidential. To set up an appointment, for an individual or a group, please contact the chairperson of the Review Committee by **December 20th, 1996.**

**Dr. D. Schroeder**  
(Department of Music, 494-3867 or 494-2418), Chair  
Unit Review Committee  
Department of Philosophy

**Dr. R. Finbow**  
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