SPECTRUM

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Drugs and the student

LEGAL EASE
Legal Information for Students

Drug abuse has become one of the largest legal problems in Canada today. The problem extends from illegal possession of drugs to the importation of drugs. This article is intended to make you, the student, aware of the legal implications of involvement with drugs.

The Federal government has two statutes to control drugs in Canada. The Narcotics Control Act deals with illegal drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, magic mushrooms and drugs made from other sources. The Food and Drug Act regulates the sale of drugs used for medical purposes. The two types of drugs covered by the Act are restricted drugs and controlled drugs. Restricted drugs include such drugs as LSD and mescaline and can only be used by someone with a special licence. Controlled drugs are drugs that are usually available with a doctor's prescription. Common controlled drugs include valium, amphetamines and barbiturates.

Possession

It is an offence to knowingly have custody or control of a drug. You can be charged with possession even if you do not have the drug on your person. If you have hidden the drug away or have someone keeping if for you, it is still considered to be in your possession. More than one person in a group can be charged with possession if a person in the group has a drug with the knowledge and consent of the other members. If a group of people are sharing a single joint, all can be charged with possession, even if not all were smoking it.

The quantity of the drug is irrelevant to the charge. Having a quantity larger than would be likely for personal use could lead to a charge of possession for the purpose of trafficking. Even if the quantity is small a charge of possession for the purpose of trafficking can be laid if other evidence points to an intention to traffic. This evidence can include scales, bags or even the accused statement that the drugs were not for personal use. Possession for the purpose of trafficking can have a punishment of up to a life imprisonment.

The penalty for possession can vary. For your first offence you could get a fine of $1,000 and/or six month imprisonment. If the Crown chooses to treat the offence as indictable you could go to jail for up to seven years.

Trafficking

Many people think that trafficking only means selling drugs. However trafficking also includes such acts as manufacturing, giving, delivering or transporting drugs. It is also trafficking if you offer to do any of these things. If you pass a friend a joint, you could be charged with trafficking. To sell sugar, claiming it is cocaine, constitutes trafficking if the intended buyer believes it is cocaine. A conviction for trafficking almost always results in a jail term, which can be as long as life imprisonment.

Other Offences

Importing and Exporting - Transporting a drug across the Canadian border or arranging to have drugs moved across the border can lead to a charge of importing or exporting. This offence results in a minimum of seven years' imprisonment and a maximum of life. The amount of drugs does not matter; only a few joints in your suitcase will get you a minimum of seven years in jail.

Cultivating - to knowingly grow marijuana plants or opium poppy is an offence. The maximum penalty is seven years in jail.

The material in this article was obtained from the pamphlet A Guide to Drug and Alcohol Law for Canadians from the Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Research Foundation.

This column is intended to be used as a guide only. It is not meant to be a replacement for professional legal advice. If you require any additional legal advice or legal counselling, please contact a lawyer.

in the pink

Using the oppressor's language

by Neil Slattery

Those of you who are sociology students will recognize my debt to Dorothy Smith for the title of this week's article. Her famous work "Using the Oppressor's Language" serves somewhat as an inspiration for what is about to follow.

She argues that life is an alienating, dehumanizing, capitalist system accustoms us to using language in an externalized and objectified manner. Our work becomes so routinized that we lose any sense of individual voice, creativity, and self-fulfillment. We then learn to organize our thoughts and our language accordingly. The long arm of the job, so to speak, results in us treating our lives as though they were textbooks and standard forms allocated to us by our capitalist oppressor. Smith then suggested that the feminist movement should include in its mandate a more humane approach to understanding our world and ourselves.

What are the implications of this for the gay liberation movement?

In the same way that we are all used or oppressed by capitalism, we as gay people also share experiences of oppression by the heterosexual community. Who was it that constructed the closets in which gay people find themselves? It certainly was not of our volition. No one would want stigmas as potent as "queer", "faggot", or "dyke" associated with them. Of course we would want to hide. No one would want to face the negative sanctions (real or imagined) that accompany coming out of the closet. The result? Gay people learn to live in fear. Fear of being exposed, fear of ridicule, and fear of being beaten up by some pompous bigot are all part of gay life in a heterosexist society. The unfortunate result of all this is that we internalize the same anti-gay messages that heterosexuals endorse. In the same way that capitalism messes with our minds, the all too common homophobic sirens take their toll as well.

1. The most striking product of this socially constructed homophobia is the overwhelming political apathy in Fredericton's gay community. Right now New Brunswick is facing landmark political changes that aim to include sexual orientation within the Human Rights Code. This legislation would protect people from discrimination on the basis of sexual identity. This means that someone could not be fired, evicted, or harassed because of their sexual orientation. This progressive measure has already been taken in Ontario, Quebec, Yukon, and Manitoba. New Brunswick could become the next province to adopt such a policy. Most gay people, however, seem completely disinterested. Organizing into a collective bargaining unit to work for beneficial social change would at least halt systemic oppression. Instead, the Fredericton gay community responds to the Ferris report with a yawn. You all loved Matthew Broderick in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off"; what gives?

2. In a recent issue of "The Gazette", an editorial dealt with the problem of poor lesbian-gay interaction. How well integrated are lesbians and gay men? It has been my experience that we have only a civil relationship at best. Instead realizing how we share the same blanket of oppression, and letting this realization break down barriers between us, we choose to largely segregate ourselves. I think our lives would be much more rewarding if there wasn't this social line of demarcation, and it certainly couldn't hurt ourselves politically to be more cohesive.

There are other examples of how poorly we treat each other and ourselves that mirror the way heterosexuals treat us. What of the ultra-feminine gay male, or the butchy lesbian? Are they welcomed as freely as the blonde bodybuilder or the tanned sun goddess? I don't think so. We need to begin to reject the desirability standards that heterosexuals have constructed for themselves. The heterosexual mass media and Hollywood television wonderland have convinced everyone that 'blonde is beautiful', 'thin is in', and 'bigger is better'. For the majority of gay people, this is an ideal that we have difficulty living up to. We were not the star jocks of the football team, we were not the prom princesses, and we shouldn't look down on ourselves for failing to be this person. Gay pride is about more than holding marches in the streets, and enacting political rallies. It is about validating ourselves - even if we don't meet the heterosexual definition of acceptability. It is not up to us to learn how to be more masculine (or more feminine as the case may be). Society needs to learn that it is not 'queer' when men are a little effeminate, or when women are masculine. Learning to feel good about yourself no matter what should be a number one priority for every gay person. Until we learn to do this, chances are we will continue to unconsciously act out homophobic behavior among ourselves.

We can learn to stop using the oppressor's language, and the first step is gay pride. Take that chance and get involved on a more substantial level with the gay community. On CHSR every Monday night at 7:00 p.m. there is a program called "Fruit Cocktail" devoted to gay issues. If you don't want to participate directly, you certainly would enjoy listening (it's quite a funny show).

For those of you reading who are still in the closet, it is time to start thinking about coming out. The process is difficult but it is also the biggest relief in the world. Opening up to your friends and family is a necessary step in coming to terms with yourself.

The first regular meeting of UNB/STU's Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA for short) meets on February 13th (that's next Wednesday). The meeting will be held up at St. Thomas in Edmund Casey Hall in Room 120 at 7:00 p.m. The guest speaker will be Dr. Tom Fish, a professor of psychology at St. Thomas, and he will be sharing his research experience and thoughts with us. Everyone is welcome so please make an effort to attend.

Crisis Talk with Naveed Majid

The Gulf Crisis pt.1

At the time of writing this letter, the Persian Gulf War is well into its 3rd week. CNN has done an incredible job covering it 'as it happens', however, I am very disappointed that virtually none of the big networks have made an attempt to document the incidents leading up to the crisis.

At one point during the crisis, I watched an average of 11 hours of news per night for 4 weeks and found hardly any information that gave the background to the dispute.

This lack of insight has given people a very narrow view of the Arabs, Muslims and the area in general. University students, potential leaders of tomorrow, are also subject to ignorance.

Few people question the fact that American invaded Grenada and Panama with no regard to the sovereignty of those countries or the United Nations. The same goes for England's invasion of the Falkland Islands. Now, these two countries hide behind the banner of the United Nations to impose their will upon another country. So I ask, why should Iraq listen to hypocrites?

Iraq has more justification to invade Kuwait than either America or England had in their invasions. I'm not justifying invasion as a means to solve problems, but only that the triste between Iraq and Kuwait was just that - between Iraq and Kuwait.

Before Iraq invaded Kuwait, OPEC nations met to discuss price. Iraq requested Kuwaits assistance in bringing oil prices to $25 per bbl. instead of the agreed to $21 per bbl. Kuwait declined the request.

Also, the disputed Rumaila oil field, 90% of which exists in Iraq and 10% in Kuwait was being discussed. Kuwait was overproducing oil from that field by 50 to 100 percent. This overproduction was in direct violation of a quota agreement set by both Kuwait and Iraq. There was more oil available on the market by these production practices and in effect this caused prices to be lower.

Kuwait was also accused of drilling at an angle into Iraq to tap their supply. Iraq felt that whatever oil was being produced from this oil field by Kuwait, was at Iraq's expense. The relative glut kept prices down and Iraq would have less oil to produce if Kuwait kept up its drilling practices. Kuwait was warned to cease or face invasion by Iraq.

The Saudis were duped by American "Intelligence" into believing that Iraq was preparing to invade Saudi Arabia as well. After deployment of American forces, Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was asked if he had proof of an Iraqi build up on the Kuwait-Saudi border. He said there was no conclusive evidence!

Thus began the Persian Gulf Crisis. Through American impulsiveness in deployment of forces and an unwillingness to bring the forces home because they would look like cowards in the eyes of the world, we have come to war.