

Pot debate continues

Parties divided over legalization

by Adam Grachnick, Ottawa Bureau

OTTAWA (CUP) — Canadian adults may soon be legally entitled to "blaze", "smoke up" or "hit up the phat chronic" if a report tabled by the Canadian Senate is accepted and passed into law.

The report released by the Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs, calls for the legalization of marijuana.

"Judges, lawyers, college students [and] brain surgeons. Everyone smokes marijuana," said Senator and committee member Tommy Banks. "Putting someone in jail for simply having a joint in their pocket is wrong."

The report has triggered intense debate and staunch criticism from many MPs.

"It's plain absurd," said Randy White, Canadian Alliance MP and vice-president of the House of Commons committee on the non-medical use of drugs. "Two of the 11 findings were irresponsible. It's a quantum leap from where we are today. We would be only country to do this [...] and that should tell you something."

The extensive 600-page report concludes that, "only behaviour causing demonstrable harm to others should be prohibited: illegal trafficking, selling to young people under the age of sixteen and impaired driving."

"Penalties for trafficking should skyrocket," Banks said. "[You should] be put in jail and throw away the key."

The report also recommends amnesty for "any person convicted of possession of cannabis under current or past legislation."

"Why was marijuana ever criminalized?" asked Banks, about the 1923 Opium and Drug act, which criminalized cannabis.

"In retrospect there was no rational

reason for criminalizing it in the first place," he added, admitting to having smoked marijuana once, at a jazz concert in 1957.

White feels the committee is condoning the use of marijuana.

"While we spend hundreds of millions of dollars saying not to smoke, here is a committee saying outright, it's okay to smoke marijuana," he said.

Banks vehemently disagrees with this position.

"Nobody is encouraging use [of] drugs," he said. "Drugs are bad and don't do you any good. [But] putting morality aside, prohibition doesn't work."

"You're living in some other place if you think prohibition laws are keeping drugs away," he said.

The Marijuana Party, whose mandate is to demonstrate the social advantages to ending cannabis prohibition, welcomes the news.

"I'm happy," said Marc-Boris St-Maurice, leader of the Marijuana Party. "[I'm] impressed with how far they [Senate Committee] went. They used explicit strong words."

"Senators have given the marijuana party our platform for the next election," St-Maurice added.

The report recommends the government set up prevention programs and to "adopt an integrated policy on the risks and harmful effects of psychoactive substances."

It also recommends that the Marijuana Medical Access regulations be changed.

"Present medicinal marijuana provisions are not effective and must be revised to provide greater access for those in need," the report observed.

Banks, who supports marijuana use for medicinal purposes, is optimistic about seeing the report become a reality.

"This has to be dealt with at all orders of government. It can be done

with only one order," he said, adding that marijuana should be controlled by the provinces.

"Fairly soon we'll see decriminalization," he said.

White, on the other hand, believes we'll never see marijuana legalized.

"It's not going to happen," he said.

"It's [report] not going to get out of there [House of Commons], believe me."

Atlantic Grads

Continued from Page 3

Canadian graduates but he is taken aback by what he perceives as omissions in the report's contents. "The fact that Atlantic Canada has lower starting wages and higher unemployment than other parts of the country is not surprising," said Hare. "What is surprising is that this report ignores the student debt crisis."

Hare believes that the low starting salaries are yet another obstacle Atlantic Canadians must face when choosing to pursue higher education.



Emma Hutchman/The Brunswickan

Last Friday was the Take Back the Night March - "Be aware, take action" was this year's slogan.

"The debt crisis in Nova Scotia is appalling. The Millennium Scholarship Foundation has done nothing for Nova Scotia. Couple that with the highest tuition in the country and then couple that with the lowest starting wages and high unemployment and you have a catastrophe," he said.

According to Fred Morley, vice president and chief economist of the Greater Halifax Partnership these potential financial hardships aren't keeping young graduates from choosing to call region's largest city home.

"Usually low wages are a reflection of a low demand for labour," said Morley. "We know that the unemployment rate in Halifax is fairly low. There are more people wanting to live and work in Halifax than there are jobs."

Morley believes that factors other than salary may be what makes Halifax most attractive to young workers.

"Wages don't tell you everything. If your costs of living are a little bit lower in Halifax then that comes into play. Quality of life is another factor as is proximity to friends and family."

According to Junor's research such intangible benefits might not be enough to keep graduates in the region. He believes that increased mobility among young Canadians means that recent graduates are free to seek their fortunes outside their home provinces.

"The businesses that are there offer the best they can. If that's good enough students take them up on it. If not they pursue other options. People migrate where the high wages are, whether the cost of living is higher or not."

Education costs unfair

by Kelly Marcella, UWO Gazette

Students in Quebec are standing against what they feel are discriminatory costs.

Undergraduate tuition cost at McGill University for the year is \$1,668.30 for residents of Quebec, and \$3,708.30 for students from other Canadian provinces.

According to the Joanne Methot, media spokesperson for the Quebec Ministry of Education, the out-of-province charge is determined by taking an average tuition from all Canadian universities.

Martin Doe, president of the Students' Society at McGill, said most students feel the differential fees are discriminatory.

Initially, students were not concerned with the tuition difference, Doe explained. With the support of their student associations, Quebec students are beginning to take a stand against their province's Ministry of Education.

"We now have a chance to address it from a political standpoint," Doe said.

"The policy is to prefer everything that's francophone over everything that's anglophone, and it's not right said Bernard Shapiro, principal and vice-chancellor of McGill.

The Ministry uses the differential fees to put Quebec universities on the same level as the rest of the country, Méthot said. With tuition fees so low for students from Quebec, higher fees will discourage outsiders from taking their spots, she added.

In Loving Memory of
Dr. Abdul Q. Lodhi

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"I am a human being.
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have a ring of dignity and pride.
That is why
I think it is the highest honour
to be a human being
in body and soul."

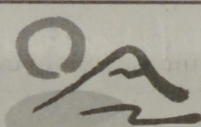
I do not love it, I hate
to be flame in the heat
ice in the cold.
But to warm the one freezing to death,
to cool the one gasping in the heat-wave,
not to flatter the powerful,
not to insult the weak,
to lend a helping hand to those who stumble,
to encourage those who suffer -
That is how to be a human being.

If you've carried dignity and worth
as a banner of struggle,
if you've never compromised with cunning and baseness,
if you haven't feared death
in the cause of truth and freedom
be proud of yourself and say:
"I've been a human being."

By Luvuandambyn Khushaan (b. 1929)
Translated by Alex Miller

In loving memory of a true friend and mentor
Dr. Abdul Q. Lodhi,
founding Director of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre,
who died 11 years ago on September 17, 1991.

Remembered every day by Melynda Jarratt and Rachel Heffling



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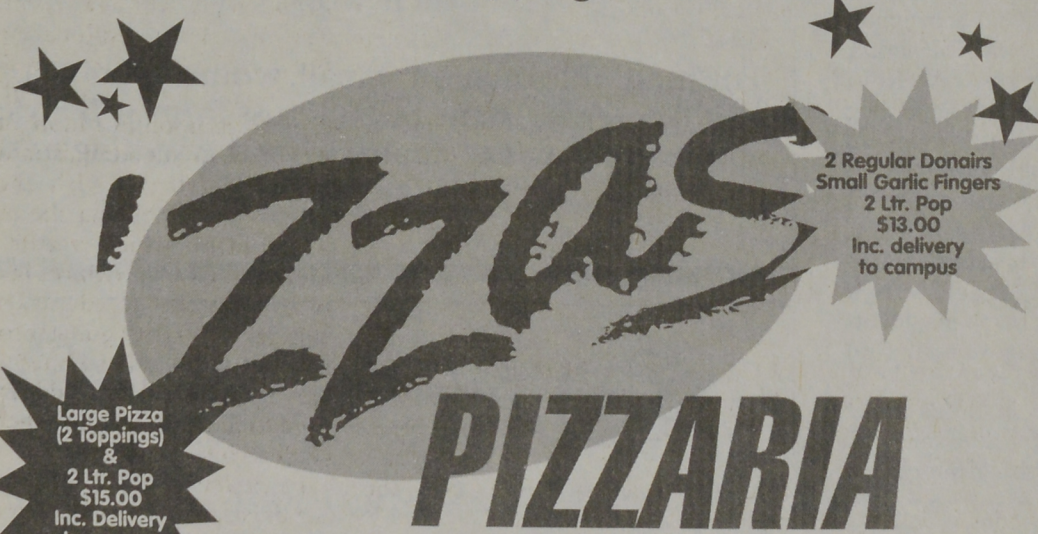
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