

THE VOICE

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www.ausu.org/voice



A Bug In Your Ear...

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am very pleased that Council has decided to rescind its previous decision to receive reimbursement for cellphone use without having to provide a receipt to show that it was for AUSU business.

All of those who were at the meeting where the motion was withdrawn voted to have it rescinded, and replaced with a new motion that now requires a bill proving that any cellphone costs for which reimbursement is being sought was for in the course of actual AUSU business.

Accountants call this type of procedure as being in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), which AUSU is even more keen to follow now, with its new Vice President of Finance and Administration and President at the forefront of this level of accountability. I would like to thank those members of Council that were present, all of whom voted for the new GAAP-complaint procedures for their wisdom in doing so.

It was pointed out to me today, and rightly so, to an extent, that I mentioned the names of only those who moved and seconded the original non-GAAP compliant motion about cellphone expenses. It was also suggested that I should somehow apologise for quoting the motion in the fashion that I did. I am not going to do so, because it stated beside the name of the mover and the seconder of the non-GAAP compliant motion that it was approved unanimously; therefore, I was not singling out any one person, but the group as a whole. If you would like, I can provide you with the names of those who were eligible to vote at the meeting, but most of these people were the same ones that came to realise that they had made an error and corrected it, with an exception or two. Again, I would like to thank Council for making a very wise and proactive decision in this matter.

In politics of any kind, it's not so much a matter for me of whether I love, hate, agree or disagree with a particular policy or action, it's more an issue of the action having been undertaken according to Bylaws, Policies, Legislation and the like, that matters. I have to continue to believe in this principle and pay heed to it everyday, lest I become a hypocrite yet again. Luckily, AU has several courses that will help me deal with this problem of mine. Perhaps they will teach me that while I live in a glass house (made from fairly thick glass), that I should not be throwing big stones at the wrong time and in the wrong way.

Darren L. Kereluk



Marijuana: No Different from Alcohol?

Part one of two on the issue of legalizing marijuana.

By Tamra Ross Low

My issue this week is complex, so I have broken it into two parts. The second will follow next week.

The debate over the decriminalizing of marijuana use has reached a fevered pitch. Public opinion has become more tolerant of pot, and police are confused about whether or not they should continue to charge people who are caught using it. At a recent convention of the [National Association of Professional Police](#), members "agreed it's time for the government to make up its mind on marijuana: either decriminalize it, or give police the funding they need to enforce the law." But why is decriminalization even an issue?

Clearly many of the people who support legal marijuana are recreational drug users, but recently many non-users have taken up the banner of legalized pot. These people seem to have been convinced that legal marijuana is the only way to serve those people who are suffering from illnesses that can be effectively treated with pot.

The issue is cloudy, however. First, there is no need to decriminalize pot in order to make it available for prescription. Morphine, Demerol, codeine, and other opiates have been legally available via prescription for decades, yet it is still illegal for people to obtain these drugs without medical supervision. Most people agree with this law, as they recognize both the value of opiates as a potent form of pain-relief for the terminally ill, as well as the danger of their use for recreational purposes.

Second, there is scant evidence that marijuana is an effective medical treatment for anything, with the possible exception of glaucoma. However, to suggest that this means that pot is good for everyone is the same as believing that since insulin makes diabetics feel better, we should all have a shot every morning. Indeed, such a prescription would most likely prove deadly for most of us. The logic of medical value argument simply does apply to the recreational use issue.

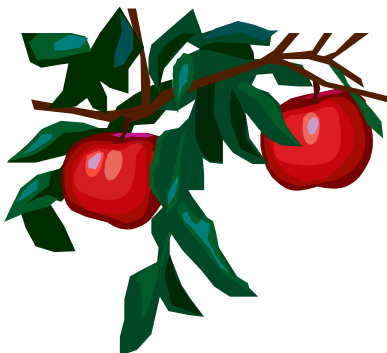
Third, people are now coming out of the woodwork suggesting that pot is an excellent painkiller and, as Championed by Calgarian Grant Krieger, a valuable treatment for Multiple Sclerosis. This may be the case, but so far, there is very little data backing up these claims. Some studies have shown that the marijuana provides only mild pain relief, not much greater than aspirin. Numerous people have claimed miraculous benefits from marijuana use, but this has also been the case with many experimental drugs that have ultimately failed to live up to expectations. Usually, a drug must pass rigorous testing and show both efficacy and a low risk of harm. People seem to be willing to accept marijuana as a treatment without any hard evidence. We cannot simply take the word of users, because smoking marijuana has a euphoric effect which could motivate people to claim other benefits from the drug. I am not saying that sick people on pot do not feel better, but then so would people who snorted some cocaine. Does the drug alleviate their symptoms, or does it just make them too high to care? Moreover, is it dangerous?

If we are going to talk about legalizing pot, we have to take a better look at the negative consequences. I have experience with therapy groups for people with anxiety and panic disorders. I know that many therapists have noted a link between pot use and panic attacks. One told me that many of his patients had their first attack while using pot, and another asks about recreational drug use as part of her initial assessment of neurotic patients.

From my own informal research, I have noted that many people with anxiety disorder can trace the beginning of their illness to the beginning of their marijuana use. What is scary, however, is that most patients do not correlate the two, and instead may increase pot use to alleviate anxiety and paranoia. In fact, many drug studies have noted that marijuana use amongst anxiety sufferers is high. Until recently, researchers have assumed that the two are merely correlated, not that a cause-effect relationship exists. Evidence from recent studies suggests that marijuana may indeed be a causal factor in anxiety illness, supporting what many therapists have suspected all along. A recent article in *Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly* (Feb 19, 2001 v13 i8 p8) entitled "Marijuana may have mental health effects," noted that "several harmful physiological effects have been associated with smoking marijuana, but ... the drug may lead to mental health problems as well. Scientists reviewing [sic] several studies reported in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* that marijuana use can generate anxiety problems in people who do not have a mental illness, and can worsen mental health problems for those with a diagnosis." The question this raises is, who will be responsible if the government legalizes marijuana without enough research, and thousands of people end up with lifelong anxiety problems?

A large worry regarding this is that despite the fact that pot can be eaten (many commonly bake it into brownies) most marijuana is smoked. This becomes a problem as there is no way to contain the narcotic to the smoker alone. Second-hand marijuana smoke is potent and capable of entering the blood stream of anyone who breathes it. Pot-smokers know this all too well: it is common for smokers to group together, sharing the smoke of a single joint by exhaling into each other's mouths. Given this, there is no way for people who are sitting near the smoker to avoid having cannabinoids (the active components of marijuana smoke) from entering their bloodstreams, though some of us definitely do not want these drugs in our systems. The repercussions of this are numerous.

Next week: Part II - Complications inherent in decriminalization.



From My Perspective: The Immigrant Legacy

By Debbie Jabbour

My apple tree is full. Branches heavily weighed down, apples falling to the ground, making a mess on the grass. I have yet to taste one - I don't really like apples much. But everyone says they are delicious and I'm actively trying to give away the surplus.

Looking at the lovely rosy skin of the fruit on the tree, fruit I have no interest in eating - made me recall a story my grandfather told me.

My grandparents on both sides were European immigrants who arrived in Canada during WW1. My paternal grandfather recently celebrated his 96th birthday. Some years ago he began to write his memoirs - and has thus provided his family with a treasured legacy. His life and his experience have influenced me profoundly, and taught me the importance of tenacity, to never give up even when faced with what seems to be insurmountable difficulty. He taught me to always find something of value in even the most tragic of life's happenings. I would like to share a few of his experiences.

Bob Johnson was born in England in 1905, and was barely 9 years old when World War I broke out. Bob never knew his father, and his mother had become a Military nurse, so Bob and sister Mabel were made wards of the government. Along with many young English boys of the time, he was separated from his family and sent to the English countryside to school for a while. He was shuttled from one place to another, only being able to maintain minimal contact with sister Mabel. Little more than a year later, rumours started to fly at boarding school regarding young British boys being sent to Canada to help farmers provide food during the war. For Bob, the idea of enough food was becoming a distant reality - a single apple was a rare treat that all the boys fought over - in his words;

*"I well remember one lad opening his parcel and producing a big red apple. Most of us around him had never tasted such a treasure for many a month. Twenty mouths around him drooled as he took a huge bite and chewed with delight, his eyes rolling upward in ecstasy. A bedlam of begging burst out"**

At the tender age of 10, alone, away from his family and everything that was familiar, Bob would contemplate his future far into the night, knowing he was soon to be separated from his sister and *"forcibly taken from the land of my birth and sent to a foreign land thousands of miles away...among strange people in a strange land...not knowing what would happen to me".** With the creative imagination of children, he and the others envisioned a boat trip that would involve *"scrubbing decks and shovelling coal...we heard about the submarines...if we should be sighted we would be put into small boats and have to row the rest of the way across the Atlantic".**

The day finally came and Bob was on a boat to Canada. He did not know it then, but he would never see his mother again.

The trip was relatively uneventful, lots of seasickness but no submarines. Finally Newfoundland was in sight. Around noon, the ship slowed and finally came to a stop to allow immigration and custom's men to come aboard. Bob reports what happened next:

"Shortly after, a lot of activity started up on the top deck. A space was cleared and canvas screens were put up. Our curiosity was relieved when we were told that we were to assemble up there for medical inspection.

The doctor and a nurse took us one at a time. We were scanned and probed, front and rear, inside and out. They seemed to pay special attention to throats. We soon found out why. It was announced that all of us who had not had our tonsils removed previously, would have to have them taken out before we would be allowed to land in Canada. To our surprise, the operations were to be performed, not in an operating room below, but up on deck in the sunshine!

*The nurse swabbed my throat with some evil-tasting anaesthetic. Then, ten minutes later, a contraption was slipped over my head that kept my mouth open and my tongue pulled forward. The doctor inserted an ugly pair of tongs down my throat, wiggled them around a bit, and CRUNCH, out came my tonsils. Then the nurse did another quick swab, with the cheerful comment that it would stop the bleeding"**

Two days later the ship was finally docked at Quebec city. It was September tenth, 1915. My grandfather was 10 years old and for better or worse, he was now a Canadian.

*My Rugged Road, R.W. Johnson. Unpublished memoirs.

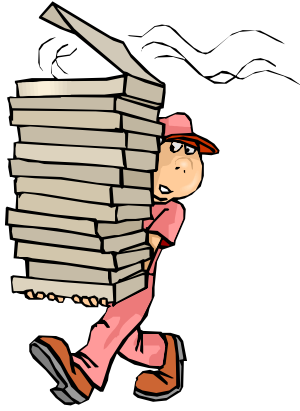
ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AUSU

Applications are currently being accepted for a Club Organizer Assistant, who will help maintain database information regarding student clubs and students. Applicants should be familiar with the use of computer databases, have access to email, and be aware of FOIPP issues. The amount of time required for this position will vary, and may be between 1-5 hours per week, depending on the interest expressed. For further information or for an application form, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator by email at mgueffroy@ausu.org.

The Volunteer Coordinator of AUSU is currently accepting applications for Academic Committee Members. These members are needed to address academic concerns of students requiring advocacy. Some research is involved, as well as the maintenance of a database of the concerns and their current status. Members will also be expected to provide support for student academic activities and inter-committee cooperatives, and to monitor student discussion boards and course reviews to pinpoint areas of concern. Applicants should be able to attend monthly meetings, and must have an interest in academic issues. They should be able to work cooperatively and in a spirit of mutual respect within a group, as well as having an understanding of the importance of maintaining a productive relationship with AU, and approaching advocacy issues in a non-conflictual way with AU at all times. For further information or for an application form, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator by email at mgueffroy@ausu.org.

Applications are currently being accepted for a Volunteer Coordinator Assistant, who will be responsible for maintaining a database of persons who have contacted the Volunteer Coordinator for information about volunteer positions at AUSU. This person should be familiar with the use of computers and specifically databases, have access to email daily, and be aware of FOIPP issues. The successful applicant may be required to complete an Oath of Confidentiality. The amount of time will vary, but ranges from about 1-5 hours per month, depending on the interest expressed by potential volunteers. For further information or for an application form, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator by email at mgueffroy@ausu.org!

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: September 15, 2001



Pizza Guy Chapter One

By Wayne Benedict

When I look back through my working life, one job stands out as a worse disaster than all of the rest put together. When I quit school after grade 9, I tried my hand at phone solicitation, door-to-door Kirby vacuum sales, construction labourer, and labourer in a glass factory among other “trades”. None of these positions could hold a candle to pizza delivery driver when it came to an eye rolling position from Hell.

Since I couldn't deliver pizzas without a car, my father was kind enough to purchase me a 1968 Pontiac Grand Parisienne. This thing was a tank and had a similar gas mileage—not a great feature when I had to pay for my delivery gas. Actually, I'm pretty sure that I paid more out in fuel costs than I made in wages. Anyway, one weekend night I was making my last delivery in Coquitlam. It was around 2 am when I stopped the car at the customer address. When I stepped out of the car, large steaming pizza in hand, I heard a female voice in distress. Even at 16, I had a reckless heroic streak. My father had always taught me that a man never hit a woman... another man was OK, though. I tossed the pizza back onto the bench seat, which promptly rejected it causing the large steaming pizza to make a large steaming mess on the floor of my tank. This event did little to improve my deteriorating mood. I reached under the front seat and extracted the steel little league bat that was always there. I never played baseball, but I would later do an excellent job of convincing the RCMP that I did.

Upon rounding the corner of the street, I was confronted by a guy that seemed half again as tall as myself. Obviously drunk, he was yelling at a woman and knocking her about. I was hitting my bat on the asphalt as a warning when I approached and stated, “leave the girl alone, man” in a voice that was an octave or two higher than was my own. I cannot remember the conversation that transpired between us next, but he attempted to kick me, and in blocking it, my new watch was broken. Sticking his finger under my nose must have been the last straw because my bat made contact with his forearm, which suddenly hung at an odd angle. At this point, the woman changed sides and began shouting “leave my husband alone you #!@&”.

Making a hasty retreat to the tank, I began to drive back to the pizza joint. In my rear view mirror, I could see that he was running after my car with a two-by-four in one hand, and a strangely flopping appendage supporting the other. Half way back to my employer's place of business, I saw a police car at an intersection and flashed my high beams at him but he drove off. I had wanted to inform him of the drunken lunatic that was beating on his wife. After convincing one of the other drivers to take a new large steaming pizza back to the scene of the incident, I was more than ready to call it a night. When I entered the parking lot, however, I found that curious RCMP officers surrounded my car, one of them being the constable that I had flashed my lights at. It was at this point that I explained the entire story as I saw it, including my aspirations of future baseball stardom. I must have been convincing because no charges were laid. Actually, I think it had more to do with the fact that I was more than a decade younger and half the size of my opponent.

You might think that an incident like this would clue me in to the fact that pizza delivery driver was not the right job for me. Guess again, it took many more events before I finally gave up that lucrative career. More later...



FED WATCH

By Karl Low

The Gifts keep on Coming

It shouldn't surprise me. The banks pay the politicians for influence, the politicians pay the people for votes. In this week's set of gifts, we've managed to get [46.2 million](#) from the federal government for highway repairs, [26.4 million](#) for Alberta researches to work on fighting diabetes, and the [opening](#) of a new regional office of CIDA in Edmonton.

CIDA stands for Canadian International Development Agency, and they are primarily the branch of government which handles foreign aid. Their supposed mission in Edmonton? A coaching and support role for those businesses and volunteer organizations which may wish to work with CIDA in developing countries. Laudable, certainly, but necessary? After all, there is already a CIDA office in Vancouver, and anybody who really wants to help out developing countries wouldn't find it very hard in the first place to get in contact with CIDA if they wanted to. The crowing touch? Having a CIDA office in Alberta isn't even new. This [news release](#) shows we had one in Camrose until the Federal Government cut spending in 1990 and took it away.

Not that any of these things are bad, and certainly the funding, especially in the research area, is greatly needed and appreciated. It leaves a sour taste in my mouth though to see all this largesse coming now, on the heels of the Federal Liberals coming to town and at the same time as the Prime Minister is espousing how Alberta needs to share with the rest of Canada.

If politicians really wanted to make an impression on me, they'd do what was right all the time, not just when they could cash in on it.

More Subsidies for the Energy Industry

Here's an industry that just really needs our help. They must, because we certainly keep giving it to them. The latest comes in the form of SECAP, or the Sulphur Emission Control Assistance Program. What is it? It's a program that allows producers of sour gas wells to not pay their full amount of royalties due so that they'll have the money to ensure that their sour gas wells aren't endangering our health.

Isn't this energy industry the same one that posted record profits last year? The one that has jacked our gas and utility prices through the roof? And now we're giving them extra money so that they don't have to take a cut in their profits to ensure their own wells meet proper environmental standards?

Would someone please explain to our government, and our energy industry, that they don't have the right to make a profit on destroying the environment?

Of course, the [news release](#) mostly glosses over where the money is going and instead concentrates on how this means Albertans can enjoy a safe environment. I tend to think slapping a whopping big fine on non-compliant companies would tend to ensure Albertans would enjoy a safe environment as well. But maybe that's too simple.

Saskatchewan is Listening

Premier Calvert and a number of the Provincial Ministers in Saskatchewan has embarked on a "[Listening Tour](#)" which has covered over 2,700 kilometres since August 8th. By going from community to community, the Premier is getting an up close look at just what is important to the people of his province.

I can only hope that more provinces and Premier's follow his lead. Communicating with the people is the essence of a representative democracy. It's also a great wish of mine that the Prime Minister would do something like this as well, but somehow I doubt would be willing to listen to Canadians, and I have even more doubt that he'd like what we have to say. After all, the Prime Minister is well aware of what it takes to lead Canada - Ontario.

The Advice Man (DEAR JEROME)

I have just finished my first semester ...and have 2 1/2 years to go through AU. As my major is computer sciences, I am having difficulty with some of the course material. I'm sure that if I was to work in a group that it would be much easier. How to I find or organize a study group in my city for some of these courses?

Thanks, Michelle

Thanks for your question Michelle...the Athabasca University Students' Union has a Study Buddy program that could be of some help. I would suggest that you contact the AUSU General Manager, Christine Lynch, and she can provide further information about the Study Buddy program. Her contact information is:

Athabasca University Students' Union, Edmonton Learning Centre
Christine Lynch, General Manager
(800) 788-9041 ext. 3413
clynch@ausu.org

Dear Mr. Advice:

I have been a student at AU for a year now, and I have just paid for four course extensions for the second time this year! I just can't seem to get my courses done on time. I'm working full time and going to university full time too. Do you think I'm trying to take on too much?

Thanks for your help.

Suzie

Dear Suzie:

I would suggest that you take a lighter course load or work part-time. I do think that you are taking on too much at one time, and patience is the virtue that leads to success. Here is an idea!

Try calling the Counselling Services at AU, and ask Rhonda or one of the very nice ladies (or gentleman) there to help you plan your courses.

Dear Sir:

My girlfriend gets mad every time I try to study. She says I don't pay enough attention to her, and that University is a waste of time. I have a rich mother and don't really need to work, but I still want a meaningful career. Can you help?

Charles

Co-Dependant Charles:

Are you a man or a mouse? Your girlfriend gets mad every time you try to study...this exhibits co-dependant and controlling characteristics in your girlfriend, and you need to make a decision. Do you want to be controlled for the rest of your life? And tell me this, how does your mother being rich have any relevance...who do you think you are-the Prince of Wales? Are you going to bum off your mother for the rest of your life? GET A JOB-or at least a university education!

The Advice Man (DEAR JEROME)

COUNSELLING SERVICES AT ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

The student life is not an easy one, particularly for AU students who are often working full or part-time and/or trying to raise a family while squeezing out blocks of study time where possible. AU recognizes the challenges facing its students and provides a variety of support services through its counsellors - Julia McDonald, Julia Nielsen, and Ken Dickson, as well as through its other Student Services areas.

When students have been out of school for many years or even decades, the return to formal learning can be confusing and overwhelming at times. Counselling Services has a number of Study Skills resources, which it makes available through AUSU. Students can also book an appointment with a counsellor to work through specific difficulties they are experiencing in their studies. This can be done by contacting Rhonda Guay or Monica Wolanuk in the Counselling Services intake unit either by phone (1-800-788-9041, extension 6723), by e-mail (counselling@athabascau.ca), or by using the Online Counselling Appointment Form on the AU Student Services web site (<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/counselling/apptForm.htm>).

In addition to helping students strengthen their study skills, counsellor also offer learning support in exam preparation, reducing exam anxiety, time management, overcoming procrastination and other areas of a student's life that may be interfering with greater academic success.

Proper alignment between program choice and career aspiration is important if a student is to maintain a strong sense of purpose and motivation in their studies. Career interest exploration and testing, career vision re-evaluation, appropriate program choice, and occupational information and awareness are other areas where AU's counsellors can assist students in a more rewarding AU experience.

The problems that students run into often become more difficult to resolve successfully because students do not access the learning support services available to them while there is still enough time remaining. Counselling Services is raising its profile through articles like this so students will have a greater chance of academic success by using our services as soon as the need arises. Don't ignore the problems that obstruct your academic progress. Such problems typically do not go away. Rather, they tend to get worse as less and less time remains to resolve them or learn new skills to overcome them. Call us as soon as you recognize that our learning support services could benefit you.

So, check out the Counselling Services web site at <http://www.athabascau.ca/html/services/advise/conserv.html> or contact us by phone or e-mail if we can assist you in achieving greater academic success, because your success is our goal.

Phone: 1-800-788-9041, extension 6723

E-mail: counselling@athabascau.ca



ENLIGHTENING INFORMATION:

\$7,000 in scholarships to be awarded to Métis students at Athabasca University

Edmonton, July 24, 2001 -- The competition is now open for seven \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded this fall to Métis students who have demonstrated scholarly merit in studies at Athabasca University.

The awards, funded by Canative Housing Corporation, are available to Métis students who have completed at least three credits (normally, one course) through Athabasca University. Canative

Housing Corporation director Herb Belcourt presented the University with the scholarship monies -- and a commitment to fund the new awards for at least 10 years -- two years ago.

The application deadline is October 31, 2001. To apply, contact:

Janice De Girolamo
Office of the Registrar
1 University Drive
Athabasca, AB, T9S 3A3

T: 1-800-788-9041 (ext. 6249)

E: janiced@athabascau.ca

Are you an Artist? AUSU supports the arts!

AUSU is interested in purchasing original works of art from students for use in promotional purposes. These promotions may include: gifts from AUSU to graduates at convocation, tokens of appreciation for volunteers, special presentations, etc.

The works of art must:

- be created by an AU Student
- be within a value range \$0-\$500.
- be accessible or easily transportable to Alberta

If you are an artist of any kind who creates a product you feel we would be able to use for such a purpose, please contact djabbour@ausu.org. Supply a brief description of the art object, a picture if you have it, and its market value.

International Year of the Volunteer

2001 is the International Year of the Volunteer, and the title recognizes the contribution that volunteers make to our lives every day. Our communities would not be whole without volunteers.

As a Writer/Reporter for The Voice, I would like to include a profile of a worthy volunteer in each week's issue of this newsletter. I invite you to contact me by email at markgueffroy@hotmail.com if you know someone who has made a contribution to their community, or to the AU community, by volunteering their time. This person may receive an honorarium for their volunteer efforts, but cannot be a paid staff member or considered an employee.

Celebrate Volunteers with the staff and volunteers at The Voice!

WRITE FOR THE VOICE!

Fill on our online application at www.ausu.org/voice/write.html or contact Tammy Moore at tmoore@ausu.org.