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# Editorial

*Editor's Note: This commentary appeared in the University of Winnipeg's student paper 'The Uniter'. Although the opinions expressed may not necessarily reflect those of this publication, I thought it might be of interest to UPEI readers. Comments?*

## Say No to Drug Hysteria

The so-called "War on Drugs" is, and has always been an annoying media campaign. Ever since Ron Reagan began blaming tolerant attitudes towards illicit substance abuse for North America's social ills, intelligent people all over the continent have been groaning in disbelief.

It is difficult to ascertain what our government has to gain by attempting to legislate morality but in an effort to convince us that substance use is immoral, our political leaders have asked us to accept several dubious posits. Firstly, the now-universal phrase, "Say No to Drugs" implies that all drug use is equally harmful, and that the use of any drug is a physiologically dangerous criminal activity. Nancy Reagan would have us believe that there is not difference between the occasional cannabis user and an intravenous heroin addict.

The suggestion that the casual marijuana smoker is criminally deviant and a threat to our society is laughable, and yet there exists an even more entrenched anti-drug myth. The "War on Drugs" philosophy speaks very infrequently to the issue of alcohol abuse. The careful distinction made between "alcohol" and "drugs" is the most irresponsible distortion ever put forward by the reigning anti-drug forces.

Approximately eighty percent of Canadians use alcohol. Alcohol abuse may easily be considered one of the country's most damaging social problems, with alcohol use figuring very prominently in statistics concerning vehicular deaths, violent crime

and a wide variety of physical and mental health problems. The hypocrisy is staggering.

Because we live in a country where powerful breweries and distilleries can influence government policy, alcohol is neatly excluded from the Drug War. We, as Canadians, are not encouraged to abstain from using drugs. Rather, we are encouraged to buy our drugs from conveniently taxable, government-approved sources.

Until now, Canadian universities have had a long and proud history of resisting mindless, blanket anti-drug propaganda. Members of York University's faculty of law, for instance, played an admirable role in producing the Canadian government's 1973 Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drug. This enlightened report, suggested, among other things, that cannabis products ought to be much less regulated than opiate drugs. Unfortunately, this open-minded atmosphere seems increasingly absent.

The U of W is a liberal arts institution. As students in such an environment, we expect to enjoy some degree of intellectual freedom. The posters displayed in our university that read "Drugs: Dumb" are a symbolic affront to our individual freedoms, as well as an insult to our collective intelligence. It is sad to see such mindless hysteria in a place of higher learning.

Although a resurgence of tolerant attitudes towards marijuana use, in particular, is not likely in the future, it is important that students at least question the sagacity of this country's drug laws. It is not my intention, in this article, to encourage drug use. I do encourage, however, a reexamination of the Canadian government's perception of reality and the blind obedience with which many seem to follow it.

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