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## EDITORIAL

# Goin' to the Chapel

## And we're gonna get bankrupt

**E**VERY ONCE IN A WHILE YOU run across one of those little societal oddities that characterizes modern life, and you don't know whether to snicker uncontrollably or turn in your human race membership card. This writer had one of those flashes of insight on stumbling upon the *Guardian/Patriot's* "Bridal Edition" supplement-- just in time for Valentine's Day, too. Many folks venerate the rituals of romance and marriage-- there are whole magazines devoted to the latter topic-- but this scribbler admittedly finds romantic and matrimonial dogma about as heart-warming as roadkill. It's not anything against the institution of marriage--far from it. What's disturbing is the degree to which love and marriage, like many ideals, are being confused with and subverted to the great god Materialism.

There's an old slogan that runs, "Say it with flowers." And it's not just flowers, bud. Everywhere you look, the media is telling you that you can express or win affection by buying this or that product for yourself or your loved one. This gets particularly bloody near Valentine's Day, as the stores are awash in a sea of red-- chocolate, jewellery, embroidery and who-knows-what-else, all twisted into heart shapes and sprinkled across store shelves like some gaudy case of architectural measles. The prevailing commercial wisdom seems to be that love can be purchased-- but that's no truer in the department stores than it is in the red light district. True affection cannot be bought.

Despite this, our society has come to view marriage, the ultimate validation of love, as a ritual for which certain materialistic trappings

are necessary. The aforementioned "Bridal Supplement" reads like an ad for said trappings, with informative articles on such matrimonial paraphernalia as consultants (who help you decide how much to spend on this stuff), bridal

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gowns, tuxedos, bridesmaid dresses, tiaras (!), jewellery, reception halls, trousseaus, cakes, videos (if you're spending this much you'll want to keep this event forever), and of course, the ubiquitous diamond wedding ring.

That last object strikes one as particularly perverse. If she really loves you, why would she want you to spend something approximating your life savings on a sparkly rock? And if you

really love her, are you so insecure that you need to validate this by purchasing a sparkly rock? For that matter, what does a diamond have to do with love? It's pretty, but so are a variety of less expensive materials. It's permanent, but so is a nice little parcel of land (and more useful)-- and besides, there's something morbidly perverse about buying an inanimate object that will probably outlive you-- to say nothing of the marriage. The idea of diamonds being symbolic of an eternal, unbreakable marital bond is admittedly an appealing one, and one of the nobler sentiments of matrimonial dogma, but it's very difficult to rationalize such an expenditure nonetheless.

Not surprisingly, the diamond ring is a tradition begun by the rich. The first lucky gem recipient in recorded history was Mary of Burgundy, who in 1477 was given a diamond ring by her beau, Archduke Maximilian of Austria. Hmm... is it mere coincidence that both engagement rings and World War I got their start with an Austrian Archduke? One wonders.

This time of year makes it painfully clear that we have a love affair with things. It's a futile passion since material life and pursuits are transient, but many people continue to lust after things or the human relationships that they think things can buy. Ironically, the best things in love are free--affection, compassion, and tenderness; loyalty and fidelity; honesty; passion. You can't buy the good stuff and you don't need to, no matter what the advertisers say. Like the old song says: "People who love people are the luckiest people in the world."

Sean McQuaid  
Dry-eyed editor

## Letters

### Two points

Dear X-Pressers,

Thank you for that informative article on student lounges. I have been here three years, majoring in Canadian Studies and minoring in Classics. While bearing the dubious distinction of studying in two of the smallest departments possible at this university, I have been, for three years, unaware that I had any claim to lounging space anywhere at this university. Now I suddenly discover that both my disciplines entitle me to kick off my shoes in a room with

nice furniture. I am truly impressed. Thank you.

Point two: these bomb threats to Main Building were telephoned in at a similar point in time to when the football lobbyists were being turned down in their bid to waste great gobs of university and alumni money on the desires of men like Tex MacDonald, who's too old to play football anyway. No football...sudden bomb threats. Coincidence? Hmm...

### Thanks from the Lung Association

Dear X-Press,

On behalf of the P.E.I. Lung Association, I would like to compliment Sean McQuaid on his well-written and thoughtful editorial on smoking in the X-Press (February 1). The recent events surrounding decisions on tobacco

smuggling have been of great concern to the P.E.I. Lung Association. We understand that manufacturers of tobacco products and the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers Council have put considerable pressure on the government to reduce tobacco taxes as a mechanism to reduce smuggling. This is a rather ironic situation as these are the people who reap the profits on both the smuggled and legal products and basically have done very little, if anything, to prevent their products from reentering Canada illegally. In fact, there is very little demand for Canadian tobacco products in the U.S.A., which would suggest that export to the States is chiefly there for smuggling back into Canada.

Our deepest concern is with how the decreased tobacco taxation will affect our smoking prevention programs. Already too many young people, particularly women, are

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