

# Dalhousie Student Council

announces openings on the following non-council committees

- Academic Affairs
- Sport and Recreation
- Library Committee
- Bookstore Committee
- Alumni Teaching Award
- SUNS Campus Committee
- Course Evaluation

to be appointed October 5/80

for more information contact your Student Council representative or drop in to the Council offices Rm. 222 Dal SUB

# High textbook prices - who's to blame?

by Andrew Sinclair

So you have just returned from the bookstore with enough books to rebuild the Great Wall of China but no money to buy food for the next month. The bookstore is really a rip-off joint, right? Well, not really.

Of course, it cannot be denied that textbook prices are extremely high. Unfortunately, however, there is not much the bookstore can do about this.

The philosophy of the bookstore, according to manager Irving Kirk, is that it is basically a non-profit organization. Given this it seems reasonable to expect prices to be lower than in commercial book stores. In the publishing business, however, there is a big difference between textbooks and trade books. (Trade books are novels, mysteries, general non-fiction works and the like.) The difference that counts in so far as students are concerned is the fact that while trade books are sold to the bookstores at a 40% discount of the list price, textbooks are sold at a mere 20% discount. The result is that the bookstore actually loses money on the textbooks it sells. To compensate for this, the store must sell any trade books that it stocks (such as many of the books required for English classes) at the regular list price just like everybody else.

Even this, however, is not

always sufficient; during the 76-77 school year the bookstore, according to Parker Staples of the Business Office, lost more than \$100,000. In 1977, the bookstore was moved to its present location in the basement of the SUB, and its current manager, Irving Kirk, was hired. Since then, things have improved. The payroll has been cut in half, gross sales have gone up considerably, and while figures have not yet been published for last year, in the year up to March 1979 the bookstore actually showed a minimal profit.

Much of the loss, says Kirk, was absorbed by an increase in sales of jackets, sweatshirts and records—the luxury items—which have a mark up ranging from 30 to 50 percent. Still, prices are fairly low. Stationery is cheaper in the bookstore than in most stationery stores (drugstores, however, are the best bet for basic supplies like looseleaf and scribblers) and records, despite the small stock, are generally competitive with Kellys and A&A.

### Publishers—The Real Villain

The fact still remains, though—textbooks are expensive, and according to Ray Cleveland, history professor at the University of Regina, this is a deliberate aim of most textbook publishers. In an article written for the Cana-

dian University Press, Cleveland maintains that publishers try to make their books as big and bright as possible. This helps them sell, but it also pushes the price way up. Cleveland also points out the extraordinarily high quality of most textbooks. Printed on high quality non-yellowing paper with special long lasting inks, and bound in sturdy hardcover bindings, most textbooks, claims Cleveland, are designed to last from three to five centuries. Yet most are used only once, and those that endure are usually obsolete within five or ten years. In the competition for sales, too, there is widespread duplication of material, adding further to costs.

There are alternatives—the Dalhousie Math Department, for instance, prints an inexpensive set of notes for its introductory calculus course, which, since they are periodically revised and are directly related to the course, they actually are more useful than the text, which is available for reference in the library. The W.W. Norton publishing company publishes a series of critical editions of various major works of literature, which as high quality paperbacks containing critical essays and biographies, constitute a reasonable compromise between the cheap paperback and the expensive textbook. These alternatives, however, are very hard to find.

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# Psych department deemed incompetent

REGINA (CUP)—In a western Canada precedent, the psychology department at the University of Regina has been placed under receivership by the university administration.

The move follows years of problems and, more recently, numerous complaints about the quality of education in the department from psychology students.

In May of this year a group of nine psychology students went to the press and the Minister of Education with complaints about the quality of education provided by the department of psychology. The students alleged most of their professors were incompetent. In one graduate level class the only required text was a Chinese comic book.

The month after students went public with their concerns, the university administration took action.

The department of psychology was placed into re-

ceivership, the department lost its right to self government, and a management advisory board was established to govern its affairs as of July 1.

Problems have existed in the psychology department for a number of years. The university commissioned two reports in 1979 to investigate the alleged problems and provide recommendations for dealing with them. One report was produced by Tom Nelson of the University of Alberta and the other by Alvin Mahrer, of the University of Ottawa.

Mahrer's report, which was obtained by the university student newspaper, the Carillon, indicates the problems in the psychology department have their roots in the office of the dean of graduate studies, the dean of arts, and the department itself.

Mahrer indicates the office of the dean of graduate

studies has not fulfilled its duty to ensure thesis supervisors are sufficiently qualified.

Referring to the office of the dean of arts, Mahrer said, "with regard to many of the problems in the department of psychology, there seems to be little agreement as to the functions and responsibilities of this office relative to those problems."

Mahrer states, "there are at least two likely conclusions in this regard. One is that clear and sober responsibilities do not reside in this office... the other is that this office does not meet its duties and responsibilities."

Reaction to the release of Mahrer's report has been favorable on campus. The university administration, which tried to suppress the report, has said it regrets their release but has no further comment.