

Campus cops should serve students

by Ken MacDougall

Campus police harassment has been a major bitch of the student body this year, particularly in the Student Union Building. Complaints of excessive ID checks, the number of campus cops at SUB events (and their behaviour), and the whole question of having a student police force head the list.

The complaints are not new. They have been made off and on over the past few years. As a result, the university Senate has finally set up an enquiry into the function and duties of the force. Student senator, Peter Harvison, committee chairman, says the report should be ready by March, if not earlier. Implementation of the recommendations probably won't begin, then, until at least next year.

The force at present consists of about 100 male and three female students, the largest percentage of which do duty in the SUB.

The large numbers of campus cops used for SUB events has raised a financial problem for the Student Union. If the policy of using so many cops in the building continued, the force's budget would have been exhausted by January.

To avoid this, personnel cutbacks were made by SUB administration, reducing the numbers on duty by about half. The reduction in strength could result in problems for the DP's; they could become less of a deterrent during SUB events, and could be more liable for lawsuits if they interfered in a potential fight. At present, their role in such situations is not defined. If CP's are off duty and attempt to restrain combatants, they will not be paid for their effort, as they aren't paid for the first half-hour when they are called out to handle an emergency.

Training of the CP's is also a big problem and the SUB can do little or nothing about it. Control of this stage of the lives of the CP's is in the hands of the Athletic Department, under the patronizing directorship of John Allen, Administrative Assistant.

Allen, when contacted by the Gazette, dismissed a request for an interview with a terse "anything I say might be untimely, as there is a Campus Police enquiry on at the present time."

What exactly does the Athletic Department do for the Campus Police? First, they rip them off for ten cents an hour ("administrative expense"). Second, they absolutely refuse to train the CP's for the specific jobs they must undertake.

When the SUB administration requested permission to interview the student cops to be used in the building, the department's attitude was "no way, you take what we give you". This is the same department that originally begged the SUB administration to allow the use of CP's in the building.

If the Student Union (and thereby, hopefully, the student body) has no say about who is employed in their building, why should campus cops be used here? Furthermore, is there a need for them in the SUB or anywhere else on campus?

Administration — and that means the SUB and university alike — feel the force is necessary to "protect" the student body. The student cops feel they are doing the student body a service. The whole rationale is: "If we (CP's) don't shake up the place once in a while, the outside ones (RCMP and Halifax Police) will."

We wouldn't want that to happen, would we? No, not us, the student body. We might start waking up to a few more reactionary happenings in the city and the Maritimes. We could (perish the thought) become "politically active".

The Senate enquiry will do little to change things. The Student Union may take over the administration of the force, but things will just get more subtle. But you'll be "protected" and so will the administrations. The jocks will go, and all that will remain will be the . . . the what? RCMP informers? Pushers? (Rumour has it that some CP's are pushing in Fenwick. Fenwick — the Rochdale of Halifax?)

Will we be left with situations such as those of other

Canadian campuses? U of Alberta and U of T have their own private ex-service, ex-FBI type of security forces, with cars, radios, and riot sticks. St. F. X's poorly trained student cops are sworn into the Antigonish Police Department, and can bust heads anywhere in town.

That may sound extreme, but it is typical of what can happen when student police powers are not carefully studied by committees and the student body.

Dal student cops now have certain limitations and powers. Like anyone else, they are subject to lawsuits; like anyone else, they can also arrest or detain you if they suspect a criminal activity is taking place, or is about to take place.

Remember these facts, do we, the student body want protection? If so, it must serve us and not the establishment, the RCMP, or the thrill-seekers and get-rich-quick artists that invade virtually every police for the world over.

Think about it. It's your university.



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Editor: Dorothy Wigmore 424-2507
Advertising Manager: Jim Tesoriere
General Calls: 424-2350
Room 334 — Student Union Bldg.