

Posters warn against religious aggression

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University chaplains were also concerned that the posters and pamphlets — intended as religious education — may scare students away from all religious groups.

"This [pamphlet] could make people vigilant and wary of any group. [Another brochure, 'Places of Worship and Prayer at and Near Dalhousie'], is meant to send students to tried and true places," Mehlman said.

The educational campaign is based on similar campaigns at the University of Toronto and Ryerson Polytechnic University.

The posters are from the University of Toronto, modified with stickers to say "Dal" over "U of T" in the final slogan "Aggressive religious recruiting is a reality at Dal."

In one case a poster depicts two women walking through a campus, overlaid with the words "So my best friend's not talking to me, my grades suck and things could not be worse, when I meet these really great people who invite me to what seems like a totally cool party and I'm thinkin' hey maybe my luck's about to change...think again". Another is splashed with the words: "Captive; gravitate; isolate; intimidate; segregate, alienate, dominate."

All the posters provide phone numbers to contact if, as the poster states, "you are feeling threatened or harassed by members of a religious group". These numbers include Dalhousie's security office, student union, International Student Centre and the chaplaincy office.

Like Dal, Ryerson has also had complaints about religious recruitment on campus. They place pamphlets in frosh packs every year.

The group that Ryerson says they've had the most complaints about is the Toronto Church of Christ, another branch of the International Church of Christ.

"They have tried to form a student group here on campus for several years, but I'll tell you, over my dead body," said Leatrice Spevack, Student Groups Coordinator at Ryerson. "We do not support groups we've had...complaints against."

"It's in part of our bylaws, as part of our student group policy. We [don't] recognize [the Toronto Church of Christ]."

Correction:

Last week, in Kaveri Gupta's article "Taxes push building into the red", The Gazette reported that the university "forgot to account for sales tax" in its estimates for the new ASSB. The Gazette apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused.

How can I identify the high-pressure groups?

Observe the group's responses to you and how you feel. If you can answer 'yes' to three or more of the following statements, you should seriously reconsider your involvement:

- The group seems to be perfect. Everyone agrees and follows all orders cheerfully.
- They claim to have "all the answers" to your problems.
- The group offers "instant friendship". They will not take "no" for an answer; invitations are impossible to refuse without feeling guilty and/or ungrateful.
- You are asked to recruit new members soon after joining.
- The group insists on total obedience to their leaders and discourages questions or doubts as signs of weak faith. You may be rejected or shunned if you persist with questions.
- Your parents and friends are described as being "unable to understand or help you" with religious matters.
- The group encourages you to put their meetings and activities before all other commitments, including studying.
- The group puts down your past religious, social, or political affiliation.

Why are these Groups allowed on campus?

Dalhousie University has a policy of freedom of speech and association which allows all students to form groups and meet on campus for any legal activity. As a result you may find such groups meeting on campus at places such as the Student Union Building. Giving a group space does not mean endorsing their beliefs, activities, or ways they operate.

This means that you need to protect yourself by asking questions and seeking advice from any of the many representatives of student services on the campus who are informed and are there to help you. Even if you have concerns about off campus groups, there are people on campus who will listen to your concerns.

Excerpted from "Religious Groups at Dalhousie University: What to expect, What to accept, and What to avoid — making an informed decision".

Ottawa directed RCMP to limit protests

BY DOUGLAS QUAN AND SARAH GALASHAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — High-ranking government officials, including Prime Minister Jean Chretien, directed RCMP officers to limit the level of protests during last year's meeting of 15 Pacific Rim leaders because they didn't want to embarrass then-Indonesian president Suharto, leaked internal documents suggest.

And students involved in RCMP Public Complaints Commission hearings investigating police actions during the APEC Summit say political interference hasn't ended. They say the inquiry has been skewed in favour of the Mounties from the start — and some say they will boycott the proceedings when they officially begin Oct. 5.

At a press conference last Wednesday, complainants sat next to 38 stacks of empty boxes, representative, they said, of their inability to mount an effective complaint against the RCMP. The two boxes of documents they do have access to have been heavily edited, they added.

"Every attempt has been blocked to make this a just inquiry," said complainant Garth Mullins, who represents a group of 29 complainants.

The documents do suggest, however, that federal officials tried to placate In-

donesian delegates who were concerned demonstrators would embarrass Suharto.

Notes from a meeting between Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas indicate Alatas was worried a poster campaign conducted by the East Timorese Alert Network would embarrass Suharto. Suharto's military regime had occupied East Timor since the 1970s.

"If it caused concern to the Canadian government because agitation of these groups could not be controlled and the dignity of President [Suharto] was sullied, then [Suharto] would rather not come to Canada," Alatas said, according to the notes. In response, "the Minister [Axworthy] said he apologized for the poster campaign," the notes read.

It also appears government officials gave direct orders to the RCMP to limit the visibility of demonstrators and protest signs.

In hand-written notes, RCMP Supt. Wayne May wrote, "Security perimeter will need to be adjusted at UBC re: protesters. PM-specific wish that this is a retreat and leaders should not be distracted by demos, etc."

And in his hand-written notes, RCMP Inspector Perry Edwards cited comments from RCMP Supt. Trevor Thompsett regarding

students who were camped out on the APEC site at the University of British Columbia: "Trevor T. — PM 'wants the tenters out.'"

Another RCMP officer, Staff Sgt. Peter Montague, wrote to the APEC security office to say he had personally assured the Indonesian delegation that Suharto would not be embarrassed.

"I assured them that if there was a demonstration on a major motorcade route, we would take an alternate route to avoid potential embarrassment," he wrote.

At least one RCMP official expressed concerns about political interference in security operations, and wondered whether the RCMP had the authority to remove protest signs.

"Common sense tells us we do not want banners nor would the [Prime Minister's office]," Staff Sgt. Bill Dingwall wrote in an e-mail to Thompsett. "Having said that, banners are not a security issue. They are a political issue."

This week, Chretien defended the security measures taken at the APEC meeting and insisted they were done to protect students.

In his memo, Montague wrote that Indonesian delegates planned to carry weapons and had inquired about "what would happen to one of their [security officials] if he pulled his gun

and shot someone during the visit?"

But Craig Jones, a law student who was arrested during the summit, doesn't accept the government's argument that it was concerned for the safety of students. He says the documents suggest Ottawa conspired to subvert people's constitutional right to freedom of expression.

"These are strong words, perhaps the strongest I've ever said, but they are apt," Jones said.

However, Mullins says that unless changes are made to ensure a fair and balanced hearing, many complainants may boycott the hearings — even though some members have been subpoenaed to appear.

They've been restricted access to documents, and haven't been free to summon government officials — including the Prime Minister — for the hearings, they say.

Last week, the federal government also denied legal funding to the complainants. The RCMP officers involved in the hearings are represented by eight publicly-funded lawyers.

In explaining his decision, Solicitor General Andy Scott said, "These [RCMP] members may be subject to disciplinary measures as a result of the proceedings — complainants do not face similar potential consequences."