

Queen's (and our) CUP runneth over

EDITOR'S NOTE: The article was reprinted from the Queen's Journal Editorial Page.

By SOL CHROM

Every year or so, the Journal is contacted by a representative of the Canadian University Press (CUP), and urged to join. CUP is the national student newspaper cooperative, and although the Queen's Journal was a founding member, we are not involved in it now. Moreover, we have no intention of joining in the foreseeable future. Given that the Journal is your newspaper, we feel that you should know why.

First, a little background. CUP is in its 46th year, and is North America's longest standing national student organization, according to the editor of the Dalhousie Gazette. Member papers pay for a central executive in Ottawa, which compiles and collates material from across the country. There are fieldworkers supplied for on-the-spot resourcing (not unlike the case of CFS-O/OFS), and other services for the collective. Chief among these are Campus Plus, CUP's national advertising service, and the CUP news/features exchange.

So what's the problem? Well, there are several. The first has to do with cost. Membership in CUP would cost the Journal approximately \$10,000 a year nowadays. That's a sizeable

chunk of our operating budget, and we simply don't think it's worth it. We are usually assured that this would be more than made up for by the increased advertising revenue that

Campus Plus would provide, but we're not sure that Campus Plus would make that much of a difference to our revenues. We already get a fair amount of national advertising. In addition, we can't run more than 40 per

cent paid advertising per issue, so more national advertising would mean less room for local and student advertising.

As regards the news/features exchange, the Journal would not use it. We do maintain exchanges with other campus newspapers (some members, some non-

members), and we do summarize some of the more interesting stuff in Campus Briefs, but we do not reprint articles or reproduce material from the CUP news/features exchange. The

reason for this is simple: the Journal is here to serve, write about, and provide experience and training for Queen's students. Running more CUP copy would leave less room for Queen's copy.

The biggest single problem we have with CUP,

however, stems from its Statement of Principles, and the rather doctrinaire way that it applies it. Initially, it seems beneficial; member papers pledge not to use

material that is sexist, racist, or not nice in several other ways. However, CUP also requires its member papers to function as "agents of social change," and to

mobilize students against the injustices inherent in the class structure of our society, and a number of other noble-sounding things. If we sent reporters out into the

world with their perceptions coloured by that what kind of copy are we going to get from them? A newspaper's function is to report the news, and report, accurately, and impartially as possible. If you're trying to be an agent of social change, you're going to have a lot of trouble being impartial.

That is what happened in the mid-Seventies, when the Journal withdrew from CUP. The Ontario wing fell under the influence of some radical

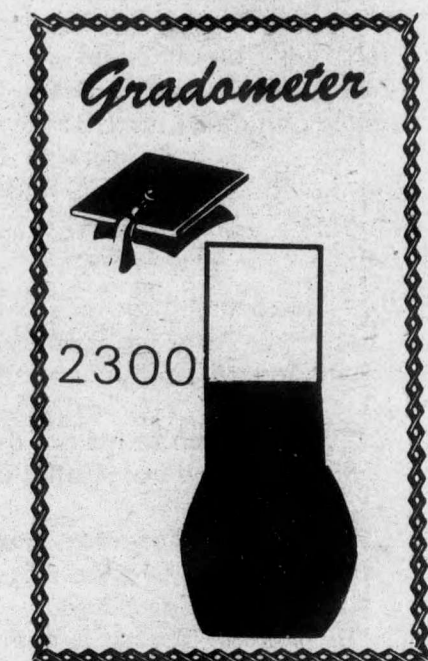
Marxist-Leninists; consequently, the news copy we were getting from ORCUP (the Ontario wing) started to adopt such a violent anti-government, anti-state, anti-capitalist slant that extensive rewriting was necessary before it could be used in the Journal. Much of it was unusable, in fact.

There is nothing wrong with student newspapers functioning as opinion leaders or guardians of student interests and concerns. It is essential, however, that a clear line be drawn between news and opinion. If a newspaper starts advocating policies and positions in its news columns (as opposed to its opinion columns or editorial page), then how can it be relied upon to report the news fairly and objectively? Its credibility would disappear pretty fast. Although complete objectivity is just about impossible, it is still something worth striving for.

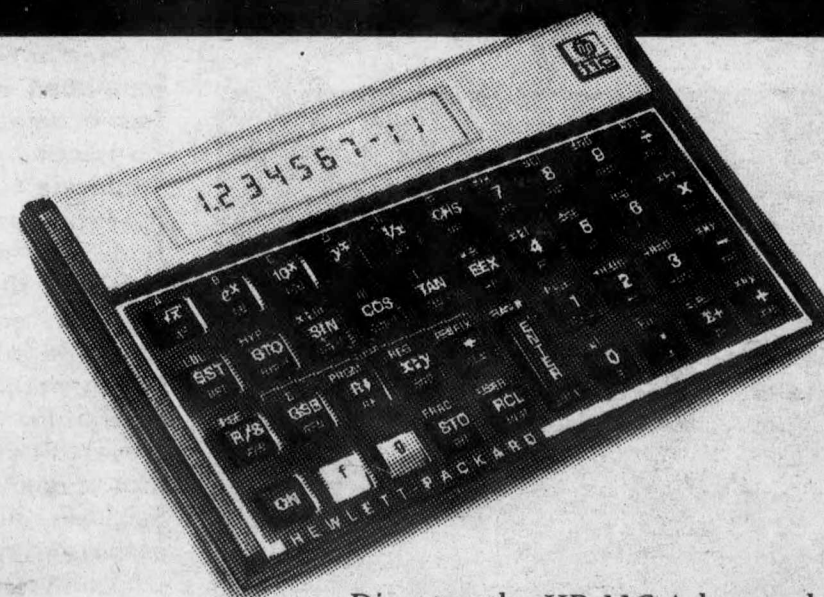
In fact, this Statement of Principles came up for discussion at the most recent CUP meeting, which occurred last month. Several members expressed

just these kinds of concerns, and according to a story in the University of Toronto Varsity, some rather spirited debate arose at the final plenary before a proposal to take it back to member papers and let the staffs vote on it was turned down - in apparent disregard for CUP's supposed commitment to "staff democracy."

Anyway, that's why we're not members of CUP. It's your paper, and we thought you should know.



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