

# A subjective look at CUP

by Rich Watts

In reading the *Gateway*, you will have noticed the CUP notes on page two and the stories that are headlined CUP. These three letters stand for the Canadian University Press, of which the *Gateway* is a member.

Canadian University Press is a cooperative organization made up of campus newspapers from across the country. In order to fully understand your newspaper, some background of CUP is essential.

It is often said that a newspaper making news out of itself is cheap, even incestuous. However, it is important that you, the reader, be aware of the workings and general complexion of your newspaper.

As your newspaper, it is the *Gateway's* responsibility to provide its readership with the best coverage and analysis of events that you as students and potential citizens are entitled to. On the other hand, it is your responsibility to be aware of the human error and bias of the *Gateway's* writers.

This will enable you not only to analyze a situation, but also analyze the analysis itself, when forming your opinions and attitudes of any event or situation.

CUP is largely responsible for the *Gateway's* attitudes and therefore some discussion of it is vital.

One of the major reasons for its existence is to ensure that all students are provided with good information and coverage.

Papers with large resources from big campuses, such as the *Gateway*, can, in general, provide this form themselves. However, small campuses and community colleges do not have large resources. Through cooperation and sharing of resources in CUP, their papers can provide a better source of information to their students.

This cooperation is achieved partly through the news exchange CUP provides. The news exchange is partly responsible to CUP notes and all stories headlined CUP in the *Gateway*.

This is achieved by campus newspapers sharing the news of their campuses with all CUP members. The mail and telex service links us with students all across the country, providing a better understanding of student rights, responsibilities, and actions.

In addition to an exchange of news stories, CUP also provides an exchange of feature articles. These features cover a variety of topics that are of particular continuing interest to Canada's student community.

These news and feature articles are all written by students, from a student's perspective.

In addition to news copy, CUP provides and advertising service. Advertising pays for the majority of costs of printing the *Gateway*. Approximately twenty percent of the *Gateway's* advertising comes from CUP media services, which provides nation-wide advertising through the medium of campus newspapers.

CUP Media Services, or Campus Plus as it is known, is an advertising company owned by CUP which started last year in an attempt to turn advertising profits back into campus newspapers. To avoid any conflict of interest between journalism and advertising, the Campus Plus is supposed to operate separately with only minimum communication in policing the ads for racist, sexist, or distasteful connotations.

CUP's exchange of news, features, and their ability to provide the *Gateway* with one fifth of its advertising, are only the visible effects of membership.

Any dedicated "CUPpy" will inform you that CUP is primarily a cooperative, and, as such, dedicated to specific principles and attitudes.

CUP's principles are outlined in a statement of principles that has been incorporated into their constitution. CUP's statement of principles is worth examination since it is ultimately responsible for CUP's outlook and direction and provides direct influence on the complexion of the *Gateway*.

CUP's statement of principles states that the major role for the student press is to act as an agent of social change. As an agent of social change, the student press

must assist students in understanding and mobilising against exploitation, oppression, and injustice. In carrying out its mandate, the student press must perform both an educational and an active function.

Now, "agent of social change mobilizing against exploitation and oppression" does sound something like "Liberte, Egalite et Fraternite" and is inconsequential.

Nevertheless, consider what has happened to the concept of objective journalism. It isn't mentioned because it has been thrown out the window. This might sound

like a development coming from way out in left field. However, as a journalist of sorts and a reader of newspapers, let me assure you that objectivity in news reporting does not exist. Not only does it not exist, it is

impossible to achieve.

An opinionated analysis is always made in the mind of the reporter, subconsciously or otherwise.

The reporter's bias shows up in his choice of words, arrangement and choice of facts, and quotes, and the lead he uses. Not only is a bias imparted through the reporter himself but the medium also imparts a bias in the selection of stories, the photographs and layouts used, even the position a story occupies in a newspaper.

You may not believe it but a lack of objectivity is a sad fact in all journalism. The best any reporter can hope for is not objectivity in his writing, but fairness.

CUP's statement of principles embraces this concept. CUP newspapers are not attempting to provide their readership with a small community newspaper discussing university beer bashes and socials. Instead, CUP papers are determined to provide an alternative medium to that which is already available in the commercial press, TV, and radio. This fact can give you the real reasoning behind the stories you read in the *Gateway*.

In viewing itself as a largely political organization, CUP does provide a different, and worthwhile perspective on the major issues of the world. It is your responsibility to recognize this perspective.

Make no mistake, CUP is a political organization. This explains the often shrill anti-Americanism so often present in CUP articles.

The concept of a fair agent of social change rather than objective medium might sound shocking, even disagreeable, but it is considered the fairest and most effective way the student press can operate. The student press does hold real power (it speaks directly to the thinkers of tomorrow) so it is important that this power be handled correctly.

There are dangers and pitfalls in CUP's thinking. The power could be abused and campus newspapers could fail in their responsibility to their readership. One large pitfall exists right now in the advertising company Campus Plus.

At the moment, CUP functions as democratically as its widespread membership allows. The decisions made by CUP can never be more than recommendations to the member presses. However, when Campus Plus becomes financially stable, CUP will control twenty percent of a paper's advertising revenue.

This advertising revenue could prove to be an effective weapon in controlling any member paper in CUP, spelling out one word - M-O-N-O-P-O-L-Y. Obviously a monopolization of the student press is unacceptable even if the organization does function democratically.

A newspaper's greatest responsibility is to its readership, not to an exterior organization. This responsibility could be compromised.

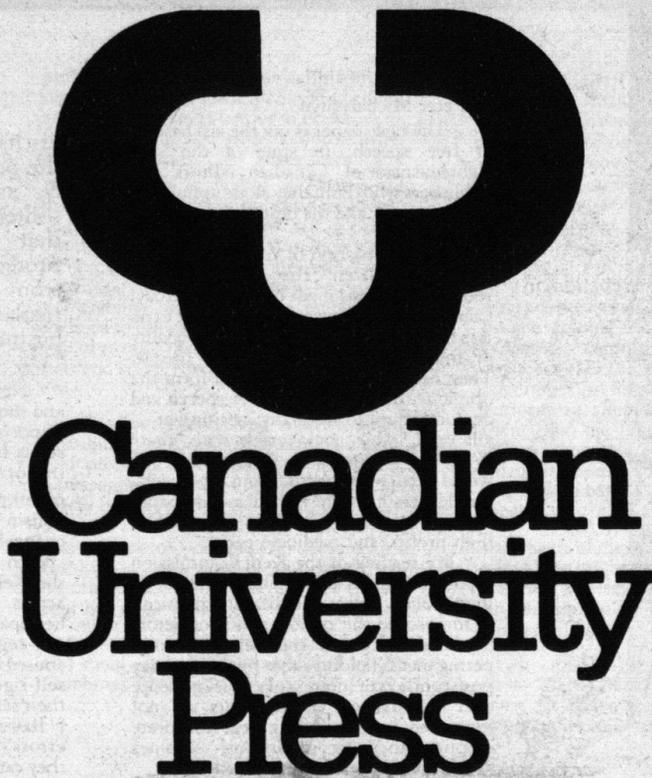
However, safeguards do exist. The greatest is CUP's democracy. Greater safeguards could be built in and the channels are always open.

One safeguard that could be built in, and is being considered, is to eliminate CUP membership as a prerequisite for receiving advertising through Campus Plus. This would effectively reduce the power that CUP could hold over any member papers who might happen to disagree with CUP's politics and direction and would ensure that the student press is always ultimately responsible to its readership.

At this time, it is safe to say that the damages are only potential ones. The inherent good in CUP does outweigh the dangers. You, the readership, can be assured that through the cooperative spirit of CUP, your newspaper and ultimately you are helping to insure that students all across the country get the high quality of news coverage and analysis they deserve.

Through the exchange of news and ideas, CUP alleviated some of the isolationism inherent in a campus atmosphere.

Like it or not, you are members of a community that is larger than the U of A. It is important that you be aware of the student communities' particular viewpoint and perspective at all times in forming your attitudes and deciding on your future actions.



## Autonomy drives on Canadian campuses

by Keith Krause

Student papers across the country are engaged today in an often heated battle for newspaper autonomy.

The papers at McGill University, University of Toronto, University of Calgary, Capilano College, Simon Fraser and many other campuses are already autonomous. And about a dozen more are working to join their ranks this year.

But few students, including those who work for the paper, really understand what it means for a paper to be autonomous. Many think it means a bunch of radical students want to close themselves in a room where no one can interfere with them, and put out a paper that is accountable to no one.

The truth is far less sinister. Autonomy for the campus press means autonomy from meddling administrators or students union officials who want to, by controlling the paper's finances or other aspects of its production, interfere with the freedom of the press.

A good example of this is the recent events at Red River College in Manitoba. The student paper there, the *Projector*, so incensed students' association officials (who didn't like the news printed about them) that they shut the paper down. It is, with the help of papers across Canada, still printing, but with autonomy, the closure would never have happened.

Most student papers in the country are also partially dependent on their students for funding. This can range from .50¢ per student to \$16.50 per student; the average is about \$2.00.

But, in most cases, this money is first channelled through the Students' Union on

the campus. And when student politicians become upset with the coverage their behavior receives, they often put the screws to the newspaper.

Autonomy is first and foremost designed to avoid this possibility. It put control and responsibility for a paper's finances in the hands of the people who work for it.

There are many other aspects to autonomy, however; including providing for the paper's autonomy from advertisers who may insist that a paper ignore certain events to keep its clients.

This problem afflicts the commercial press: seldom do reader's get the whole story on Canada Safeway or the Hudson's Bay Company — it's just too expensive to print.

Autonomy also has significant benefits for the staff of the paper. It makes them responsible for all aspects of the paper, including the finances, and this has the added benefit that students in more faculties who don't want to write can get involved at all levels of the paper.

With freedom also goes a sense of responsibility to the students. This is implemented in many ways, usually by having a board of directors responsible for ratifying the decisions of the staff on financial matters. It consists of students and paper staff, with no elected officials of the students' union.

The papers themselves also commit themselves to operating democratically, by a constitution, with every staff member having one vote on any decision (including the editors). This prevents the paper from being taken over by a small clique and it gives those people who contribute to the paper a say in how it is run.