

# Graduate students hold conference

by Ron Norman

The Canadian Union of Graduate Students (CUGS) achieved several of their planned objectives at the three-day national conference held in Halifax March 12, 13, and 14. However, the pivotal issue in the conference was an item not on the agenda: the purpose of CUGS and justification for its existence.

The issue initially arose from a request by Laval University for a definition of CUGS so that Laval could then prepare a brief for the Quebec conference of Graduate associations, with the hope of procuring more Quebec members for CUGS (Laval is the only Quebec university belonging to CUGS).

What arose instead was an extensive examination of CUGS as it stands now.

CUGS president, from the University of Alberta, stated that "CUGS is a self-help organization aimed at representing the views of Canadian Graduate Associations, and, thus indirectly, graduate students".

The president went on to set forth CUGS's primary functions: (1) a disseminator of information to Graduate Associations across Canada; and (2) a lobbying unit in the interests of Canadian Graduate students.

It was pointed out that while

thirteen graduate schools were in attendance at the national conference, many of the major schools, including University of B.C., University of Toronto, and McGill University were not present. One dissatisfied member suggested that the reason for their absence was CUGS ineffectiveness.

The president defended CUGS's low-level approach, saying that the gathering of information is an initial growth stage, and that once this was achieved the organization could then focus on doing something.

However, the general feeling of the members was that CUGS should move past the information stage; "If CUGS is just gathering here to share information", said one member, "why not simply send a newsletter"?

The representative from Guelph suggested that CUGS take an active role in such issues as the recent university budgetary cuts, which affect Graduate Associations across the country.

The York representative advised the CUGS executive that if it did not begin to act through lobbying and the use of the press, then York's Graduate school would seriously

consider joining the National Union of Students (NUS) who have an office in Ottawa.

John Cheyne, president of Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) rejected the proposal that CUGS become more active. Cheyne said that under the BNS Act education is a provincial concern, and "any attempt to form a strong national body with an eight person office in Ottawa (a reference to NUS) is just plain silly". Cheyne said that the constitution mitigates against a strong central body and that CUGS had been most successful so far

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## "Our prices aren't high"

by Valerie Mansour

Dalhousie Bookstore personnel claims that their prices are not high. Amid constant criticism about the price tags on their books, Margaret White says that they charge only the list price as suggested by the publishing firms. Even their stationary items, which sell at an extremely high price range, are on the shelves at the price indicated by the companies.

The Dal Bookstore is organized so that it just breaks even at the completion of a year. There is a staff of twenty-six to pay, and freight charges are alarmingly high. For instance, on a shipment of two packs of fourteen text books, the store must pay \$34.95 to receive them.

Publishers, except for the smaller ones, give the store a twenty-five percent discount on the books bought. In most instances the store can return unsold books.

Book prices are constantly climbing, this being partly due to the paper shortage which has resulted in paper prices soaring.

Often books in the Dalhousie Bookstore have two and three price tags on them. This is due to the fact that the price on a certain edition of books might rise while there still are identical copies on the shelf from a previous order. Previously, if a new shipment of books came in at a higher price, the store would leave the original price on the other books still in stock. However, because of students' complaints as to why some people could buy the same book cheaper than others, the store decided that when the newly priced books arrived, they would put new price tags on the older books, something not allowed for example in the retail food business.

When comparing Dal book prices with another bookstore it can be seen that many books are identically priced, and sometimes Dal prices are considerably higher or lower, often depending upon the edition. Bookstores are supposed to sell at list price, except for sales.

The Dalhousie Bookstore has actually been selling books at lower prices lately. A Penguin book sale has been held as well as a sale of books which they cannot return to the publishing firm.

Some policy changes have been made recently. All freshmen books have been moved to the main bookstore with only the stationary items remaining in the other one. A trade section with reference books is now being worked on with all faculties advising the store as to what type of books should be included. The office area has been moved from the main bookstore to allow more floor space for new books.

The policy on returns is different now also; you must have a letter from the instructor of your course before a book can be returned.

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