

I told the police officer that I would not leave my purse in the main area and I was told that I could not enter the store. I am sure if I had gone any further with my purse that I would have been physically thrown out of the store or arrested. I felt as if I was being treated like a criminal.

The police officer told me to take my wallet with me and leave my purse there. I stated that I still have money in other parts of the purse and he said that to leave it with him and he would watch it. I observed him from a distance and of course he was not watching my purse, for he was too busy accosting other students who dared to bring in a bag, briefcase or large purse.

I went to the bookstore office and asked to see the manager. He was not in and I left him a message regarding my complaint and asked him to call me, which he never did. I then contacted the Public Affairs office who referred

me to the Office of the Vice President of Administration who referred me to Mr. Rennie, the Vice President of Finance.

I explained the situation to Mr. Rennie. I stated that I felt as if I had been treated like a criminal and that surely that there are better ways to prevent theft than by treating everyone in that manner.

He stated that it was necessary to prevent students from stealing and that while department stores can write in the cost of theft into their prices, the bookstore cannot.

In response to Mr. Rennie, I stated that there are better ways to prevent theft. I gave him the example of magnetizing books and other items sold in the bookstore, similar to other stores and the University library. He stated it would cost too much to install and there were too many books to magnetize. I asked him how much it was costing to hire police officers and to have two bookstore

employees on each floor standing around just to prevent people from walking in with bags and briefcases. I said that the U of A libraries seems to be able to magnetize and demagnetize all of their books without any problem. I also stated that if a person wanted to steal they could just as easily put an item under their coat.

I asked him who would be responsible for items stolen from the designated area where they demand customers leave their personal items. Mr. Rennie stated that it would be the students who would be responsible.

I said that it did not sound fair that students would be responsible when it is the bookstore who demands they leave their belongings unattended. Mr. Rennie responded by giving the analogy that parking lots also have regulations regarding people leaving things at their own risk.

At least in a parking lot they

don't demand that we leave our valuables unlocked and out in the open.

I told Mr. Rennie if customers at the Bay were told that they had to leave their shopping bags at the door, then they would soon have no customers. Mr. Rennie stated that if the students didn't like the rules of the bookstore, they didn't have to shop there either. I stated that it wasn't the same — university students have to buy books in order to pass their courses.

I stated that I felt their ends (to prevent theft) do not justify the means (physically grabbing people and demanding that they leave their belongings in the entrance) when there are less offensive and more effective ways (ie. magnetizing goods). I stated that I felt that my rights as a human being were being infringed upon, that we should be treated with dignity and it's not as if we live in a country with no human rights.

Mr. Rennie then stated that he

tried to have a logical conversation with me and if I was going to act like that, that he was going to discontinue the conversation.

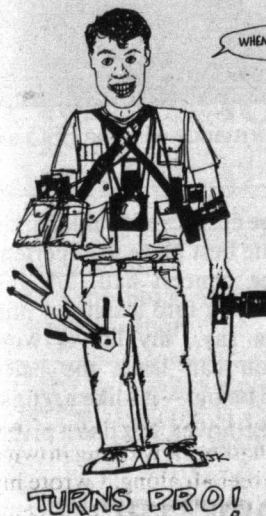
I am concerned that the U of A and students have allowed this situation to continue for so many years without students actively lobbying against this appalling treatment. How much longer will we passively allow this to continue? What is next — frisking students as they leave the bookstore?

Stand up for your rights! Write to the President of the U of A. Have our Students' Union lobby the University to have this procedure abolished. If that doesn't bring about a halt to this mistreatment — remember civil disobedience? If we all refuse to leave our belongings, they cannot throw us all out.

By doing nothing, we will continue to be treated like criminals. I, for one, refuse to be humiliated and mistreated in this manner.

Sharen Van Fossen

CLIVE OSHRY: PHOTO VOLUNTEER FROM HELL



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