

THE GAZETTE

Volume 131. Number 2.

Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Thursday, September 17, 1998

Dal targets aggressive religious recruiting

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

The Dalhousie Student Union and university chaplains' office have begun a campaign to warn students about aggressive religious groups on campus.

With the support of the student union, the chaplains' office has published a pamphlet and posted the campus with signs warning students to guard themselves against forceful religious recruiting techniques.

The pamphlets, entitled "Religious Groups at Dalhousie University: What to expect, What to accept, and What to avoid — making an informed decision", were in frosh packs and are available at the chaplains' office and the info desk of the Student Union Building (SUB).

The posters were hung throughout the campus.

In addition, there will be a section on aggressive religious recruitment in "Dal: The Book", the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) handbook.

Dalhousie chaplain Clement Mehlman says the campaign began when the chaplains' office and the student union began to hear com-

plaints about religious soliciting on campus.

"I became aware last fall of students who were placed in embarrassing moments because they had expressed interest in certain groups and then when they started having second thoughts they were being pressured to remain in those groups," he said.

"I was with one person who was at worship Sunday morning and [he] was getting phone calls as to why he hadn't gone to [worship at] another place."

Mehlman says that defining aggressive religious recruitment is difficult.

"It's really a matter of what is unwanted," he said, adding that if recruitment tactics are continued after it is made clear the subject is not interested, it can be considered aggressive behavior.

Brian Kellow, executive vice-president of the DSU, has also received complaints about soliciting on campus — centering around the Halifax-Dartmouth Church of Christ, a branch of the International Church of Christ. Kellow says these complaints are one reason the student union opted to support the pamphlet's publication.

"There is some relation to the International Church of Christ," he said of the pamphlets. "One of their members who came to talk to me said that there were young people here who had left home...it was a transition period in their life and an ideal time for [the students] to hear the word of God."

"If the students are being targeted then I think it's appropriate that we give them the tools to make educated choices," he added.

But Kellow also says the pamphlet and poster campaign are not aimed solely at the International Church of Christ.

"This isn't the only group we're concerned with. We just want to make sure that when students get involved in a religious group they're going in eyes open."

Kevin Robins, minister of the Halifax-Dartmouth Church of Christ, says he agrees with the idea of a pamphlet campaign.

"I don't have a problem with what the DSU is doing. I think people need to be aware, need to be wise in their relationship with God," he said. "I think the problem comes when others try to quench expression of belief."

continued on page 3...

Are frats part of Dal? Sigma Chi not warned of Shruballs in February

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

St. right next to the university's Sociology department and

Physical Plant.

Whether an organization so close to campus, with Dal students as members and recruitment at frosh week events, is affiliated with Dalhousie is at the heart of questions about whether the university had a responsibility to inform the fraternity of Shruballs' ban.

The university says it didn't.

Chris Lydon, Sigma Chi president and a Dalhousie student, says that although Dal security couldn't have known about Shruballs' background, they should have contacted the fraternity.

"Obviously we would have liked to be warned," he said.

Christine Smith, a spokesperson for the university says the case was handled like any

other.

"There would be no reason to go and tell the neighbourhood," she said. "All this information on William Shruballs wasn't known."

Smith also says Sigma Chi, like all other fraternities, isn't affiliated with Dalhousie.

"If it's perceived that there is [an affiliation between the university and fraternities], then that perception is wrong," she said.

But Brian Kellow, executive vice-president of the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) doesn't see the distinction so clearly.

"I think that any group that is affiliated with the university yet isn't affiliated in any official way, they kind of get to ride on the credibility of the university," he said.

Sigma Chi, and a number of other fraternities, also had booths set up at Welcome Fair — a frosh week recruitment event.

Sororities and fraternities were the only non-Dalhousie affiliated groups at the fair.

Kellow says having the groups there was a mistake, but one that has been a tradition

during frosh week.

"It's tacit approval, but it's unintentional," he says. "It gave the appearance that frats and sororities are endorsed."

So while Kellow acknowledges that the university may have had no legal responsibility, he isn't prepared to say they have no responsibility at all.

"If the university and if campus security...knew that there was a dangerous man on campus — I would hope that they would inform not only the Sigma Chi house but their students," he said.

Dalhousie Security would not comment on the case.

Eric McKee, vice-president student services, says that Dal's policy of not recognizing fraternities isn't unusual across Canada, and that monitoring students' off-campus lives is not the university's job.

"We respect [students'] right to choose where they live and to choose who they live with and to form organizations," he said.

"And I think there's some individual responsibility involved in that."



Great Big Sea and friends entertained approximately 10,000 wet but rabid fans Saturday evening on Citadel Hill. See full story on page 21. Photo by Avi Lambert.

William Shruballs, then known as Ian Thor Green, was banned from the Dalhousie campus in late February.

Shruballs was arrested on June 22 in connection with several sexual assaults and charges of aggravated assault, unlawful confinement and attempting to strangle a woman.

Until his arrest on June 22, Shruballs lived in the Sigma Chi fraternity house.

Members of the Sigma Chi fraternity — two of whom interrupted the assault that led to Shruballs' arrest — have said they had no knowledge of Shruballs' activities.

The "Sigma house", as it is known, is on South



Photo by Lee Pitts.