

SU Executive Accused of Interference

Charges of intimidation and interference in Gateway affairs on the part of the Students' Union executive were submitted Friday to a Canadian University Press (CUP) investigation commission examining the contentious Gazette bylaw.

The hearing, from which the executive was conspicuous by its absence, was requested by the western region of CUP at their annual conference in Saskatoon earlier this month. The commission consisted of Ed Reed, bureau chief of CUP's main office in Ottawa; Paul Knox, news editor of the Ubysey at the University of British Columbia; and Don McGillivray, associate editor of the Edmonton Journal.

No executive member was present at the hearing because the executive has ignored the commission from the beginning, labelling it a "kangaroo court". CUP commissions have no legal weight, but they merit considerable respect in the journalistic community. At times they have ruled against newspapers, but the executive felt the outcome of this one was certain, so they boycotted it.

Several presentations were heard at the hearing. All except one were against the bylaw. The dissenting voice came from former councillor and recently defeated Education rep candidate Wayne Madden.

Bob Beal, Gateway editor, outlined the history of the dispute between Gateway and the union executive. He said that the executive has felt for some time now that the Gateway wasn't giving adequate coverage to council news. During the summer they proposed to pass a bylaw requiring the Gateway to publish all "official notices" regarding council news. Considerable objection was raised to the proposed bylaw, and consequently it was shelved. The present Gazette bylaw was then tabled and passed. It required the Gateway to publish, free of charge, one-half page of council news in each issue. The Gazette was published once (in the October 7 issue), but the next instalment was refused by the Gateway staff. It was sent back to the executive. Since, the executive has paid for all advertising in the Gateway.

Beal said that the paid staff of the Gateway could conceivably do all the work required to publish the Gazette. However the position of the paid staff is that "if the voluntary staff feel threatened by the Gazette and refuse to work on it, we also refuse to work on it."

Student councillor Rob Spraggins called himself "a former Gazette supporter" who now believes the Gateway should have the right to print whatever it pleases. He said he

would like a delegation from council to meet with a group of Gateway staffers to hammer out a mutually satisfactory arrangement. "The way it is now," he said, "everybody is loosing."

"Speaking as a student," Spraggins continued, "I can say that last year a lot of students were dissatisfied with the Gateway. I don't know if the same bunch are still complaining this year, but I do know that council as a whole feels that Gateway coverage of their activities has been on the decline the past couple of years, so they decided to do something about it."

Beal defended the Gateway, maintaining that coverage of council events was much more comprehensive this year than in the past, now that the old "weekly council meeting article" concept has been scrapped. Under the old system, a reporter would attend council's weekly meeting and then grind out a story on it, regardless of the importance, or lack of same, of the issues discussed at the meeting. This year, however Gateway publishes articles on any council news deemed relevant, and ignores other council news. This results in some issues carrying several articles, while others may contain no council news at all.

The commission members felt it necessary to talk to S. U. president Don McKenzie in his office about the Gazette. Reed explained the commission felt they could not give the matter fair consideration without hearing both sides of the story.

McKenzie cited two specific instances where he felt the Gateway was not doing its job. One of these was a State of the Union address by McKenzie to Students' Council. He felt it was very important and should have been reported.

Beal countered that McKenzie had told him before the meeting that the address was unimportant and the council reporter, a former councillor, had felt the same.

McKenzie also accused the Gateway of bad and biased reporting in an article on Student Help. The Gateway did apologize to Council for the story which was due to an inexperienced reporter who had been given the wrong facts. The chairman of the Students' Union Personnel Board, Lawrence McCallum, then told the commission he felt a neutral body should decide the issue. He said Gateway and council "have stopped being reasonable to one another."

"Actually," said McCallum, "whether or not the union pays for the advertising is immaterial, because if it does, that's just taking \$4500 out of one place and putting it into another. It all comes out of the general funds anyway."

Rich Vivone, former Gateway editor and currently Communications Chairman, the post responsible for the Gazette, said he considered the Gateway's recent coverage of council news to be "piss-poor". When asked why he didn't join the Gateway again, he said he felt that, as a former editor, he would be an embarrassment to Beal. "The last thing Bob needs is a former editor working under him and possibly second guessing him," Vivone said.

Reed then read a couple of submissions from Gateway staffers and employees who were unable to attend the hearing. Percy Wickman, Gateway advertising manager, argued in his submission that the Gazette would increase the Gateway's effective advertising content from 30-35 per cent to about 40 per cent, leaving even less space for news and feature copy than now. "If the union would pay for the Gazette," reasoned Wickman, "then we could cut out some other advertising and still keep our present level. But 40 per cent is too much."

Sid Stephen, a staffer of three years' experience, mentioned the executives' apparently radical change of attitude towards the Gateway in the past year or so. "In my experience," said

Stephen, "the Gateway has always welcomed people from all points on the political spectrum to join the staff. In fact, last year we appealed to those with differing views from our own to join the staff, but none of the present union executive responded. Now, all of a sudden, it seems they're quite interested in the quality of the Gateway."

Arts editor, Ross Harvey, and news editor, Elsie Ross, spoke next with what they called "purely selfish" reasons for opposing the Gazette. Both claimed they were short of space already, and if the Gazette became reality, their limited space would become even scarcer. Both said they had some good copy for which there simply wasn't room, and this was very discouraging to volunteer staff, especially new staffers.

Bob Blair was the final Gateway staffer to speak at the hearing. He said that, as a former "council reporter" who used to attend council meetings and then write stories on them, he could verify that this year's "if it's important, write an article on it, if it isn't, leave it" policy was a superior one. He said that significant council news was now getting more play than ever before.

Blair also mentioned the possibility that councillors may have a misguided idea of the importance of council news. "I ran for council once," he said, "and at the time I favored something like the Gazette, because I figured what council was doing was really important, and thus should get more publicity. But after becoming acquainted with council, I came to realize that it wasn't really that important after all, that other things were much more relevant to many students. I think it's about time the current executive realized this."

The commission is now weighing the evidence it received, and will make a decision within the next two weeks.

by Dave McCurdy

Edmonton Abortion Coalition formed

Abortion laws in Canada can be changed but the support of great numbers of women (and men) is needed. This was the message of a day long abortion conference held Saturday in Garneau United Church. The Conference saw the formation of the Edmonton Coalition for Abortion Law Repeal. The Coalition, which centers around the demand "Repeal all abortion laws now", will work towards the removal of all abortion laws from the Criminal Code.

Dr. Michæl Ball, director of Student Health Services at the U of A was one of the speakers at Saturday's conference. He felt the best way to change the Criminal Code was to have people become more informed. "I don't favour abortions as a birth-control method, but they are a solid back-up to other methods." Dr. Ball said.

Judy Quinlan, former director of Edmonton Abortion Referral Service, said that her organization works basically to refer women to sympathetic doctors who will perform legal abortions. Miss Quinlan also said there must be a push for improved access to birth-control information.

Heather Johnson, coordinator of MOVE, an association for the assistance of unwed mothers called for improved sex education in the schools. She felt that the prime emphasis should be on adequate sex education rather than on abortion.

Jean McBean, a third-year law student at the University of Alberta, discussed the history of abortions and their place in the

law. Some of the problem, she said lies in the varying definitions of the word "health". A problem occurs when an attempt is made to draw a distinction between the "mental" and the "physical" health of the women involved.

A steering committee of the coalition then suggested several forms of action to be taken. One will be a petition campaign in support of a private members bill in the House of Commons. The Bill to be presented by Grace McInnis and Hilliard Chappell will call for repeal of sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion.

November 20 has been chosen as a national day of protest against the present abortion laws. The petition campaign in Edmonton will end that day with a mass meeting in the morning in front of the Post Office. Women will be asked to send registered letters of protest to John Turner, Federal Minister of Justice.

In the afternoon, women will march to the Legislature to present a brief to the provincial government. The brief will demand that the provincial government apply pressure on the federal government to change the abortion laws. It will further ask that more facilities for abortions be made available in the province.

One of the Coalition's main tasks will be to involve more people although many women already have offered to help in circulating petitions. Women interested in the Coalition may contact Terri Jackson at the Dept. of Comparative Literature.

RATT is in trouble

Student Council has struck again.

The victim this time is Room at the Top. RATT has been issued an ultimatum. If a good crowd does not appear this weekend Students' Union will close the place.

"For a slate that was elected on a service platform, this is ridiculous," says Sam Gersonowicz, an employee at RATT.

RATT is on the seventh floor of SUB. During the week it is a cafeteria; on weekends it has served as a type of coffeehouse.

Gersonowicz said that the people involved would like to see it turned into a seven day a week recreational centre. Good, cheap food would be offered and hopefully wine, beer, and possibly hard liquor would be served. That however depends on the granting of a liquor license by the provincial government.

The RATT staff is willing to accept suggestions about entertainment. It's "whatever

people want". The staff would also like to see after hours entertainment, jazz and jam sessions until the early morning. This weekend, Room at the Top will feature the New Prairie Pals, a jug and bluegrass band.

UAVAC denied funds

Ben Metcalfe, a member of the Greenpeace crew will not be the principle speaker at a forum proposed in protest of Amchitka, Nov. 2, if Students' Council has its way.

Larry Panych, chairman of the U of A Vietnam Action Committee, says that the committee needs \$150 to pay for the expenses of the speakers. Panych originally needed \$300 but half of this was informally promised by the Forum's Committee.

When UAVAC went to Students' Council for the other \$150 they were turned down. Students' Council claimed that the Amchitka blast was of little

interest or relevance any more. UAVAC went to Lana Black, Forum co-ordinator, and told her that they might be able to put on the forum for \$150. The request was now refused.

The original forum was to have taken place at noon November 2, and during the evening. It was to have been followed by a rally which would tie in with the high school marches.

Panych still feels that the forum will take place even though there is no money. He feels that the Amchitka blast is still a very live and dangerous issue. It should be the concern of every student and responsible person.