

Dal Bookstore spoils Gazette fishing trip

Journalism, at times, is a lot like fishing. You pack a lunch early in the morning, head out to your favorite fishing hole and begin casting into the murky deep, hoping for a strike, a bite, even a snag, a signal that indeed there is life in the unfathomable depths below. You're constantly entering unfamiliar territory, hankering after fish of new, exotic breeds and colours. Sometimes you get lucky, but more often than not you come home empty-handed, convinced the forces of nature are conspiring against you, that, somehow, your quarry has been invisibly watching and mocking your every action throughout the trip. Worst of all and the subjects of many a tall tale, however, are the ones that get away.

Take the Dal Bookstore as an example. This year, as in past ones, we received many complaints about the price of texts in the little bookstore in the basement of SUB. Students pointed out that often they would find books at SMU or downtown bookstores significantly underselling those at Dalhousie. It was even claimed that at Acadia, where all the books are shipped in from Halifax, prices undercut those of the Dal Bookstore. So, as in past years, we sent a reporter down to check things out.

What our man discovered by talking to store manager Irving Kirk is that the bookstore is "basically a non-profit organization," that it "actually loses money on the textbooks it sells" and that, despite everyone's suspicions, it is "(Not) really a rip-off joint." Thus the fearless Gazette reporter came home empty-handed, the big one got away, or at least so we thought.

Figures released at last Sunday's council meeting, however, reveal this "basically non-profit organization" actually made over \$55,000 in profits last year. Counter to claims by store manager Kirk that textbooks are sold only at list price, Council V.P. and Library Committee rep Jeff Champion said that textbooks are actually marked up 25% over the list price. It turned out that we had something on the line after all. But this is a cunning fish we're dealing with, one that schemes to break our line at this first opportunity available.

We are told that it really is consistent to say the Bookstore is really a non-profit organization even though it rakes fat profits. How's this? Isn't that like saying Socrates is still a woman even though he is a man? Not really, Kirk claims. Previous operating losses really counterbalance the bookstore's profits this year, he says. What he doesn't say is that previous losses of up to \$100,000 a year were the result of administrative mismanagings which included a big payroll and an inaccessible location which limited sales. It is not at all clear that this year's students should have to pay for the errors of past years' administrators.

Kirk says if the Bookstore's profit figures were reduced, students would have to pay for the lost revenue by way of increased tuition anyhow. Oh, yea? More fishy facts of the university's operating revenue and is thus only one of several sources of revenue. The University, in addition, can always look at cutting back its expenditures, perhaps in the area of major building developments where the millions involved really dwarf the Bookstores' profit figures.

Exorbitant book fees do more than knock holes in students' pocket books, they act as deterrent to buying books and as such indicate a backwards attitude toward education on the part of the Administration. If they knew how many students actually forego buying texts for their courses because of costs perhaps they might change their tune. Rather than marking up the prices of textbooks to fill their coffers a more sensible approach would be to subsidize book prices and encourage a wider dissemination of knowledge on campus. We're an institution of higher learning after all, aren't we?

Inaction on the part of the administration in cutting book prices could result in action by the student body. Council last Sunday, for example, was discussing raising the bookstore's rent in the SUB.

Meanwhile, we're going back to the boat to continue our fishing. Word is the big ones are biting this time of year. As for the Bookstore, we haven't let them off the line quite yet.

BOOK STORE



Correction

In the November 27, 1980 issue of the Dalhousie Gazette it was mistakenly reported (cf. "Trouble stirring on the entertainment front") that the band

Spice cancelled out of a SUB engagement this year. We wish to apologize for any harm inadvertently done to a group that we are assured has an excellent record for living up to its business commitments.

VOICES VOICES VOICES

The society whose educational system gives priority to the economic over the spiritual and emotional needs of man defines its citizens in terms of economic units and in so doing debases them. There is a dignity and nobility of man that has nothing to do with economic considerations. The development of this dignity and nobility is one of education's tasks....

Justice Emmett Hall

"Visitors to my country said that they saw the happiest black faces in the world," said Ian Smith, former prime minister of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

*The Varsity
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ont.*

SEX MURDER—Homosexual priest in cult torture org with incestuous newlyweds as train crashes killing 32 including mother and five children she loved. "Not a pretty sight" says bystander. Mass murderer sobs, "It was a crime of passion".

*Headlines and lead from the Winnipeg Sun
A special issue put out by the students at
the University of Manitoba*

the Dalhousie Gazette

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Pat Jordan of Dal Photo designed the front page of November 27, 1980 Gazette.