

Gas leak on lower campus

BY STEVE PETRIE

A propane gas leak on the second floor of Dalhousie University's Dental Building resulted in a short evacuation on Tuesday night.

The leak was the result of the gas valves in a lab being left open and was initially discovered at about 5 p.m.

At that point, the smell of the gas was not detectable outside of the lab. Security was called and informed of the situation. It was discovered that the shut-off lever on the third floor had been thrown. No further action was taken at that time.

By 8 p.m., the custodial supervisor was informed that the smell of gas had permeated beyond the lab. A half hour later, a custodian told security at the Dental Building that gas could now be smelled in the hallway.

Security was called and came immediately. They evaluated the situation and decided to pull the fire alarm to evacuate the building.

Fear of higher levels of propane gas caused firefighters to not enter the building when they first reached the scene.

In addition to evacuating the building, part of Robie Street and University Avenue were closed to both vehicles and pedestrians for a number of hours. People in the area were also instructed not to start their cars.

Within four hours, the problem was determined to be minor, and the building was ventilated and reopened.

Trial delayed in CASA fraud case

BY DAVID COCHRANE

OTTAWA (CUP) — The fraud trial of a former student politician accused of embezzling thousands of dollars from a national student organization has been delayed until early next year.

Patrick FitzPatrick was supposed to appear in a New Brunswick court on Sept. 8 to stand trial for fraud.

But three days before the trial was set to begin, FitzPatrick switched lawyers and asked for a delay until his new counsel could study the case. The crown objected, but Judge Hazen Strange granted a continuance until January.

"The trial should go ahead today," said Kevin Connelly, the New Brunswick crown prosecutor handling the case. "People were inconvenienced. We had witnesses coming in from out of province."

FitzPatrick is officially charged with defrauding the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) of more than \$5,000. Some reports have placed the actual amount closer to \$40,000. If convicted, FitzPatrick faces up to ten years in jail.

The charges stem from a two-month period in the fall of 1995 when FitzPatrick was serving as CASA's interim director. CASA alleged that FitzPatrick used his position as co-ordinator of a national conference on higher education to access and misuse the funds.

The conference ran up nearly \$30,000 in unaccounted expenses and when suspicious bills began to appear, like one for \$10,000 worth

of letterhead, the organization began an internal investigation.

FitzPatrick also had access to a CASA-funded credit card while serving as director. Charges to the credit card during that period include bills for pizza, a stay at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa, and a \$169 shopping spree at The Gap.

In January of last year CASA met with police to launch a formal investigation, but formal charges were not laid until earlier this year.

The missing money forced CASA to cancel the conference and gave a black eye to the two-year old

Alliance. Hoops Harrison, the Alliance's executive director, says CASA is trying to forget about the trial and start fresh. But he says the Alliance is considering a civil suit against FitzPatrick.

"It certainly is a very large priority for our members that we recover the money," he said. "But the criminal trial is our first priority."

CASA was just a few months old and had a total annual budget of \$128,000 when the money went missing. Harrison says it was easy for someone to deceive the inexperienced Alliance.

"We were a very young organization when this happened and it was easy to take advantage of the new organizational structure," he said.

CASA currently represents 13 student unions, including Dalhousie, and more than 200,000 students.

FitzPatrick could not be reached for comment. He recently worked as a photographer for a student newspaper in New Brunswick where his brother Joseph FitzPatrick is now the editor-in-chief.

Coke and university sued

BY MIGUEL MARTIN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Coca Cola has discovered that a student newspaper's demand for information is the real thing.

Coca Cola Ltd. and the University of British Columbia (UBC) are being taken to court by UBC's student newspaper, The Ubsysey, over an agreement reached between the University and the soft-drink maker in the fall of 1995.

Under the agreement, in return for exclusive selling rights on campus, Coca Cola will pay UBC an undisclosed sum of money, which, according to the university, will then be used to upgrade facilities for the disabled.

The conflict with the student paper arose when one of their reporters, Stanley Tromp, requested documents related to the deal. UBC

refused, citing sections of the BC Freedom of Information Act which allow a public body to withhold documents that could compromise the financial well-being of the institution if released.

The University also cited section 21 of the Act, which protects third parties in such disputes, claiming revelations concerning the deal could cause Coca Cola financial hardship, as well as section 14, which protects information subject to solicitor-client privilege.

The Ubsysey appealed the decision to the Freedom of Information office, arguing that clauses of confidentiality are overridden by the Act.

"Previously, universities had to be accountable for their financial dealings," said Ubsysey spokesperson Scott Hayward. "But now that corporations have bought

in, there seems to be two sets of rules. If we are using private sector rules now, where is the University's accountability?"

"The problem is we can't discuss whether the deal is appropriate because we can't see the details — we don't even know how much money the university will make," said Hayward.

Hayward's main concern regards UBC's accountability to the public. "This decision makes it easier for [UBC] to do whatever, without the public outrage," he said.

In his ruling, Freedom of Information officer David Flaherty sided with UBC and Coca Cola saying he found their arguments "very persuasive".

The Ubsysey has since appealed Flaherty's decision to the B.C. Supreme Court.

"Initially [the University was]

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