

# Saga Denies Pullout Rumour

by Lynne Garland

There may be more brewing around the SUB cafeteria than coffee. Saga Foods at present holds a one year management contract with the Student Union for the operation of the cafeteria. Saga is presently being challenged by Beaver Foods who have the contracts for the residences and the Tupper Building. At the same time there are indications that the Student Union executive is taking a hard look at food operations in the building and that a report will be submitted to council suggesting that the cafeteria be run directly by the Student Union.

Saga first came to Dalhousie in June, 1974, after the departure of Caterplan. It is a management company and as such it provides the trained personnel to oversee the workings of the cafeteria. There are three Saga personnel involved with the cafeteria - they are responsible for the hiring of staff, the purchasing of supplies, the planning of menus and the supervising of day to day activities of both kitchen and cafeteria. The equipment and facilities are owned by the Student Union. Saga employs 24 full time and 7 part time employees for its Dalhousie operation.

Saga's time at Dal has not been free from trouble. In the first place Saga's Canadian university business has expanded rapidly. In 1973 they ran cafeterias and dining rooms on 11 campuses. In 1974 this number increased to 19. Only one university account was lost - Mount St. Vincent when the Mount made moves to integrate the food service operation into the home economics department. The end result of this expansion has meant a shortage of trained management personnel.

At Dal the major problem was an overabundance of staff - a situation which was further complicated by the uneven pattern of meal consumption. Noon hours are peak periods with 1700 meals being served on a busy day. But, busy days vary throughout the week. On Fridays, evenings, and weekends, activity is light. Because of this it is extremely difficult to schedule staff on any regular basis. Labour is apparently the only variable which management in the food industry has any control over. The rapid rise in food prices has meant that there are no long term supply contracts. Purchases are made from day to day.

John Frohlich, Saga's Director of Food Services at the SUB, claims that the company has been able to maintain quality by limiting its number of employees. According to Frohlich, the only casualty so far has been the salad plates, which were abandoned



because they consumed far too much preparation time for the amount of demand which existed for them.

Frohlich did not deny that Saga has experienced some losses on the Dalhousie operation but maintained that because of cost control factors it has recently begun to break even. He denied the rumor that Saga intended to pull out of Dalhousie, particularly since it has begun recovering some of its earlier losses.

The challenge to Saga comes from Beaver Foods

which holds the contracts for the University residences and the Tupper Building. By agreement with the University, Beaver has the catering monopoly for the campus with the exception of the SUB. However, Saga was recently asked to bid on a Saturday conference luncheon for 100 people on the lower campus. It submitted a bid of \$5.00 per head, later offering a \$1.00 per person discount. Beaver's bid for the function was \$3.00 per head. If neither Beaver nor Saga can get preferential rates

from the local food wholesalers why the \$1.00 difference between the two bids? Was Saga hoping to make a quick profit or was Beaver prepared to suffer a quiet loss in the hopes of embarrassing Saga?

There are indications that the Student Union may be contemplating a head first plunge into this sea of sharks. The present agreement with Saga calls for a twenty percent mark up on food items with ten percent going to Saga and ten percent to the Student Union. If the Union took

over food services, the middleman would be eliminated and his profits absorbed.

A second bone of contention is that the Student Union receives no percentage on banquet meals served in the McInnes Room, when it is rented to outside groups. The rental fee covers the operating cost of most functions so any profit on these occasions ends up with the caterer.

Lastly, since the SUB owns the facilities in the cafeteria and since the contracts with the food companies are for relatively short periods, the companies show little interest in purchasing new equipment or maintaining the old. On the companies' part it is difficult to see why they should make expensive equipment purchases if their contract is likely to be cancelled at short notice.

For all those who are beginning to worry that they soon will not receive their daily servings of tuna casserole, Unionburgers, or clams and chips, calm down. Saga Foods presently has no intentions of pulling out of the SUB cafeteria and leaving a wake of hungry Dal students behind them. But there may be some changes around the cafeteria if the Student Union receives a proposal that they themselves take over the running of the food services.

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Other areas of interest include the co-operation of inter-community residents' groups. Because of the heavy involvement of the Student Union in the Quinpool Road controversy, approval by the newly-formed association to ally themselves with other residents' groups if the membership approves the cause, should be viewed with some note of optimism by the Community Affairs office of the Union. At the same time, such communication should go a long way towards bringing Ward 1 residents back into the mainstream of community involvement in the City. In the past South End residents have been cynically portrayed as a self-seeking group of individuals. This criticism was particularly levelled at them during the height of the Dalhousie Sports Complex controversy, even by supporters of the **Concerned Dalhousie Area Residents**, who were successful in blocking construction of the complex on the Stairs property.

Dal students have access to the directorship of the association. A Dalhousie student, Ken MacDougall,

a resident of Fenwick Towers, was given a position on the fifteen-person board. The ward was drawn into six areas, mostly in terms of interest. Section one, where Fenwick Towers is located, is bounded by Morris, South Park, Inglis and the waterfront.

Other areas of student concentration include the area west of Robie Street. John Delory, who lives at 1171 Dalhousie Street, can be contacted for problems in this area.

For SMU students living in the area bounded by Tower Road, the railway tracks, Inglis Street and Robie, Dorothy Grantmyre, a resident of Bridges Street, is the contact.

One of the first areas of involvement that the new organization may find itself in is the question of the compromise that newly-elected mayor Edmund Morris has proposed to mediate between the **Concerned Dalhousie Area Residents** and **Dalhousie University**. The association may request that they be represented at the meeting, but so far no action in this direction has been taken.

ATTENTION:

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## GAZETTE GATHERING

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