

Consumer pays cost

Bookstore bubble bursts

Interview with S.A. Zalewski, manager of the York bookstore, compiled by David Chud.

EXCALIBUR: Where does the bookstore fit in as far as the rest of the university bureaucracy goes?

ZALEWSKI: The bookstore is a service under the ancillary services provided by the university. We are under J.R. Allen the business manager of the university and are also responsible to the vice-president for finance. As well we are responsible to the bookstore committee (made up of faculty administration and students) for service factors.

EXCALIBUR: What do you see as the function of the bookstore?

ZALEWSKI: I see these functions: 1) To provide the community with instructional materials, particularly books for classroom use. 2) To provide books to the community at a competitive purchase price for individual consumption.

EXCALIBUR: What are your problems as a bookstore manager?

ZALEWSKI: The biggest problem is to fulfil our major function, which is selling books, in a way which is acceptable to the consumer and at the same time allows us to fulfil our practical responsibilities to the university. This includes trying to run the store on as close to a break even basis as possible. This has proven to be almost impossible.

It's natural for the students to assume that since book prices are rising the store is making a profit but prices are rising selectively because the publishers have raised their prices in selective cases.

EXCALIBUR: Why are you selling stereo sets and radios, etc.?

ZALEWSKI: We sold cassette tape recorders last year and we had a very good response. We've decided this year to move into original art, prints and the larger appliances. Although they're really marginal to education we feel they're legitimate products for us to sell. The student response will be the telling factor in these cases.

EXCALIBUR: Doesn't the fact that the rate of profit is higher on these items have something to do with the fact that you're selling them?

ZALEWSKI: Yes that's true. Selling these products allows us to provide books to the community at a more reasonable rate.

EXCALIBUR: But aren't you really saying that it's

impossible to provide books to the community at a reasonable rate and that your solution to the problem is to pass the cost on to the consumer by selling these other products?

ZALEWSKI: What's the alternative?

EXCALIBUR: Why don't you go the other way, to your boss the business manager or the vice-president for finance and tell them that it's impossible to sell the books at a reasonable rate and that they should look for a solution that doesn't involve the consumer?

ZALEWSKI: That would mean that the university would have to go to the government for an additional grant and if they received money for us it wouldn't be fair to the private businessman. Anyway we never eclipse our primary function which is to provide books. We plan no more than 20% of sales at any time on non-book items. Right now we are well below 15%.

EXCALIBUR: How does somebody become the manager of the York University bookstore?

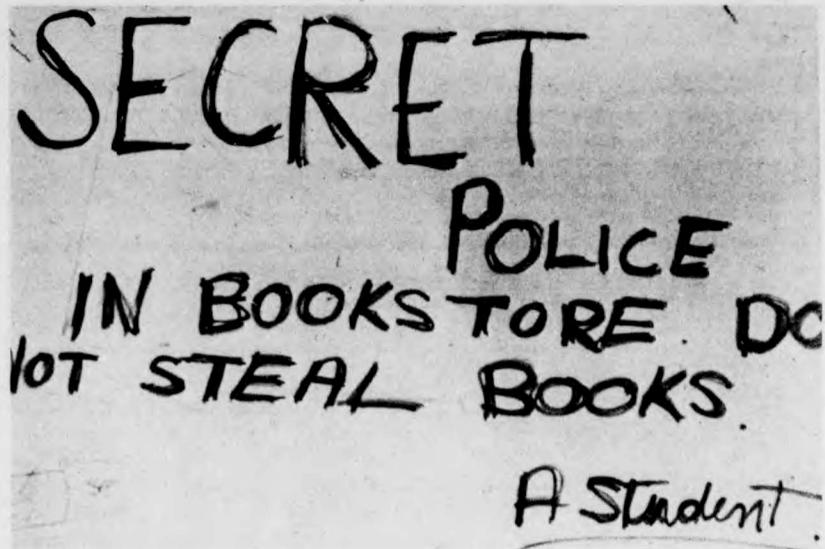
ZALEWSKI: I dropped out of the University of Buffalo and answered an ad in the paper for a management trainee. What they wanted was a book clerk. I spent three years at U.B. as a stock clerk and slowly worked my way up doing various jobs in the bookstore there. Later I took a job setting up the bookstore in a new community college in Niagara Falls, New York. I also worked in the bookstore at Cornell and for private publishers. When I was working for one publisher my territory included Toronto. I liked it here so when I saw the ad for the York bookstore I applied.

EXCALIBUR: Was there any other reason for coming here?

ZALEWSKI: I belong to the United States Air Force Reserve. My major reason for coming to Canada was a personal political one. Second it was a vocational one. Joining the reserve and not deserting was the most difficult single thing I've ever done. It's not consistent with my personal beliefs and yet I'm not willing to make the withdrawal at the price that would be necessary.

EXCALIBUR: What do you think about the talk that has been circulating about a union of York students who work part-time at the university?

ZALEWSKI: It may be a very good and legitimate avenue of making working students, especially those with specific skills, available to those departments of the university who can use them.



A persistent student replaced this warning sign four times, only to have it torn down by an unidentified agent of the bookstore.

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Nominations - Science Student Faculty Liason Committee

Nominations for the committee are open September 21-28. 3 Names are required for nomination form. Forms may be obtained from Room 247 Farquharson.

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