

# No justification for higher book prices in Canada

CALGARY (CUP)---There is usually no justification for Canadians paying 8 to 20 per cent more for books than people in the U.S. says George Parry, owner-operator of the Laughing Rooster Bookstore in Calgary. Parry puts the situation down to the "colon-

ial attitude" American business has toward Canada.

"What often happens", he says, "is book prices sent from American publishing houses to their Canadian branch plants are immediately jacked up at the factory".

The case is the same for textbooks except they are usually marked up in Canada and the new price pencilled in. As an example Parry cites the Whole Earth Catalogue which has a \$5 tag printed on the cover but sells for \$6.50 in Canada, even two years after it was declared duty-free by an Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) customs appeal.

He states that book distributors justify the markup by claiming tariffs and freight rates as the culprits, but, says Parry, over two-thirds of the books on Canadian bookshelves, are duty-free and it is the booksellers not the distributor or publisher, who pay freight.

The Laughing Rooster, David Fallis Books, also in Calgary and Banyen Books in Vancouver all place many

of their orders directly with U.S. wholesalers thereby passing on the U.S. retail price or close to it, to their customers. Parry says the three stores are the only ones he knows of in Western Canada that follow this practice.

He feels it is in no way anti-nationalistic because a majority of the suppliers and some of the publishers in Canada are American subsidiaries and the Canadian across the counter deserves a "nationalistic" break.

Parry adds that some bookstores buy U.S. wholesale but sell at Canadian retail prices.

David Fallis calls the whole situation "obviously ridiculous". He says that the ordinary rules of economics, in the form of tariffs, should not apply to books.

"Tariffs", he says, "are there to protect a country's own industry. If the country is producing socks and doing well at it and another country wants to import them cheaply, a tariff is set up to bring them up to a competitive price. But in the book industry that doesn't



apply since authors are internationally known".

He feels the present form of distribution through a Canadian-based subsidiary plant is of little use except that it creates jobs for Canadians. But with prices as they are, Fallis prefers to buy from a U.S. wholesaler except in the case of Canadian published books.

Parry feels the textbook scene should be another major point of protest by Canadians. Distribution time for textbooks (which are all duty-free) is hopelessly delayed by the U.S. agencies in Eastern Canada which tie upsole distribution rights as well as raise prices.

On the other hand, Carmen Moore of Carmen Moore Books Ltd. says the price discrepancy is "one of the many hazards of having a wide population in a large country."

She adds that the Canadian Booksellers Association (CBA) is gaining strength and has been able to pressure distributors into offering a "more equitable exchange".

Parry feels the CBA is pressuring in the right direction. Although the situation is far from being resolved it has been getting better. Mark-ups used to be higher and some publishers, such as Collier and Van Nostrand Reinhold, have now started printing one price with "United States and Canada" on their books.

Parry suggests as a possible route of action that students collectively boycott texts which sell for higher than the U.S. list price.



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