

# HALIFAX PAPERS CENSORED

STUDENT PRESS: DALHOUSIE GAZETTE, SAINT MARY'S JOURNAL, VICTIMS OF CENSORSHIP BY PRINTERS

HALIFAX (CUP) - A mildly controversial photo cutline has become the focal point of a major controversy on freedom of the press here after two student newspapers were forced to change their content or not be published.

Both papers, the Dalhousie Gazette and the Saint Mary's University Journal, were the victims of their printers, who refused to publish copy which they claimed was libelous.

"We're not going to bend to pressure," said an angry Tom Regan, editor of the Gazette, after the paper's printers told him the Gazette would not be published unless an offending article was removed.

"We intend to do the paper as we normally do it."

But Regan was forced to drop the article from the Oct. 25 edition in order for the paper to come out at all.

Due to the lengthy battle with the printers, Kentville Publishers, which involved lawyers on both sides, the Gazette was forced to come out a day late.

Regan vowed to publicize the censorship incident through other media in Halifax, and by printing a story on the incident on a gestetner or photocopier and distributing it on campus.

Ironically the controversy started with a cutline written for a photo in the SMU Journal's Oct. 3 edition, and a similar comment in the Journal staff box.

Beneath a picture of Prime Minister Joe Clark and Nova Scotia Premier John Buchanan conferring, the Journal wrote "Er...yes, we had sex with Margaret Trudeau...er...hasn't everyone." The photo was on the Journal's satire page and was a take-off of a Saturday Night Live television skit. The staff box said, "We confirm rumours that the Journal staff had sex with Margaret Trudeau."

The Journal's printers, the Dartmouth Free Press, which publishes Halifax's two daily papers, refused to print the paper unless the two sentences were removed because they claimed the comments were libelous and as publisher they could be sued.

The Journal complied but discussed the incident with other Atlantic student newspapers.

The Dalhousie Gazette decided to report the story in their Oct. 25 edition. Their story on the Journal censorship included the comments judged libelous and a picture of the page in question. The Gazette headline read "Free Press is not so free."

At this point the Gazette's printer, Kentville Publishers got into the act, also refusing to print the paper as long as the story was in it. Kentville was upset about the Journal quotes which the Free Press had refused to print but was also angry with a statement made by the Free Press management, which was in the Gazette story. The Free Press had told the Journal that if they wanted the offensive comments to remain they should have the paper printed at Kentville, "because they'll print anything."

Regan disagreed with their opinion that the Trudeau comments were libelous and threatened to do another story on Kentville's censorship of the Gazette. Kentville's management responded by saying if a story was done on the incident involving them, they might refuse to print the Gazette again.

## LIBEL THE ISSUE

Kentville and the Free Press are the only publishers in the Halifax area able to print student papers, Regan says, so the Gazette and Journal are being held over a barrel.

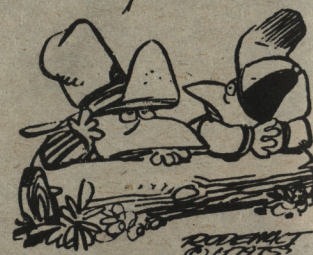
The Kentville printers also refused Regan's second request, that the paper be left blank where the story had been. They insisted the Gazette fill the spot because they did not want the censorship known, said Regan.

Regan said Canadian University Press (CUP) lawyer Brian Iler advised him that the story was not libelous but Kentville still refused to run the story. CUP is a cooperative organization of 67 college and university newspapers, to which the Gazette and Journal belong.

Regan says the censorship fight has not ended and the Gazette will find some way to publish without interference from printers. But under Canadian law, Iler said, printers can be sued for libel and have the right to refuse to publish articles they feel are libelous.

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