

## The Bookstore Problem

The Medical Students' Bookstore has recently received many criticisms. Most of these have been abusive, too few have been constructive, and the majority of complaints have been cast by those who know nothing of the purpose, structure, or management of this valuable service. To begin with, the Bookstore is an organ of the Medical Society and, as such, is directly responsible to it and hence, to every Dalhousie medical student. The Society directs the policies of the Bookstore and any complaints concerning the efficiency of these policies should be voiced at Society meetings where explanations based on facts may be made. The recent complaints, made outside Society meetings will now be answered by the Journal. These complaints are concerned with the lack of essential texts in the store, the delay in receiving ordered texts, the limited time of opening hours, and the suspected huge profits made by the student clerks.

The Bookstore has been inefficient, and this is due to at least three major problems: a lack of working capital, storage space for books, and an inadequate time for handling and selling by student clerks. There is no working capital with which to buy adequate numbers of books at the beginning of the school year because the funds for this come only from small profits left over from the previous year. This year the working capital amounted to about \$600.00. To function effectively, the store needs at least \$20,000. The store could buy on credit, but payments must be made in thirty days and, moreover, if books are bought on speculation, an error in judgement may result in a swamp of unsold books. An overload of books has the added disadvantage of impinging on limited storage space.

As to the profit, the store buys books at 20% less list price. This is marked up 10% but after shipping and handling there remains only about 8%. From this the two managers, the third clerk, and the accountant receive salaries, and the Medical Society receives \$250.00. The remainder goes into stock. The Society determines the salaries and there are no huge profits made by either the clerks or the store.

The students who work in the store do so on part-time basis. Because of their studies, their time is budgeted and they are only able to order books every one or two weeks. This factor plus any delay from book distributors due to depleted stocks explains late delivery dates. The clerks must handle mail orders from Maritime physicians and do the store's banking as well as handle and sell. This is too much work for a part-time basis.

To resolve these problems, some suggest that we decrease book discounts and thus raise the working capital, increase the storage space, and hire a full-time manager. All suggestions, though good, may be in vain, for the Senate of the University is presently investigating the possibility of including a medical section in a large new University Bookstore on Studley Campus. There probably will be a full-time staff in the store hence medical texts will be sold with no discount. Moreover, a new store will not know what is necessary or what is available for medical students. The Society acting in good interest, has formed a committee of students to investigate this new development, with the hope that it may make the Senate aware of our students' sentiments as well as our Bookstore's problems.

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