

Campbell gives another view

Principles right - withdrawal wrong

So we've withdrawn from the Canadian Union of Students. So who gives a damn?

The action has produced no noticeable changes on campus. Bad professors still give bad lectures and the poorly-written text books are still hard to understand. The parking lot is still over-crowded—like last year, and I still miss classes.

In fact, university seems no different.

The trouble is this university may never change without CUS. That is a strong statement and it needs explanation.

In the last decade students' unions here and in the United States have been fighting to establish students as full citizens of the academic community. Last year the fight reached U of A when students' union president Richard Price and his council tried to get student representation on the board of governors.

They failed, but it was a first attempt.

But there is more to full citizenship than a single student on the board of governors. The student activists say we should have a say in almost every sphere of activity in the academic community. I believe in this kind of activism.

This means students should take an active role in determining the content of their education at university and how the material is taught. It means students should help decide the kinds of buildings they wish to work in and how they are going to live in them.

What the activists are proposing is revolution in the administration's eyes, heresy in the public's eyes, and a pipe-dream in the student's eyes.

I'm not worried about the first two groups — change is always heresy and revolution—but the student view troubles me.

The first thing students say is "it's impossible" when ideas like these are expressed. Let's look at the action on other campuses and see just how impossible it all is.

For the last year or so the education undergraduate society here has been planning a course evaluation scheme. The motivation behind the project came from students who were insulted by the content and lecture techniques in educational psychology courses.

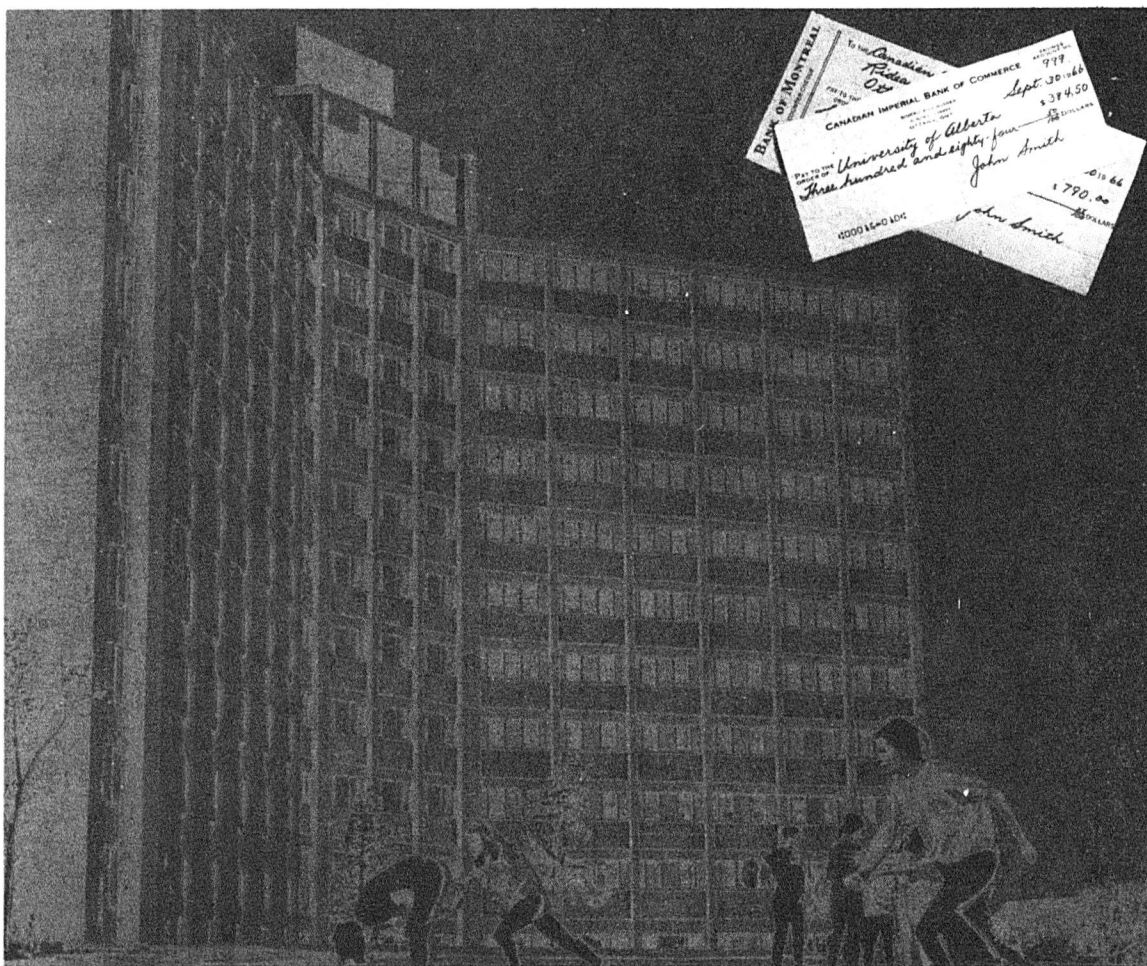
For more than six months the society has been pondering the first step to get the ball rolling. They have received almost no information on evaluation schemes at other universities. They do not know where to go for guidance in planning strategy. They do not know where to look for research material in professional journals.

Course evaluation, by students, has been going on for some years now on other campuses. Harvard's "Confidential Guide" is almost a by-word in the field.

This year I had the privilege of talking to the managing editor of the best course evaluation I've seen. His name is John Fekete and the book is the "McGill Course Guide."

The guide evaluates third and fourth year arts, science, and commerce courses and is as thick as any faculty calendar here.

Fekete and his workers had full co-operation from the dean and members of the faculty at McGill.



CAN CUS HELP STUDENTS' UNION

... fight rising university costs?

They used a computer to prepare results from a 76-item questionnaire. They used a 70 per cent sample and processed over 4,000 completed forms.

Advisors to the project include such distinguished psychologists as D. Bindra and D. O. Hebb.

The guide is honest. It does not attempt humor—it exudes an air of responsibility, and all its criticism is constructive. I read the reports on Drs. Hebb and Bindra and found they did not escape thorough consideration. The guide's forward is written by H. D. Woods, dean of the McGill College of Arts and Science.

Apart from lectures, the guide evaluates texts, labs, assignments and term papers as to their worth from the student point of view.

When I talked to CUS about course evaluation, they had never heard of the McGill project. Marilyn Pilkington, students' union vice-president, says this falls under the academic relations committee and is therefore not her direct concern. I don't know what's happening, but information on the McGill project didn't get to the people who needed it.

It probably hit file 13 shortly after it arrived. Somewhere, someone, is not doing the job.

CUS has published extensive literature on course evaluation. What happened to it?

This is the kind of communication we have been getting from what one congress delegate termed "the Giant Gestetner" for years. Much of it is exceedingly valuable to people interested in student affairs. Council says this flow will not stop—but more about that later.

Now let's look at two other areas of union concern—co-operative housing and co-operative book stores. Both these things have been working successfully on other campuses for years. At good old U

of A they are still considered revolutionary.

At the University of Waterloo students have financed and built Dag Hammerskjold house, a multi-storey residence, in a little under two years of co-operative action. The residence has rates \$20 a month lower than those in administration accommodation. The students put in a few hours work a week to make up the difference.

At the University of Toronto co-operatives have been going since the 1930's. At U of A our students' council finally recognized the existence of co-operative housing by sending co-ordinator Glenn Sinclair to a conference. So far nothing more has been done.

Some people live at home and couldn't care less about co-operative housing, but what about book prices?

The new SUB has an administration book store. The administration is paying for the floor space and will continue to sell books—at a fat profit.

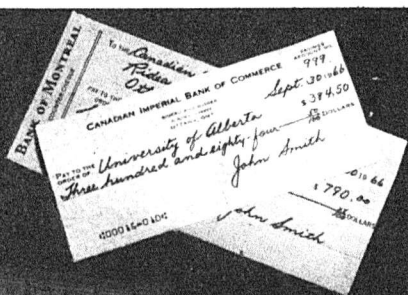
At Carleton, in Ottawa, a co-operative book store lowered prices 18 per cent and subsequently forced administration prices to a competitive level.

A co-operative in Boston forced prices down 30-40 per cent.

But the real action is in Quebec where the radical Union Generale des Etudiants du Quebec has been buying books and supplies in bulk for its members. Book prices are down an average of 40 per cent and Parker ball point pens and other supplies have gone at similar discounts. Many stores are granting significant discounts to union members.

But what about students taking a role in planning the buildings they live in? That will never happen, many say.

It has happened at the University of Waterloo Student Village, a



tionary idea of all, and again Quebec is where the action is.

UGEQ has had committees on university affairs since the start of their existence two years ago and McGill has picked up the torch.

They are kicking off their program with the McGill Conference on Teaching Affairs later this fall. It is partially sponsored by the university and will bring students and faculty together to discuss problems and possible solutions in the age of the mass university.

So where does CUS come into all this? Can't we do the same things outside?

Looking at it theoretically we could, but practically it will be very difficult. We can ask other unions to send us material on their projects and we may even get some replies. But some replies are not enough.

Judging from the reaction of students' union presidents on other campuses to U of A's withdrawal, there is a great hostility towards this council.

I don't think they will co-operate.

And part of this problem lies with council and not with the so-called leftists. I disagree politically with John Fekete, the managing editor of the McGill Course Guide, on many issues. Both John and I know this, but this doesn't mean we can not sit down and talk about things we are both interested in, and it doesn't mean I have to hate his guts.

The only ideas expressed by this council so far are the ideas they picked up from the McGill thinkers to justify their withdrawal.

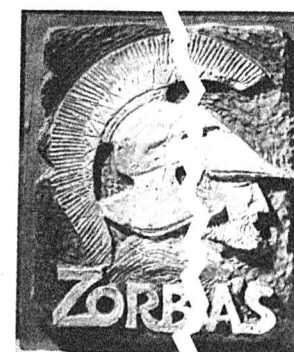
Council tells us again and again they were "well prepared" for the Dalhousie Congress. I am beginning to have doubts.

I think they went to Dalhousie with all the answers. They had set up a study group and they took the conclusions of this August body with them to accomplish their messianic mission.

They do not impress me as good listeners, and listening is the only way these people will benefit from the experiences of other campuses.

I have a feeling they alienated other delegates to the congress with their attitude.

see page 9—PRINCIPLES



Half the time we're a cafeteria
Half the time we're a discotheque,
All the time we're a hell of a lot of fun.

We open soon at 112th St. & 87th in the
CAMPUS TOWER. You'll recognize the place,
YOU'RE FRIENDS WILL ALL BE THERE.

ZORBA'S