

Get to know the National Union of Students

As part of the students' election February 9, U of students will be asked to vote membership in the National Union of Students (NUS). This is the first in a series of Gateway informational articles on the history, constitution, and activities of NUS.

NUS is the product of a long history of post-secondary students organizing in Canada. In 1926, the National Federation of Canadian University Students was formed, primarily as a services-oriented organization. In later years, the organization became more political. A lobbying campaign to obtain a Canada Student Loan Program was carried on for six years, until a plan was finally implemented in 1964. In 1963 the organization changed its name to the Canadian Union of Students (CUS). A number of provincial organizations emerged from CUS in 1966. Travel became a major area of services for the organization. By 1969, however, CUS began to experience serious difficulties, and various member associations became disillusioned.

A number of major universities pulled out of the organization. This resulted in a serious drop in revenues. Eventually, CUS and the provincial organizations it had spawned fell apart. All that remained were travel agencies, which became part of the Association of Student Councils (AOSC).

There was a lull in activities until 1972. Then the Ontario Federation of Students was formed in response to govern-

ment plans for full-cost tuition fees and an all-loan student aid system. In May of 1972, twenty-six students' unions met to approve the founding of a new national organization of students. In October of that year, fifty-one unions met at the founding conference of NUS. That first conference was notable mainly for walk-outs.

The organization

The underlying structure

NUS is a national organization of post-secondary students in Canada. Presently, its membership includes 37 student associations at universities, colleges, and technical schools across the country. Membership is open to any student association which is "democratic, student controlled, and authorized to represent the general interests of its members, and subscribes to the objects of the Union" (NUS constitution). To finance its operation, a fee of one dollar per student is charged by NUS.

The organization holds semi-annual conferences in May and October of each year. At these conferences, delegates decide upon general policy and direction for the next year. Each institution casts one vote, regardless of the size of that institution.

The responsibility for carrying out policy set at conferences lies with the Central Committee (CC) of NUS. The CC is composed of a treasurer and two

Atlantic and Quebec delegates left the conference when their proposals for the structure of NUS were voted down. However, a Central Committee was elected; this committee spent its time soliciting memberships, and surviving on a budget made up primarily of donations. At the general meeting in May 1973, twenty-four founding members, many from the Atlan-

tic region, members were ratified. In September, two full-time staff were hired to coordinate exchange of information and volunteer work across the country. The organization was operating on a budget of \$35,000. In May 1974, the conference in Burnaby, B.C. decided to begin a lobbying campaign around tax reform. Inex-

members-at-large elected by delegates to the May conference, and one representative from each province which has NUS members. At present, P.E.I., New Brunswick, and Quebec have no NUS members; Quebec has an association of students of its own. The CC meets five or six times during the year. NUS employs eight people—four fieldworkers, a translator, a researcher, and executive secretary (who is responsible for liaison with member campuses and the government) and an internal coordinator, who is the business manager and is responsible for the publication of the *Student Advocate*.

Financial affairs are handled by a budget committee at the conference, which prepares and revises the budget for approval by delegates; expected revenues are \$155,000 and expenditures are budgeted at \$170,000. NUS and its services affiliate, the Association of Stu-

dent Councils (AOSC) exchange representatives to the respective executives. NUS also appoints a representative to the National Youth Advisory Council under the ministry of Manpower and Immigration. It has also been asked to appoint a person to the Canadian Consumer Council, under the ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

NUS is currently discussing possible changes in its structures. One possibility is making two executive positions full time jobs during the terms of office, and to stagger the terms of office to maintain continuity.

Other areas of consideration for restructuring include provincial National relations and the formation of constituency groups. NUS and the provincial student associations are attempting to consolidate the two levels of student organizations. In the future it may not be possible to be a member of a provincial students association without being a member of NUS.

perience and poorly-formulated demands made this campaign relatively ineffectual. In October, the decision was made to center efforts around student aid, and to increase the per-student fee to \$1. The ensuing referenda on campuses across the country resulted in a higher public profile for NUS.

In 1975-76, twenty-six institutions ratified the fee increase and students' unions loaned and donated money to NUS. Financial affairs were becoming more settled than they had been in the past, and work began on a number of issues, including a conference for International Women's Year.

NUS also made a presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Immigration. In Winnipeg (May 1976), plans for eight staff were approved, and a National Students' Day was planned for the fall. Publication of the *Student Advocate* was also begun.

National Student Day has been viewed as anything from a total fiasco to a great step forward for the student movement. In 1976, some 20,000 students participated in a day of information on campuses and presentations to governments. The day did, however, have the effect of increasing NUS' visibility in students' eyes.

Most recently, in 1977-78, NUS and AOSC have taken steps towards closer affiliation in the future. Research and lobbying on a number of issues continues, and NUS is working on establishing relations with national students groups in other countries. There are now thirty-seven members, with a referendum planned at the U of A and at a number of other campuses.

FAS considering appeal

The Federation of Alberta Students (FAS), has lost the first round in legal proceedings against the university over the issue of differential fees for visa students.

But FAS is considering an appeal of the ruling. FAS and a visa student, Ken Devlin, had taken the Board of Governors of the university and Holoh, Minister of Advanced Education, to court, arguing that the university could charge fees for courses or programmes, not for types of students.

John Devlin, a FAS staffer, says the issue of differential fees cannot be argued from an economic point of view, because revenue generated is so small. FAS claims the government is using foreign students as a ploy to deflect the growing discontent many Canadian

students feel about the cost and quality of their education.

Devlin also claims that this is part of an anti-immigration trend in Canada which is tied to unemployment and a worsening economy.

Ontario was the first province to introduce differential fees in 1976-77. Alberta followed in 1977-78, Quebec introduced them in 1978-79, and the government of Manitoba is presently studying the feasibility of such a system.

However, the legality of differential fees has never been challenged before.

Devlin says that an appeal will be considered if funds can be raised to pay for legal costs. An appeal to ethnic groups in Edmonton and Calgary might be a possibility, as well as a campaign on campus, he says.

Here's pie in your eye

About 15 campus notables will volunteer their too-familiar faces for a pie-throw Saturday afternoon. Of course, they'll be the cream-in is to aid the Heart Fund and will take place in the Main Gym of the Phys. Ed. building during the Basketball Bears' time show.

The organizers are the Recreation Students Society and the Time Show Committee. The pie-throwing is Heart

Month, they've decided to contribute the proceeds from the sale of pies to the Heart Fund.

So Saturday night, as the Bears face the UBC Thunderbirds, come face a team of newsmakers (names announced Wednesday) with a big cream pie.

And, have a heart — throw it. See Friday's *Gateway* for more info.



Far away places...Construction began Sunday on the new AOSC travel office in SUB. If you start saving now, you may have enough money for a down-payment on a trip to Cuba when the office opens opposite the Art Gallery, February 5.

Mao being reevaluated

The Cultural Revolution and China's modernization were the subject of a China Week speech January 25.

Dr. Brian Evans, a professor in the department of history, is an authority on China and has visited the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) several times.

Evans explained to an audience of 75 people that what is happening in China today is no "deMaoization" - it is a re-evaluation of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's role in China's development.

He characterized China as "underdeveloped, united and socialist" and said that it is striving to be "modern, admired and socialist." He pointed out that in this transition of what China has been to what it can be in the future, there are bound to be difficulties.

Mao, said Evans, constructed a vision of what China ought to be and pointed a signpost to it constructed of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Tse Tung thought. He was the leader, inspiration and critic of the Chinese revolution.

Evans commented on the new openness of the PRC, commenting at one point, "we have the Chinese Communist Party to blame if twistings and turnings in China's policy have confused people. In view of the new openness, I invite you to write and tell them so."