

# National Union of Students emer

## Some say...take it!

By CHRIS HUNT

In a few weeks the University of New Brunswick will be having a referendum on whether or not to join the National Union of Students. There are many reasons for and against joining NUS.

Jim MacLean, chairman of the AFS (Atlantic Federation of Students) feels UNB should join NUS.

"As Chairman of the AFS I am obviously prejudiced in favour of NUS, because the same theoretical ideology that justifies the existence of AFS also justifies that of NUS."

Despite this, MacLean believes in an objective manner that NUS performs three basic functions for the students of Canada. These being:

"(1) It provides a forum for discussion, debate, exchange and solution to the problems that face the students of this country.

"(2) It is an important research and documentation organization for the compiling and distribution of information involved with and relating to student problems.

"(3) It is a National Student Lobby with the federal government on behalf of the students of this country."

Expanding on these functions to illustrate their value, MacLean says, "The benefits of the role of a forum are obvious, 100 heads are better than one or in NUS' case 40,000 heads are better than one." In addition he says, NUS can co-ordinate and organize student issues around a general theme via its forum exchange. "That is, inject a consistency into student demands. The benefits of such an approach are noteworthy."

MacLean illustrates the benefits of NUS' role in research and distribution with a personal example. "AFS is presently embroiled in a fight with the provincial government for increases in the local Student Aid Program. For me to gather the documentation and materials to battle effectively with the government would be both time consuming and expensive. However, because NUS has a research wing, all necessary information is just a phone call away. That is just one example that can be cited."

As to NUS' role as a lobby? MacLean says that one must realize that student problems such as student aid, housing, immigration, and unemployment are federally related. Therefore one must deal with the federal

government which requires representation in Ottawa." The alternative to NUS," says MacLean, "would be for UNB to have a lobby in Ottawa, U of T to have one, UBC also to have one etc., etc. The obvious solution to that alternative is for all universities to have one lobby - NUS."

In reply to what he terms the "inevitable attack" of "Fine, that's a concise, theoretical justification of NUS but dollar for dollar where's our return?" MacLean says, "Benefits from any organization like NUS or ARS or for that matter your own student union are often intangible and difficult to trace. Yet that is not a reply, merely an excuse and NUS does not need excuses."

MacLean believes that Canadian students have derived six major and tangible benefits from NUS.

"(1) NUS was consulted and submitted a brief to the federal government's survey on post-secondary education. The purpose of this survey is to establish criteria and data for the reforming of the present student aid program.....

"(2) NUS made a significant presentation to the federal government's hearings on the Green Paper on Immigration. If you are a foreign student then NUS is of some benefit to you.

"(3) NUS provided comparison literature and organizational abilities to the Student Union of Memorial University in its fight for better student financial assistance. The new Newfoundland program consists of a \$900 loan and a \$2400 bursary - nice eh! NUS as mentioned before is doing the same thing for New Brunswick.

"(4) Hugh Faulkner whose department administers the Federal Student Aid Program in past refused to fully recognize student input. But because of NUS' presence he is now willing to consider student input through NUS.

"(5) NUS was instrumental in the formation of BCFS (British Columbia Federation of Students) and closer to home in the formation of AFS.

"(6) NUS representation has been instrumental in rejuvenating the AUCC pressure for additional student housing."

In conclusion MacLean says, "These I feel are tangible results of the National Union of Students organization and six good reasons why NUS should by US."

By PETER KRAUTLE

Dan O'Connor, executive secretary of the National Union of Students will be looking quite closely at this campus in the next weeks. His main concern is whether UNB will join NUS in a referendum to be held on October 22.

O'Connor feels NUS' role is important if post-secondary students wish to solve their major issues. For instance the union presently acts as a student representative co-ordinating their effort towards the federal government and the Council of the Ministers of Education.



Photo by Stainless Steve

Dan O'Connor

NUS' research wings also provides an invaluable service to all student bodies. The research centre compiles information from member organizations and presents reports and papers from conclusions made from the information. O'Connor stressed this service as it informs student bodies across the country of the problems and issues that face major student bodies.

O'Connor pointed out that the location and size of the university are not relevant to the decision-making process, but that issues and the university representatives would determine policies and decisions.

He cited a case in which Simon Fraser University had a faculty dispute and their student union turned to NUS for support. The members of NUS listened to their problem and voted to support Simon Fraser's students' stand.

Every member of NUS has one vote, whether the university has 25,000 or 2,500 students, says O'Connor. This insures that the smaller universities have an equal say in Union matters. UNB should not worry about not having its views represented as long as the person representing the university is capable of fulfilling the job.

O'Connor believes that for the services and benefits the university will receive, the \$6500 it will cost us to join NUS is justified.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We are providing you, the students of UNB, with both pro and con arguments for joining or not joining NUS. It is up to you, the students to find out all you can about NUS - the conference runs from the 17th of October until the 20th.

## N.U.S. backgrounder

Should UNB join NUS, it would be the fifth Atlantic University to join. Present Atlantic members include Dalhousie, St. Mary's, King's College, and Memorial University.

The National Union of Students was formed in the fall of 1972 when the amendments to a Student Federal Aid Bill were being made. At the time, student unions across the country were attempting to concern themselves with the bill proceedings and provide input. However, student governments found themselves very disorganized and with little power when they approached the federal government.

In November of that year NUS was formed. Its beginnings were shaky, and the Union was constantly plagued with financial instability. In the spring of this year, NUS was again in financial trouble and consequently put out an appeal to post-secondary student unions for money. With the raising of membership fees from \$.33 to \$1.00 per student their financial situation has eased.

NUS' goals are threefold: 1) to provide a concerted forum through which ideas may be exchanged; 2) to provide a means for students to work collectively towards implementing policies in areas of common interest; 3) to provide lobbying, research, and information services.