

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the university community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

AFS loses credibility

Decision to be made Sunday

by Peter Mancini

On Sunday night the Dalhousie Students' Council will meet and make a decision regarding payment of fees and future participation in A.F.S. Dalhousie's contribution is \$7000, nearly 1/3 of the organization's proposed operating budget. When making that decision, several facts should be considered.

1) This summer Dalhousie Stu-

dent Council called for a financial audit on the A.F.S. books. After much procrastination on their part and after much conflict, the audit was finally prepared. It showed a disastrous financial condition. Over \$600 of the organization's money cannot be accounted for. The treasurer claims he called on the secretary co-ordinator for receipts. The secretary co-ordinator says he

replied; yet the money and receipts are still missing and unaccounted for.

2) To date few of the large universities belong to A.F.S. At the conference this weekend, U.N.B., Mount Allison, and St. Francis Xavier had no vote on resolutions. Of the larger institutions only Dalhousie, Acadia & UPEI have a vote. It can be questioned then just how many atlantic students A.F.S. really represents.

3) The constitution of A.F.S. was drawn up by the constitution committee in one day. It, in my mind, lacked substance and was by no means a workable and strong document.

4) A.F.S. has proposed to hire a full-time staff person. The hiring committee was made up of three people who made a recommendation to the conference on Sunday. Interviews were conducted by individual members of the committee and were taped and sent to the other members. I would question a hiring procedure that depended on cassette tapes for their interviews. I know memorax is next to the real thing, but really . . .

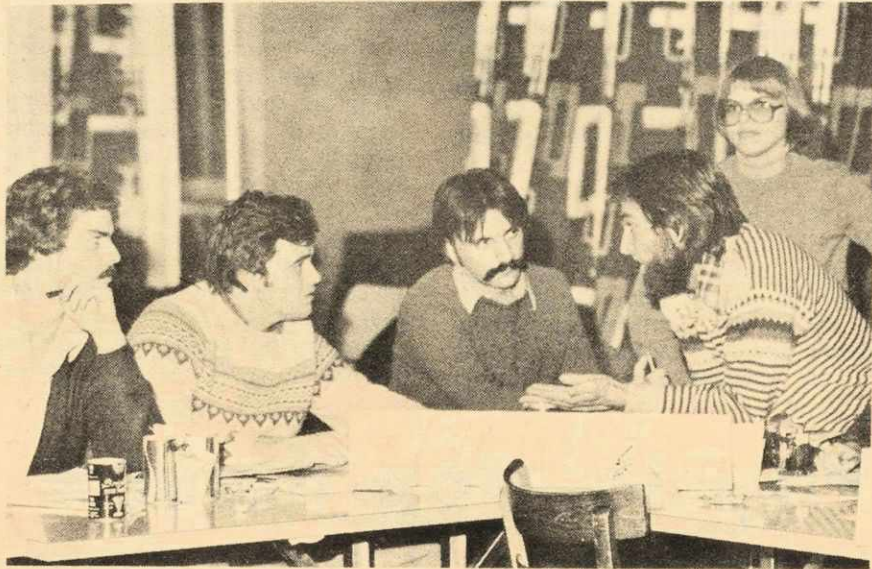
5) As of Sunday night there was a literal leadership vacuum. No one would stand for election to the top post of secretary co-ordinator and one person ran for the seat of treasurer. To me this spells non-in-

terest and apathy.

The question must be asked—Is not A.F.S. really just the member institutions who make it up? If they don't participate, clearly the organization cannot exist! That is true. No one can accuse Dalhousie of non-participation. We went to the conference armed with financial controls and constitutional amendments. We initiated the audit report. We took an active interest in attempting to improve the organization. Yet we were continually opposed by a block of smaller institutions, who hold the voting power.

For two years I have been on Council. We have assisted A.F.S. and the attitude has always been "give them one more chance to organize." Well the time to decide has arrived. It is obstructionist for us and A.F.S. to continue undecided.

The fact is that the organization has lost its credibility financially, has no real constitution, has no real leadership, and excludes many of the larger institutions. The fact is, Dalhousie must decide whether or not to commit \$7,000 of her students' monies to A.F.S. I urge the students to make their councillors aware of their feelings. We will decide on Sunday night. And that, is a matter of fact.



Dal Photo / Grandy

Democracy in action: Dalhousie had a large delegation at the Atlantic Federation of Students Conference last weekend and the members disagreed on almost every motion. Subsequently, individuals would propose motions that their own delegation would vote against.

A different perspective

Dalhousie executive acting in bad faith

by M. Allain

As a member of the AFS executive, I feel obligated to comment on the misleading and totally spurious allegations which Dal student council V.P. Peter Mancini has put forward as "fact."

Were these allegations to go unanswered a great injustice would be done to AFS and the students of Dalhousie University.

1. The question of the audit itself is an interesting one. When the books were brought to the auditor (as opposed to the agreement to bring them to Halifax), it was to one of Robert Sampson's choosing. No shopping around was done and AFS now faces a bill rumoured to be in the vicinity of \$1,000—and this on a budget of \$7,500.

The audit did indeed show "a disastrous financial condition." AFS ran out of money in the middle of the summer. This lack of funds caused a breakdown in communication which resulted in many members withholding their fees. The situation has been for the most part cleared up. As of last week's conference all member institutions (with the exception of Dalhousie and UPEI) had either paid their fees or agreed to do so before the year's end.

2. Mancini has somehow managed to exclude from his tabulations of AFS membership Memorial University of Newfoundland with a total student enrolment of 6,400. As for the other three universities mentioned, UNB intends to hold a referendum in February, Mount A has not decided, while St. F.X. held a successful referendum last year which, because of a constitutional technicality, was invalidated. The presence of all these institutions at the AFS conference and their participation in debates and workshops is in fact an indication that AFS represents all Atlantic students.

3. The constitution was the result of committee work over the summer months. If in Mancini's mind it lacked substance one can only question why such substance was not provided by the interested member himself. My own recollections are that contributions made by Mancini and Sandy MacNeil were a series of amendments considered so counter productive that the Dalhousie delegation itself voted against them.

4. The hiring of a full-time staff person was a decision taken by the AFS membership at the spring conference, and reaffirmed by all institutions at the recent conference (with the exception of Mancini, Sampson, and MacNeil within the Dal delegation). The executive was mandated at the spring conference to undertake all hiring procedures.

I would like Peter Mancini to suggest a more efficient and effective means of conducting interviews in places as distant as Ottawa and Regina when operating under such constraints as a complete lack of financial resources.

5. Mancini suggests that the reasons candidates for the secretary-co-ordinator's position did not stand were apathy and non interest. Nothing could be more misleading. By their very presence at the conference those nominated demonstrated an interest in the organization. They were, by the same token, aware of the immense responsibility and considerable amounts of time, energy and sacrifice needed to responsibly fill the position. As one of the nominees that refused to stand, I must admit that my own decision was influenced by the poor faith demonstrated by Mancini and Sampson at the conference. One could not undertake such an important position without the full cooperation of all AFS members.

This cooperation was, in my opinion, not forthcoming from the former.

The question of whether or not AFS is "really just the member institutions who make it up" is completely assinine. By its very definition, AFS is the member institutions which make it up. The fact that 15 of them actively participated in the conference shows the concern people have that the organization continue to exist. The quality of that participation, however, differed markedly between institutions. While Sampson, Mancini et compagnie came "armed with financial controls and constitutional amendments" other delegates came prepared to deal with matters more directly affecting students—imminent tuition increases, student aid, cutbacks and unemployment. The need for financial controls should not be downplayed. However, to use these as pretexts to impede the political direction of the organization, is another matter altogether.

There is a recognized need within the organization for individual participation. One must question Mancini's own personal commitment to the organization. Mandated last Sept to prepare a paper on student aid, Mancini informed the

executive one day before the conference that he had done nothing. Talk about the need for leadership and participation, is easy follow-through and sincerity are other matters however.

Mancini's suggestion that he was "continually opposed by a block of smaller institutions who hold the voting power" is totally unfounded—he again ignores Memorial U., St. Mary's, and Mount St. Vincent—none of which are, by his own criteria, smaller institutions. I have to ask whether, in his paranoia, Mancini sees these "block" votes as a result of institution size or if he is questioning their capability of independent thought.

The fact is that Dalhousie students last year committed one dollar each towards AFS. The decision has already been made. Council, by obstructing the payment of these fees, is in fact working counter to AFS and the interests of the students it represents. AFS needs resources—both financial and human—to work. Therefore, I urge students to take an active part in the organization and to form their own assessment instead of readily accepting an interpretation put forward by others.

Ignore survey

The **Gazette** urges all readers to ignore the survey being distributed on campus by Sandy McNeill, member-at-large of the Dalhousie Student Council. The **Gazette** feels that the survey is merely a result of McNeill's personal prejudice towards this paper. He is acting against a motion passed in council when council members decided that **Gazette** surveys are the **Gazette's** business and it is not up to council to interfere.

By the way, if McNeill was taking marketing his chances of passing would be poor.