

editorial

Nuts to Us

Nuts to US if we don't voice our opinion on the question of membership in the National Union of Students. The NUS referendum is being held in conjunction with the student elections on Wednesday, October 19th.

UNB joined NUS two and a half years ago, after a referendum vote. We felt the need for a national voice that would represent student concerns before the government and the news media. NUS, though still in its formative years, seemed to offer this.

At the direction of the member student unions, NUS has addressed itself to two problems in depth: student aid and youth unemployment. They have lobbied Members of Parliament for action and kept a close watch on the early stages of Young Canada Works.

Staff research has led to news releases "correcting" government reports on student finances, and opposing differential fees for international students.

The third referendum in as many years is called at the insistence of some SRC represen-

tatives. NUS has achieved no spectacular accomplishments. The student representatives question if the return is worth the financial investment.

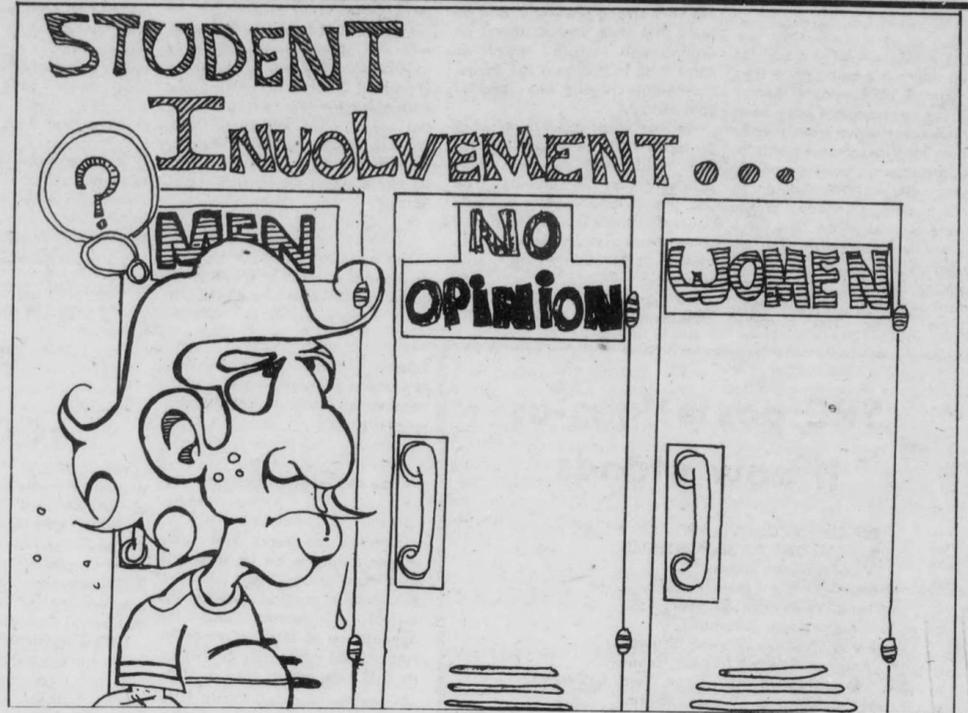
Though the \$1 per student membership fee is additional to SRC fees, there are "hidden"

costs. These include telephone, contributions to the travel pool and delegates fees for conferences.

UNB students should decide what they expect from a national union. NUS offers a lobbying force to watchdog and influence

government policies that affect students. If we expect more action, maybe we should consider thoughtfully how committed we are to involvement with an active organization.

—Anne Marceau



Future of NB grim-cutbacks affect students

The recent announcement of a \$3 million cut in the provincial Education department's budget brings the point home again that the province's financial position isn't what it should be.

And the handling of the \$30 million cut in federal transfer payments to the province, which was supposedly the reason for the cut to the education department point to questions of their own.

The province announced after the last session of the legislature closed that the recently passed budget would be chopped by \$30 million because the transfer payments were cut.

They were cut, according to a provincial government press release, because the provincial population wasn't up to the expected level, so we lost out on the per capita grant. Somewhere in the vicinity of \$460 for each one of us.

It is almost too much to believe.

Did the province not know its population growth was over-estimated? Did the federal government have access to figures not available to the province?

Did the province formulate its budget with the knowledge that they were spending money they did not have, knowing

that they would have to make a cut after the legislature was closed? Wouldn't it be easier to handle the opposition to the austerity measures that way, especially if the blame, or at least part of it, could be shifted to the federal government?

On the other hand, would it be too difficult to imagine that the federal government, politicians that they are, purposely misled the province as to the amount of transfer payments they would be receiving, in order to quiet provincial officials at this or that federal provincial conference.

Then again, could it be possible that both federal and provincial politician knew about the situation regarding the federal transfers, but worked out a mutually beneficial agreement?

Maybe both sides just sort of turned a blind eye.

However, we'll probably never know.

What we do know is that Premier Richard Hatfield has been making some pretty grim forecasts lately, now that the legislature is safely out of session and all.

It could be that he hopes the public will be conditioned to expect an austerity budget next election, and the Opposition howls of protest will be to no avail.

Another thing that we also know is that the administrators of post secondary education institutions face an uphill struggle in their bid to win more government funds for their institutions.

Mr. Hatfield, who is generally optimistic about the future of the New Brunswick economy, gave a grim speech at a recent Chamber of Commerce dinner in Fredericton. The financial position was not good, he said, and he asked for more voluntary restraint in demands.

However, New Brunswickers have not been restraining themselves the way politicians would like them to.

When cuts were made to the Youth and Recreation department's budget, last summer, bus loads of protestors arrived from around the province.

And the provincial legislature already knows about angry students and crews of lumber jacks with their chain-saws going full blast outside the legislature building.

Getting closer to the campus, student leaders might as well forget about Utopian ideas of free tuition, subsidized housing, and a stereo in every apartment.

For any student or student organization to put out free tuition as a policy statement is

blowing in the wind, and students at large would be advised to look elsewhere for the answers to their problems.

The simple fact is that the provincial government has been cutting expenses to the bone, and that hospitals, schools, athletic programs, and social assistance programs are all crying for more money.

Some people might doubt the wisdom of the provincial government in turning thumbs down to students demands, but it is a simple fact that students demanding lower tuition and a Canada Works program to give them more money at the same time do not come across with the general public in the best light.

One may even doubt whether or not this university will be able to get by without a tuition increase next year. With the sort of money they have been getting from the provincial government lately, two years in a row is pushing it.

That may be a hard pill for a lot of students to swallow, but they are just going to have to accept the fact that the public at large just don't see why students deserve a free education when they have to pay the bill, especially when they can hardly afford to pay their own bills.