

NSD - a big flop here - but....

OTTAWA (CUP) - About 300,000 Canadian students were reached by activities on National Student Day Nov. 9, according to student organizers of the nation-wide discussion on financing cutbacks and related problems facing post-secondary students.

National organizers have termed the day a success and while admitting some mistakes were made, are now planning further action soon.

The day consisted mainly of workshops, seminars and forums on the related issues of tuition hikes, inadequate student aid programs and high student unemployment on the 75 out of approximately 125 campuses in Canada participating.

An additional 25 student unions did not initiate specific programs but distributed NSD literature on their campuses, National Union of Student executive-secretary Dan O'Connor estimated.

Involvement in the day, including the type of program adopted and some of the literature distributed was left up to the individual student unions.

O'Connor announced the NUS leadership would be meeting Nov. 27 to plan further action.

Quebec was the only province not participating in the action, due to a lack of communication between the provincial student organization, l'Association des Etudiants du Quebec, and the

other student groups across the country.

In British Columbia, the best student turnouts were witnessed at the community colleges, while attendance at the three publically-funded universities was lower, according to reports.

Faced with drastically reduced funding which could result in severe course cuts turning their institutions into vocational schools, college students were most interested in the day, according to Bill Bell, fieldworker for the British Columbia Students' Federation.

In Alberta the story was similar, with strong responses at the community colleges, according to Federation of Alberta Students President Brian Mason. Mason noted the recent FAS fall conference struck committees to work on cutbacks and tuition increases expected in the next academic year.

Committees to work on tuition fees, student aid and problems facing foreign students were formed from workshop discussions at the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan.

Regina student union executive Bob Buckingham was not dismayed by what he termed a low turnout, saying he felt the educational value of the debates was important and that NSD 'was just the beginning' of student action.

Of the workshops set up to discuss the problems of the

various faculties at the University of Manitoba, the largest turnout occurred in the Engineering Dept., with about 400 students turning out to a discussion on the dept.'s threatened loss of accreditation.

In Ontario about 20,000 students participated in activities across the province, according to a staff member of the Ontario Federation of Students.

Allan Golombek said a number of campuses struck committees to work further on student aid, foreign student tuition hikes and an imminent tuition rise for Canadian students, citing community colleges as the most active.

He said the federation received a 'polite but vague response' when it presented an OFS document summarizing Ontario students' concerns to the province's minister of colleges and universities and the minister of social services. About half of the opposition members in the legislature were wearing NSD buttons, according to Golombek.

All of Ontario's publically-funded universities except for Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, which has a dispute with NUS over an alleged lack of NUS activities on that campus, were involved in NSD activities.

Five campuses in the Atlantic Region, which opted into NSD only nine days before at the fall conference of the Atlantic Federation of Students, partici-

pated in NSD activities.

At Cape Breton College 200 out of the 600 students enrolled turned out for a general meeting, while 600 students at Memorial University in Newfoundland showed up to hear provincial education minister Wallace House. Students there struck a committee of 50 to lobby the provincial and federal governments on student concerns.

The University of Dalhousie, St. Mary's and Mt. St. Vincent in Halifax averaged about 100 students each at their respective general meetings.

NUS Atlantic fieldworker Miguel Figueroa said many student unions which previously have viewed themselves as service-oriented are now aware of the type of work they can do on student concerns.

In a statement Nov. 10 O'Connor said student unions were just learning how to conduct a national campaign, and NSD was just the beginning of further action on a provincial and national basis, announcing that the NUS leadership was meeting to plan further action Nov. 27.

In estimating that between 25,000 and 40,000 students participated in NSD activities, O'Connor said the biggest flaw with the majority of campus programs was the absence of a plan for further action on the part of the local organizers.

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