

Atlantic Federation of Students

by Avard Bishop

Students occasionally wonder what a student union would be if you stripped it of all its "tangible" services such as weekly entertainment, a cafeteria, a pub, meeting rooms, office services, pool tables, the springboard for rising politicians, yes, even the student newspaper, among various others. What would we **not** have if we did not pay our \$51.00 a year at registration?

One of the more obvious answers to that question in 1976 is that we would not have any organized forum of "student opinion" or indeed any mechanism for letting it be known. It provides, in other words, a lobbying voice and force with the university administration, outside bodies of the community and the city and provincial governments usually in the person of the president.

Actually this is not about the student union, but an article about the Atlantic Federation of Students which hopefully acts as a magnified forum of opinion, and in the face of various odds a magnified mechanism for letting this be known.

Most of the universities and colleges in the Atlantic are member of AFS, from College Ste. Anne in Nova Scotia to Memorial in Newfoundland, from St. Thomas in Fredericton to the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown. In Nova Scotia, twelve universities and colleges belong to the Federation.

AFS was formed in January of last year and normally holds two conferences a year: the last full conference took place at Dalhousie in October, and the next takes place in Antigonish during the first weekend of May.

It might be argued that one of the great advantages of the organization is that it gives the opportunity to the various presidents of student unions in the region, most of whom change once a year to get to know each other, to make contacts.

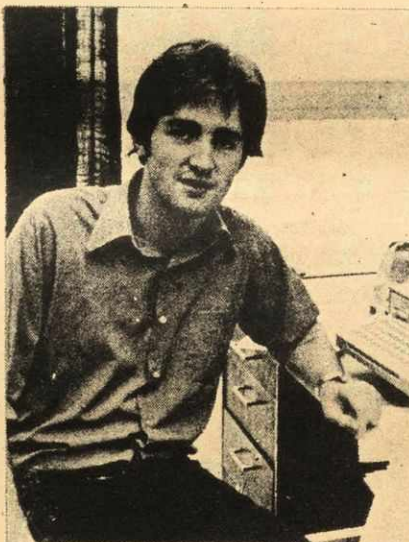
Few student union budgets in the Atlantic can afford to contribute to the running of a full time office. In the single province of Ontario, as opposed to the four provinces who comprise the Atlantic Federation, a full time staff of eight compiles briefs, does research, organizes, administers. Here in the Atlantic, small allotments are made out of the operating budgets of the unions: Dalhousie, for example, the largest member of AFS pays \$200 a year, and the institutions of populations under 1,000 each pay \$50.

Some people might argue that this is just as well, and that to expect student unions to levy let us say \$1.00 a student (about \$7,000 in the case of Dalhousie) would be aspiring to Utopia. If there is something to be done, the students unions will probably solicit each others support in any case. Whatever may be thought of the usefulness of student demonstrations, it did not require a \$10,000 budget to arrange a two week long "séjour" of some five or six hundred New Brunswick students in a government building in Fredericton to draw attention to their needs.

This of course does not mean to say that the Federation can exist on no money at all, without telephone calls, without paper or even in a complete financial vacuum. Neither does it mean that there is no room at all for any financial improvement.

In New Brunswick, it has been under the auspices of the AFS that protests concerning student aid have been carried out. In Nova Scotia, the same apparatus has been used recently in presentations to the provincial government. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island both have one principal institution of post-secondary education, so that provincial co-ordination is not of such great importance. Again, on the day of the presentation to the Nova Scotia government last week, P.E.I. students were involved in making the public and fellow students aware of concerns.

AFS of course works in close co-operation with the National Union of Students.



Dalhousie student Avard Bishop
Dal Photo / Grandy

Members of the New Brunswick caucus of the Atlantic Federation of Students met in Fredericton Wednesday afternoon to discuss their reaction to the proposals of the government sponsored committee on student aid.

The committee, which was formed at the end of the occupation by approximately six hundred students of the government building in Fredericton, is composed of representative of government, the public sector and students.

The caucus is willing to accept the second of the two options proposed by the committee, which allows for rebates on loans for sums above three thousand dollars, although only as a temporary measure, said Tina Smith of U.N.B. yesterday.

A maximum rebate of \$250 is allowed for loans four thousand dollars and below, \$750 to five thousand and below, \$1250 to six thousand and below and \$2250 to seven thousand and below. Percentages of amounts between those figures determine now near the maximum is allowed. These are all for loans towards a first degree.

The provincial cabinet was meeting at the time of this writing to discuss the options and their views are expected to be known Thursday.

National Union of Students

by Frances Long

I was elected to my position in May '75 by the Nova Scotia institutions present at the annual N.U.S./U.N.E. conference. As at that time there were only three member universities in Nova Scotia, in the Atlantic and there was not enough support or knowledge amongst student unions in the Atlantic, I subsequently resigned and was reappointed as Nova Scotia representative by the Atlantic Federation of Students, to represent the Atlantic on their behalf.

Since May '75 both Memorial University and the University of New Brunswick have joined the National Union of Students, which has placed me more into my proper perspective as Nova Scotia representative.

During my term of office I have attempted to represent N.U.S. as a more visible organization in the Atlantic by attending student union meetings. I have tried to provide a link of communication between student unions, and contributed to bringing together unions to elect a new chairman for the Atlantic Federation of Students and assisted in co-ordinating the unions in their approach to student aid, unemployment and tuition increases for 76/77.

February and March N.U.S./U.N.E. held six referendums in Nova Scotia. This provided an excellent opportunity to talk to students and unions about the federal and provincial contributions towards education (student aid, financing of post-secondary education, etc.).

National Union of Students and the Atlantic Federation of Students are extremely important groups for us as post-secondary students. They provide an organized official voice to represent our views to both the federal and provincial governments.

National Union of Students with its increased budget will finally be able to hire new staff to do the necessary work for us. Full-time students do not have the necessary time to do all of the research and produce a credible brief with it. The future for us as Canadian Post Secondary students looks bright. I am glad to have been a part of it.

National Union of Students and Referenda

National Union of Students has grown considerably over the last years. The organization has increased membership and determined many policies for future direction.

The first two years can be termed as years of survival, during which time we established ourselves with the federal government, gathered information to present to members and non-members and formulated policies.

This last 75/76 academic year can be termed as a period of growth. Referenda have been the major NUS/UNE activity this past year. Delegates at the October conference urged that the referenda must have first priority in the organizations limited resources.

From September '75 there have been twenty referenda held, including nine successful fee increases and eleven joining referenda. This brings our membership up to approximately thirty-two new members.

In Nova Scotia, during February and March, six referenda were held. Saint Mary's University and the University of King's College held successful fee increase referenda. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Nova Scotia Agricultural College held successful joining referenda. Saint Francis Xavier voted in favour of joining, however, they did not receive the



Dal Photo / Walsb

required quorum of 50%. Acadia University voted to not join NUS/UNE.

Students in Nova Scotia are becoming aware of NUS/UNE; they are aware of the issues and the decisions of students elsewhere in Canada regarding these issues.

National Union of Students is growing stronger with its increased membership and things can only be better for a strong, credible student voice in Canada.....

National Union of Students and Dalhousie

NUS and Dalhousie are closely united, however, in order to clearly establish their relationship, they should be separated into two categories: **Dalhousie in NUS:** Dalhousie has played a major role in the formation of the National Union of Students. It is a founding member (since 1972) and has acted as a leader among Atlantic universities to encourage their participation in NUS/UNE. Dalhousie hosted the first annual conference in May 1973 and as well a central committee meeting in February '75. In 1973 Dalhousie had a member on the central committee of NUS representing Nova Scotia.

Participation at the biannual NUS conferences by the Dalhousie student union executive has been excellent and during interim periods they have acted as co-ordinators for many reports for NUS. Historically Dalhousie has maintained a close liaison with NUS staff.

May 1975 NUS hired Dan O'Connor, Dalhousie Student Union President (1974/1975), as executive secretary, providing Dalhousie with a competent voice in the NUS.

NUS at Dalhousie: NUS tends to have a low profile on campus, mainly due to the fact that the majority of information coming from NUS concerning student aid, tuition increases, fiscal arrangements, etc. goes directly to the Student Union, who's responsibility it is to distribute it to the student body.

NUS issues press releases to the university papers, through Canadian University Press, which are apparent in almost every issue of the Dal Gazette. Information is also released to the media by the Nova Scotia representative as well.

Frances Long, Nova Scotia representative, attends the majority of the Student Union meetings to represent NUS, and to act as a liaison between NUS and Dalhousie by relaying information from one to the other.

Bruce Russel and Frances Long have recognized the gulf between NUS and the body of Dalhousie students and have initiated an information campaign consisting of this special issue of the Gazette and the presence of a NUS representative at various Dal society and club meetings to discuss NUS with the students.