

Where Do We Go From Here?

Editorial

The defeat of the Canadian Union of Students in last week's referendum can hardly be considered surprising.

CUS was crucified two years ago when the professional media misunderstood and maligned the 1968 Congress with sensationalistic reporting. The work of the union on student-centered issues, such as the quality and availability of education were submerged in the tumult over policies of self-determination for the people of Quebec and support for the Vietcong.

It was this misrepresentation by the media which created the backlash to the national union, and it is unfortunate that with the defeat of CUS, we lose the positive benefits of a national student organization in terms of policies designed to alleviate student grievances like unemployment, housing, and so on.

We have, in short, lost the framework, within which solutions to our problems could have been found.

It is also, of course, questionable whether such a framework really existed at all. While the rhetoric was democratic the reality was the local student unions and they were far from democratic.

Dalhousie, for example, did not democratically select its delegates to the CUS Congress. For the most part, they were hand picked by Council President Bruce Gillis. It is unlikely that any such delegation could be representative of student interest.

If we are to analyse the demise of CUS on this campus, we must begin with the election of A. Randall Smith to the Presidency of the Student Union in 1968. Smith, though a supporter of the national organization, eliminated the post of CUS Chairman from the campus. He was to be replaced by a Political Affairs Sec-

retary. A year and a half later, no Political Affairs Secretary has been appointed.

The fact that the CUS Chairman was eliminated at a time when it was imperative that the role of the union be explained to students tells much about the defeat of the union in last week's referendum.

But it is perhaps irrelevant at this point to analyse what happened - CUS is dead! The question that must now be answered is "where do we go from here?"

There will undoubtedly be the Gillises and the Abolses who, for their own personal glory, will propose new and grandiose alternatives to CUS. Gillis and Abols support a federation of Student Councils. Was this not what CUS in fact was? Though the attempt was made to democratize CUS, the local unions failed to achieve any sort of democratic structures.

Thus in reality, CUS was an amalgam of student council opinion rather than student opinion. Is this what we want?

We believe that it is not. Rather than blindly plunging into federation schemes proposed by the radicals, let us stop - and - reassess our position regarding democratization of our union.

If there is to be a new national organization, it, first of all, should be a union and not a federation. Secondly, if it is to be a union, there must be structures established on the local level so that it can be representative of the will of students.

Thus, it is obvious that our first priority, must be to create a democratic Dalhousie Student Union. Until we do this, all the grandiose schemes of Mr. Gillis and others will create not a better or more representative student organization for Canadian students, but merely another sandbox for their own political excretions.



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