

## NUS conference report

## Unemployment number one priority

Fighting unemployment remained the number one priority of the National Union of Students at its conference last weekend.

NUS delegates called for extensive research on the effects of unemployment and for the distribution of the NUS position on unemployment for debate on campuses in Canada.

The NUS position demands the federal government develop a continuing program of job creation with the goal of full employment. Some delegates said this solution did not deal with the real problem and does little to change basic attitudes.

A Dalhousie delegate, Robert Sampson said that although he supported NUS's unemployment resolutions, they are somewhat "unrealistic". Asking the government for full employment is an attempt for the impossible.

Most delegates agreed unemployment was a severe problem and had to be dealt with immediately. However they were at a loss to develop strategy on the issue and it was only in a final unscheduled workshop that a campaign to educate Canadian students was drawn up.

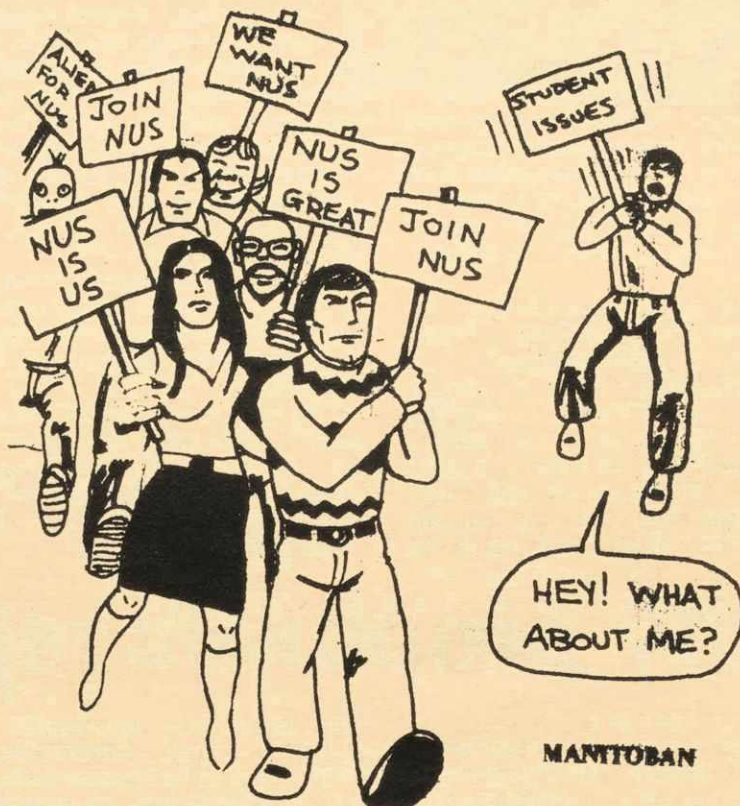
Sampson said that the leadership for local organizing should come from the entire Dalhousie student council. He plans to actively oversee the organizing of the unemployment campaign and says that "council must work together."

The NUS campaign will include a week of activity at the end of February with general meetings on unemployment at local campuses. The campaign calls for large scale student input, pamphlets, posters, and the establishment of local employment committees. The campaign will culminate with the NUS executive presenting student concerns on unemployment to Trudeau.

## delegates satisfied

Both Robert Sampson and Keith Evans were pleased with the NUS conference in Calgary. Sampson found that, as with most confer-

*The National Union of Students conference was held in Calgary last weekend. Reporters from Canadian University Press were there and submitted reports of the main motions that came out of the conference. The Gazette spoke with Dalhousie delegates, Robert Sampson and Keith Evans, about their views. As well, the editorial written by CUP reporters is printed here.*



ences, much was learned from simply discussing issues outside the meetings with other delegates. Although he found the level of debate to be poor, he was satisfied with the conference's outcome. "Students realize that the government must be lobbied regarding student aid, and that students must organize to fight unemployment."

Evans also found the conference interesting. Due to being relatively new to the issues, the workshops were a good learning experience for him. Although Evans last year was anti-NUS, he changed his feelings because Dalhousie students voted to remain in the organization and "a councillor must represent the views of the students."

## AOSC merges

A major development from the conference was the NUS affiliation with a service organization, the Association of Student Councils.

AOSC, which has 63 members including 24 NUS members, offers student charter flights along with the distribution of an international student card to Canadian students.

Says Robert Sampson, "NUS has now incorporated a service arm which will solve many problems and give credibility to both organizations. It was a great idea. It will allow for increased recognition of both organizations while at the same time giving NUS and AOSC greater stability, continuity, and credibility."

## ANEQ debate

A debate on whether or not to recognize the Association Nationale des Etudiants de Quebec (ANEQ) as a national student union equal to NUS drew varied responses from delegates. They agreed with the principle although debate broke down on procedural problems and a decision was eventually postponed to a January mail vote that will follow local debate on the issue.

Sampson said that "Quebec is not a nation. French Canada can be considered a nation. All French Canadians should be represented." He found that delegates were basically uninformed about ANEQ. NUS has been authorized to prepare a pro-con statement on the matter so that student councils across the country can properly debate the issue.

## Student aid

Creating a student aid program based on the actual needs of students will be a major priority for NUS this year.

Several motions passed at the NUS conference called for an end to the present use of summer savings as a criterion for granting loans.

"How much a student saves during the summer has no relation to resources actually available to students", said NUS President Ross Powell.

Delegates also demanded students be declared independent at age 18. Students are presently only considered independent at age 21. The Dalhousie delegation were among the very few that voted against this motion. Says Robert Sampson, "Although students are mature enough at 18, many of them simply are not independent of their families. Many rely on parents for financial assistance, and calling them independent at that age is simply not a true statement."

NUS also committed itself to press for better student input into any discussion on restructuring the student aid program and on existing student aid steering and plenary groups.

## Editorial

## Pressure, indecision, indifference

**Calgary(CUP)**—Some delegates wanted action. Some wanted research. Some wanted to lead students and some wanted to represent students. And, while they may have tried their best to reach a middle ground on these divergent attitudes on the role of the national union, NUS delegates to the Oct. 23 conference only managed to develop a hodgepodge of ideas and strategy with which they hope to mobilize students.

The conference got off to a bad start when the executive report was little more than a scanty review of past attempts at action on the unemployment issue and a state of NUS review. As a result, delegates and workshops were rudderless in a sea of issues: student aid, unemployment, cutbacks in education and countless other concerns.

Delegates were also placed under the influence, unspoken as it was, of organized groups trying to work within NUS. Notably the Communist Party of Canada tried its best, but failed miserably, to force NUS delegates to recognize the Quebec student union as a counterpart of NUS and to recognize Quebec's right to self-determination. Regardless of their personal position on these issues some delegates rightly felt the issues had to be debated on each campus before the NUS position could be solidified. The CPC tried to push the question through despite the NUS executive stand and the obvious ignorance of the delegates regarding the questions.

Only when the NUS executive reacted to the still unspoken CPC influence did the motions get stopped on the plenary floor. Yet since they were forced into reaction rather than action, the NUS executive was placed in the position of having to argue for mail debate and vote in the New Year—hardly an ef-

fective alternative to plenary debate that follows on-campus discussions. Equally frustrating was the strategy developed in the unemployment issue and student aid. The programs can only be described as "wishy-washy".

The NUS unemployment campaign smacks of the illfated national student day campaign of one year ago, and there was no discussion of how they could prevent another organizational disaster. Delegates recognized that the campaigns were likely to be, at best, qualified successes.

Shaun Donovan from the College of Cape Breton spoke for most NUS delegates when he admitted that other campaigns had failed when delegates didn't work as hard as they should on the follow-up work after the conference. And this time there was even less enthusiasm in the conference for the work to be done than there was for the NSD campaign. It does make one wonder where the needed energy will come from.

By the end of the conference, delegates were wandering about the plenary floor paying little attention to the debate while others were off in Banff catching a tourists' view of scenic Alberta. Few remained through the last moments of the debates, and few could come away knowing what they had, in total, committed their energies to.

Some of the work will get done—don't mistake that. There are a few hardworking and well meaning representatives of students, and the NUS staff can always be counted on to do their job given the guidance they have from student leaders. But, where does that leave the National Union of Students that wants to mobilize students against ever-increasing unemployment, poor student aid, and cutbacks in education?