

# Slated for the future

Is the slate system a trend in student politics at the University of Alberta?

Or was it merely a reaction to the disorganized, strife-torn Gerry Riskin administration of 1972-73.

These are some of the questions pondered by candidates in the upcoming students' Union elections, Feb. 15.

Two slates are running, only one fielding a candidate for each of the five executive positions: president, and executive, academic, services and finance and administration vice presidents.

The Joe McGhie slate, which has already elected Jack Redekop to the finance and administration post by acclamation, includes McGhie, president; Brian Makin, executive; Celine Belanger, academic; and Tony Melnychuk, services, for vice-presidents.

The other slate, Young Socialists, is composed of Henry Malta, president; Sheila Mawson, executive; Byron Nelson, academic; and Don Wiley, services.

Malta, Mawson and Wiley are holdovers on the YS slate from last year, which saw a proliferation of slates in response to the Riskin executive, plagued by internal divisions throughout its term.

The slate concept obviously met the approval of the student body, which elected all but one of the five persons on SU president George Mantor's slate.

Actually, the slate system predates the Mantor success, going back to 1967 when David King, now a progressive conservative member of the Alberta legislature, and then a member of a pro-Canadian Union of Students slate, was elected president.

Even Riskin paired up with Dave Braggins to form a partial slate.

Last year saw three full and three partial slates.

George Mantor, outgoing SU president, feels there is no better way to run the students' union.

The two most important factors involved are the length of the term, only one year, and the fact that SU has become a million-dollar corporation.

"You get to know each other under pressure during the campaign," he said. "That's when you function as a unit and learn a lot about each other in a short period of time."

Mantor says the results of last year's election show that students want their union to be run that way. As such, the executive is much like a board of directors, attempting to ensure the smooth running of student services by joint decision.

Charles Hall, finance and administration, says a united front adds to the credibility of the union with the students and the community.

Some issues demand that the executive speaks with a united voice, Hall insists, and the slate system "eliminates some of the friction."

Also, Hall believes a slate has a better chance of being elected, because each candidate has four others supporting him.

"We're administrators, but we're also political, with increased involvement with government and the city of Edmonton."

However, the danger exists that a president could be surrounded by a hostile, partisan executive, and would be isolated and even powerless.

That possibility existed this year when Gary Croxton was elected to the executive position, but his platform was similar to Mantor's.

"We were lucky that we had the same way to go," says Croxton. "I bent a little to their wishes and they bent a little to mine."

While the slate system may limit the role of students' council, it has the general support of several councillors.

David Allin, arts representative, admits that it is better than Riskin's term but

is not convinced that it is a long term solution in students union politics.

"I don't think it's a solution to all problems," Allin adds.

"When you've had a bad year, like Riskin's, it looks real good. That's why I'm hesitant to say."

Admittedly, it makes it harder for the councillors, who must overcome a united bloc of five votes and do more investigating of issues.

"There is a certain lack of communication," says Allin. "It makes it difficult to find out things."

Brian Makin, a representative and candidate in this year's election, believes it is an efficient way of dealing with issues but would wait another five or six years before the system proves itself.

Under the system the council becomes a watchdog of executive actions, making sure it doesn't overstep its power, Makin says.

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