

CUS Headed Downhill?

Martin Loney — Will he be there at Christmas?

PORT ARTHUR (CUP) — Financially crippled and riven internally by attacks from both radicals and moderates, the Canadian Union of Students staggered out of its 33rd annual congress facing the very real possibility of dissolution by Christmas.

And perhaps more importantly, the congress had not come to grips with the charges laid by radical delegates, observers and members of the former CUS secretariat that the national organization faced total irrelevance if it did not struggle to alter its nature and that of the students councils which form its base.

When the final plenary session of the congress broke off at 6 a.m. Wednesday September 3, more than a third of the items on the order paper still remained to be debated and passed; but the meeting could not go on in face of the increasingly bitter antagonisms raised as radicals insisted the structure of CUS rather than moderate programs held the key to rebuilding the union.

"A lot of people here are going to return to campus and not do very much", charged Barry McPeake, last year's CUS Atlantic fieldworker and chairman of the congress until he spoke at the final plenary.

"People have to make a choice", he said. "Either they fulfill the implications of the content of our motions in action and in words, or they sustain the structures which have lead to failure in the past".

"That choice may mean staying on their students councils, or getting the hell off. And when the real crunch comes, they're going to stay on council".

"The choice lies not in keeping the structure", McPeake said. "We have to destroy them or tear them apart so they will serve the people".

But McPeake's charges met bitter denunciation from John Gallagher, a member of the incoming CUS secretariat, who labelled the radicals opportunistic and supported the position taken by incoming CUS president Martin Loney — that the union must concentrate on organizing students around issues such as

housing and unemployment rather than a radical analysis of society.

"You're not dealing with these problems in a historical way", Gallagher said. "You have failed to come up with an alternative program".

The previous evening, delegates from the University of Waterloo had also tried to force a discussion of CUS structure, stunning the congress by proposing the national union become an affiliate of the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary syndicalist organization smashed by police in the 1920's.

The Waterloo proposal went down to defeat by a vote of 17 to 3, after the congress refused to allow Waterloo to withdraw its motion.

The right as well as the left was unsuccessful in forcing debate on the structure of CUS: a motion put forward by the University of Calgary, calling for the creation of a new national organization, the Canadian Students' Federation, died for lack of a seconder.

Sponsored by members of the universities of Toronto, McGill, Dalhousie and British Columbia, the resolution included a consti-

tution which would have greatly restricted the ability of the new union to take political stands.

Neither the McGill nor British Columbia representatives were registered as delegates to the congress, and Toronto and Dalhousie delegations refused to support the actions of a minority of their members.

But the hard logic of finances may prove to be more of a deciding factor in the direction of CUS than either radical or moderate arguments. At the end of the congress, only eight student councils had committed themselves to the union for the coming year, although several other delegations committed themselves to fight for CUS in referendums.

With only 39,500 students in the union, CUS finance commissions predicted the organization would go "belly-up by Christmas" if critical referendums at Carleton University and the University of Toronto did not favor CUS.

Students at Carleton will vote October 13; Toronto students October 23. As many as 10 other referendums may be called during the forthcoming year.

The precarious state of the union's finances led to one change in CUS operations: selection of a president-elect, traditionally one of the duties of the fall congress, was postponed until Christmas, when the union will hold another legislative meeting.

The decision to elect Martin Loney's successor at mid-year will also allow CUS members to evaluate the actions of the secretariat in view of events during the next four months.

While many programs were left undebated in the hands of the CUS national council, delegates from 33 schools who attended the conference — with voting rights regardless of their membership status in the union — managed to pass resolutions on some aspects of education and on the nature of the students role in society.

Delegates stated their opposition to the americanization of Canadian universities, but also condemned any attempts to regulate the number of American professors by means of a quota system.

"A professor's ability to deal with the Canadian reality is not always based on his nationality", they noted.

The delegates also called for an end to authoritarianism in education, and presented demands which would lead to the development of a "critical university" — one which would do more than act as an apologist for the status quo.

The present educational system,



delegates said, "prepares the student to fit uncritically into the corporate capital structure", without questioning the social and moral effects of the system.

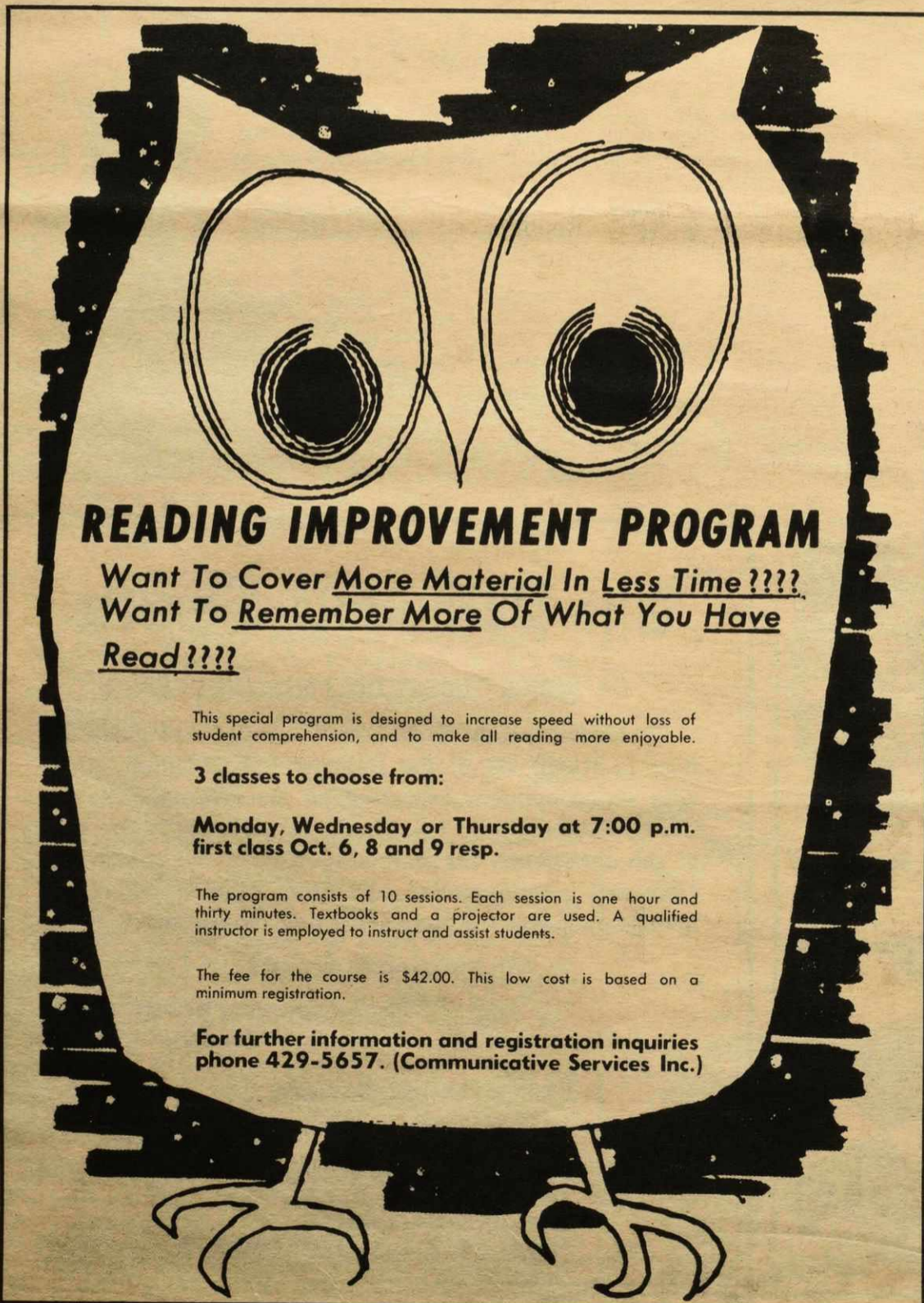
"The students in the classroom should be in control in the classroom and should be actively participating in the classroom", one delegate said.

As well as class-room democracy and student parity on academic decision-making bodies as well as hiring, firing and promotion committees, the congress demanded that other university services, such as bookstores, libraries and food services be democratized and organized on a cooperative basis.

"The existence of these authoritarian systems at the university effectively continues the socialization begun in the public school system", the delegates said.

The congress also called for students to struggle against the development of the mid-Canada corridor, a corporate and government plan to create an urbanized, industrial strip of land just south of the Arctic regions.

The congress noted the plan would, in effect, be another tentacle of American control of Canada, and added that "any nation which values its independence and sovereignty must have control of the development and dispensation of its natural resources".



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