

AFS conference disappointing

News

# Students without direction

After three days of meetings and workshops delegates to the sixth conference of the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS) left Mount St. Vincent University Sunday with little accomplished and the prospect of an emergency plenary session next week.

Debate stalled in the final plenary when repeated attempts to find a nominee for the position of secretary-co-ordinator failed. After six consecutive nominees declined the position, delegates agreed the election, and other business, including most of the reports drafted in the conference workshops, be postponed until the special session December 3.

Before the meeting dissolved, however, the membership managed to tentatively approve a new AFS constitution and a set of financial controls for the organization.

Don Soucy, outgoing secretary-co-ordinator, said he had hoped the conference would be a turning point for the federation with the membership realizing the pressing need for a united AFS and resolving their differences. However, two member campuses, the University of Prince Edward Island and Dalhousie, could not give the remaining members a guarantee they would turn over AFS student fees for the current year. Student councils at both institutions voted earlier in the term to withhold fee payment until they were assured the federation was on stable ground.

"We haven't decided what our recommendation will be to the Dal Council regarding fee payment," Sampson said later. "I'm still hesitant. No one is interested in being on the executive and close to half the membership didn't even show up for the conference. Funds are secondary—merely an instrument. We need a strong group of people."

Soucy said the organization has plenty of direction, but could go

nowhere without funds and the hiring of a full-time staff person. The executive, which consists of only Soucy and Nova Scotia caucus chairperson Marc Allain, due to the resignation of the four other members, recommended a staff person be hired when 75 per cent of fees were paid to the federation.

Although most delegates agreed that a staff person is essential to the organization's continuity, the lack of a commitment on payment from

were approved with little modification. The controls included the hiring of a part-time student bookkeeper, the selection of auditors by December 30 and tighter controls over the flow of money.

The major changes in the new constitution which was approved subject to ratification later next month, included provision for two general meetings each year, an annual review of the fee structure, and a member of the National Union

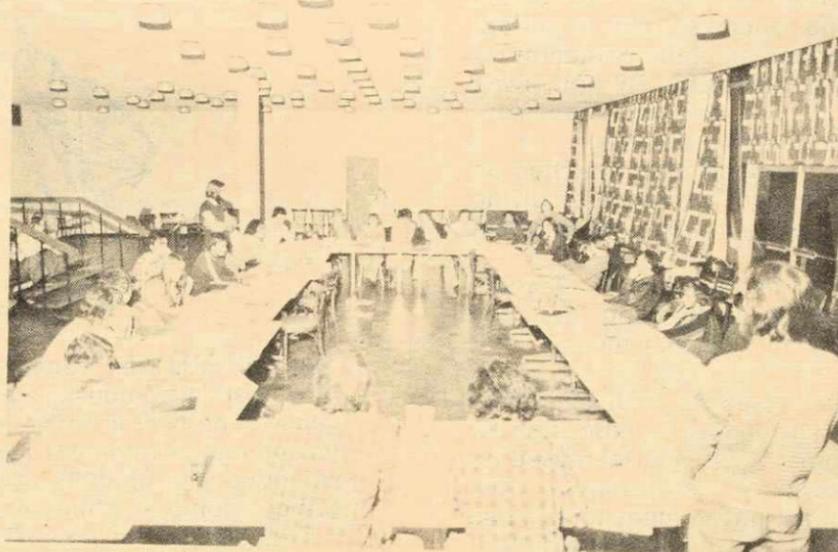
direction the federation could follow during the workshop meetings that dealt with some vital issues concerning Atlantic students.

In discussions on AFS, University financing, and student aid, student representatives recognized the best function of AFS would now be to undertake research and education at the campus level to reveal the real effect of cutbacks on post secondary education at each institution. Motions drafted in workshop meetings outlined the need for the short term goal of student representation on the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), research into university funding, and a continued push for improved student aid.

Proposed motions concerned with unemployment reiterated AFS policy in some areas adopted at the Sydney conference. Some motions from the unemployment workshop report managed to gain approval in the final plenary before the meeting broke off; one called for the right to meaningful and productive employment for all those willing and able, and another demanded the immediate repeal of the federal government's anti-inflation program and new UIC legislation.

The workshop resolutions will be presented at the December 3 special meeting, which will be a one day meeting to be held at Acadia. At that time members hope to settle the payment of fees question, approve resolutions arising from the workshops, finalize a budget, and elect a new executive.

The weekend conference was attended by most AFS members, including non-members from UNB, Mount Allison, King's College in Halifax, St. Francis Xavier, and the Dalhousie Graduate Students Association. In a departure from procedure at earlier conferences, this was the first AFS conference where non-members were not given a vote.



The Atlantic Federation of Students met at Mount Saint Vincent last weekend. The conference was a flop and the organization will hold an emergency meeting on December 3 to decide the fate of the organization.

Dalhousie, which represents over a quarter of the federation's budget, prevented the membership from ratifying the executive choice for the position.

Much of the conference plenary sessions were taken up with the discussion of financial controls and a consideration of the proposed constitution drafted by a committee at the last AFS meeting in Sydney.

The financial controls, drafted by Dalhousie and St. Francis Xavier,

of Students central committee from one of the four Atlantic Provinces to sit on the AFS executive as an ex-officio non voting member.

Some institutions were sceptical of NUS, particularly two non-member campuses, Mount Allison and the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton.

Despite the fact the business of AFS was largely undecided at the plenary sessions of the conference, delegates determined some clear

flat-rate offer of 5.5% increase from previous contracts from the administration this year. In a meeting between representatives of the groups last week to discuss the general situation a mutual dissatisfaction over the offer was voiced by all four groups, who may decide to act in concert against the university.

A major problem in relations between the various groups and the administration is one of morale, Kelly stated. "The morale of all the people working at the university is

very low, caused by tights with the AIB and the university in trying to gain a living wage and other items."

As well, in the particular case of CUPE, relations were strained between the union and a university-appointed labour board by a "lack of confidence in the people involved." Still, Kelly is optimistic about reaching an agreement. "Hopefully our negotiations will be fruitful and we can avoid this strike," Kelly said. "But if not we will have to go the other route with the operating engineers."

## CUPE calls conciliator

by Jeff Round

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 1392, representing Dalhousie cleaning and maintenance staff, have called in a conciliator on contract negotiations with the university administration.

"Wage parity with city workers is what we're after," explained Bill Kelly, President of Local 1392. "But with the high cost of living things are no further ahead than they were two years ago. And in many cases workers are still paying rollbacks from last year's contract under a ruling by the Anti-Inflation Board," Kelly said.

Budgetary cutbacks have caused a number of problems for Local 1392. "We have been forced to cut back the amount of annual student help that we used to have," Kelly said. "And our regular people are understaffed. People are looking around and saying we're not getting the job done, but we're doing as much as we can."

Vice-president Louis Vagianos expressed his concern but stated that the university could not exceed a 5.5% increase because of budgetary problems. "The estimate for the year now includes a proposed deficit of \$280,000 or we will run into stiff penalties the following year under policies adopted by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)," Vagianos said. MPHEC guidelines recommend that "any

institution which accumulates a deficit on operations. . . greater than 2% of its annual operating grant will in the following year be required to devote 2% of its grant to retiring deficits." However, Vagianos thinks things are hopeful that both CUPE and the administration would come to a satisfactory agreement on both sides.

The calling in of a conciliator has placed the union in a similar position to Dalhousie Staff and Faculty Associations (DSA, DFA), as well as the operating engineers who went on strike early this week.

All four organizations received a

**News Flash ! It has been learned by the Gazette that negotiations between CUPE Local 1392 and the university administration have been broken off. There will be a special meeting Friday 25th to let members know details. A meeting for a strike vote has been tentatively tabled for December 4th**

## MSI brief presented

by Jeff Round

A brief about medical coverage of overseas students has been presented to the Health Services and Insurance Council of Nova Scotia by representatives of the Dalhousie Student Council, the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) and the International Students Association (ISA).

Recently overseas students were denied coverage by MSI on the grounds that they do not fall within the "resident eligibility" clause, which has been called "incorrectly restrictive" in a joint report issued by DAGS and ISA. The issue has become a major concern taken up by several campus organizations.

"We think we presented a pretty good case and we're expecting to hear the results soon," said Robert Sampson, President of the Dalhousie Student Council. "The coun-

cil agreed that their definition of the term 'resident' is pretty wishy-washy and the whole issue is resting on a fine point of the law."

Sampson said he felt that the council did not fully understand the implications the decision was having. "We all benefit from the cultural exchange that these students, who are a symbol of international good-will, bring with them, yet MSI is hampering the entrance of these people into the province," Sampson said.

As yet there has been no decision to take legal action if the council's response to the brief is unfavourable. The student organizations are still waiting to hear the results of private legal consultation on the matter. Sampson said, however, that he "didn't think legal action is the answer."