

CUS President Warriar

Trying to build a student movement

By KEVIN PETERSON
Canadian University Press

Peter Warriar doesn't talk about the Canadian Union of Students, he talks about a student movement.

And he sees his main task as putting across certain relationships to students which they may not see now — relationships like what he sees in the movie *Rosemary's Baby*.

"How about a film review of *Rosemary's Baby* in terms of liberal consciousness?" he asked Peter Allnutt, editor of CUS' national student magazine, *Issue*. "The just society is going to be *Rosemary's Baby*".

Peter Warriar is president of the Canadian Union of Students. The professional media pictures and quotes him as a building-burning revolutionary who intends to knock Canadian universities down to the ground and then move on to level the rest of society in the same way. The media lies.

Warriar on leadership says: "My concept of political leadership is not the leaders and the led. Leadership is describing the situation then presenting alternatives."

"The student movement has always been hung up on leadership, the charismatic leader like Dutschke or Cohn-Bendit . . . encouraged by the media which builds these people."

For the moment, Warriar would much rather stand on a table in some university cafeteria and talk to students than lead howling masses through the streets. He doesn't deny that someday he may be fighting in the streets, but he has no intention of doing it until Canadian students think that's what's required.

When people describe Warriar sympathetically, they say he is the image of the clean-cut, Canadian kid — doesn't smoke or drink, likes football (he still plays it occasionally) and once was a seminarian. In short, he becomes the male version of *Playboy* magazine's "girl next door".

If you want to like Warriar, he's all that and more. When he speaks, he has a sincerity which, at times, becomes too much to believe.

He speaks in quiet tones, but the message is

the sort that is supposed to come across only in revolutionary rallies.

He wants CUS to take ideas to people and help them see their position: "We talked a lot at the congress about taking it to the student . . . when we talk about confrontation, we mean not only political confrontation but a confrontation of ideas."

CUS's September congress in Guelph passed several motions condemning American imperialism in Canadian society. Warriar is convinced the student can see his position within this framework.

"When I say imperialism, I have in mind a system of political domination and exploitation," Warriar says. "Students may be turned off by the word imperialism, but that's a semantic problem."

"I think an examination of our situation will show we are politically dominated and economically controlled."

Warriar sees housing in similar terms.

He says, "You can't deal with the question of student housing in isolation. You must start with the overall problem of housing in Canada. Again, you are going to arrive at some basic contradictions which have produced the situation."

Warriar and CUS are taking things to the student with an expanded fieldwork program: four full time fieldworkers, one each in British Columbia, the Prairie provinces, Ontario and the Atlantic Provinces.

If the approach proves completely successful, Warriar says, "The year will end with mass student involvement — the majority of students would demand their place in university decision — making and take that place firmly and clearly. The university would probably begin to operate on a sort of syndicalist (student as worker) line."

But even Warriar doesn't believe in complete success. Optimistically, he says, "I think it may be possible that by the end of the year 20% to one-third of the students in Canada may be involved on a continuing day-to-day basis, with an equal number following them in crisis situations."

If something near Warriar's prediction is not reached, the union may be in trouble. For the past

three of four years there have been rumblings throughout Canada that "students aren't getting their money's worth from CUS" and talking to people is not going to produce easily defined financial benefits.

CUS lost nine members during its congress, although three others signified their intention to join. Referendums are taking place on numerous campuses about CUS membership this year — no one is quite sure how many — and if more large campuses withdraw, the union could be in serious trouble.

On the other hand, some universities not in CUS, most notably the University of Alberta, are also having membership referendums. If these schools decide to join the union, it would be in a much stronger financial position. But, it would also have a significantly stronger moderate block which opposes the line Warriar is trying to sell.

Warriar is bothered by referendums on member campuses, not because of possible membership losses but because, "Theoretically a referendum is a way to bring issues to the student; in practice it doesn't."

"Referendums may be valuable at the end of the year, but in the fall they become counter-productive, abstract, organizational debates."

"The major task is building a mass base for a student movement, the major thing is to educate — by making what we have more effective."

"If the conditions are there they give rise to the movement — if they remain, the movement will flourish. We don't manufacture the issues and it is impossible to justify CUS on those grounds."

However, whether Warriar likes it or not, there are fall CUS referendums and they do have to be fought.

Meanwhile, and between referendums, Warriar will be working for a new sort of university. "We're sometimes slandered because it is said we want to destroy the university," Warriar says. "In fact we are trying to give it viability and life which can only come from analysis, self-criticism and definition — otherwise we become extinct like some huge grey mushy sort of dinosaur."

"Increasingly there is the feeling we will have an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist university or no university at all."

Warriar talks about the reaction from administrations to student activity calmly and coolly.

"I don't think they're capable of a common approach across the country," he says.

Recently, at Brandon University and Memorial University, threats have been made to expel students for demonstrations and other activities which were deemed disruptive to university life.

Warriar commented on the threat of expulsion: "A more serious error by administrations or a more beneficial act for the students as a whole couldn't be dreamed of."

"There are just too many students to whom the threat of expulsion for political action is a cause for glee rather than dismay."

There was a look of glee in Warriar's face when he said that.

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U of T Grads To get Four Council Seats

TORONTO (CUP) — The grad council of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto last week approved in principle a resolution to seat at least four elected students on the council as full voting members.

The council, which now consists of 24 professors and nine administration officials, sets academic and financial policy for all four divisions of the SGS.

If the resolution is approved by the senate and the board of governors, the student members will be elected next spring in each of the four divisions.

The resolution also stated that a committee be set up to recommend to council appropriate amendments to the senate statute governing the SGS. The number of student representatives on the council (a minimum of four) will be determined by the committee.

"This was a very important decision," said John Winters, GSU president. "It's the first time it has happened in Canada. The council has accepted everything we asked for in our brief."

"Although they will be in a minority, four people could swing a decision on an important issue," he said.