

A Replacement for CUS?

The Atlantic Federation of Student Unions

"CUS failed because it was a federation of student unions. The Atlantic Federation of Student Unions is an attempt to set up a non-council structure — a federation of students — to create interest of students, but they are not worried about threatening student council "bureaucracy," said Gerri Gaskin, newly-elected President of the Atlantic Federation of Student Unions in an interview Sunday.

The Federation held its founding conference in Charlottetown on Oct. 17 — 19. The idea of a federation resulted from a conference, held last October in Charlottetown when Maritimes students' council members agreed some kind of organization was needed. Interested students from that conference decided to organize a meeting that was held at SMU last May. There a steering committee was set up to do a study and present working papers at the Charlottetown meeting, which they organized.

Due to the short notice of the meeting given, many of the delegations were unable to commit themselves. However it is expected that all English Maritime universities will join. Those

committing themselves at the conference were Mount Saint Vincent University, College Sainte Anne, Memorial, Saint F.X., and SMU. Those expressing a definite interest, but without any mandate from their councils were Dalhousie, UPEI, UNB, College Sainte Marie and Acadia.

Since then Dalhousie has committed itself. The French universities were unable to attend the meeting but it is hoped they will join also. Another meeting will be held at Christmas to set out definite policies, as the universities wishing to join the federation will have selected their local committees by then. As the federation is only a temporary precedent to a federation of Students, a referendum is expected in March to convert the federation to one of students.

At present a six-man executive has been set-up, to be supported by a local liaison officer on each campus. Field workers, working under the officer and a legislative board, are to co-ordinate research, evaluate local campus activities and to spread the idea of the federation.

The federation committee on each

campus will set up smaller groups to deal with specific topics. The executive elected were President: Gerri Gaskin, President MSVU; and provincial vice-presidents — Newfoundland: Jack Harris, president Memorial; Nova Scotia: Danny O'Connor, external vice-president, St. F. X.; P.E.I.: Dennis MacKay, president UPEI; New Brunswick: John Blakey, student council, UNB. An Acadian vice-president will be chosen at Christmas.

There will be two field workers — one English and the other Acadian. Cathy Walker, women's liberation field worker and Skip Hamlan, a member of the CYC national advisory board, were chosen at the conference. However, since Moncton and other Acadian universities were unable to attend the conference, one of the field workers will be replaced at Christmas, by an Acadian, chosen by the caucus.

The aims of the Federation are regionally oriented. They plan to undertake research into the need for a union, followed by a referendum on each campus after an undetermined length of time, and to study the pros and cons of campus governments. The majority of delegates agreed there is a need for reform and their organization will be successful only in proportion to the degree of representivity in local campus politics. Their other aims are: to involve a large number of students in studying regional problems — reform of educational systems at all levels, the need for more detailed analysis of curriculum in all fields, the lack of regional political leadership partially due to the mass exodus of the educated young people, the possibility of travel programs for high school and university students and the investigation of employment opportunities in which the university is personally involved; the establishment of a communications network reaching every student interested in becoming involved in the various facets of study and action; and the establishment of a well-documented and well read research system.

A levy of 40c per student was suggested at the conference. However not all campuses can afford this. Gerri Gaskin said this would not

bind a university joining the federation. "It is set up to serve students and money is not necessary to get in." She said that if a university would profit by joining, they will be allowed to. Dalhousie, in committing itself added \$100 to the \$2,196 the federation had already budgeted for. Acadia's contribution is also expected to make a difference and help put the budget in the black.

Many people are questioning the difference between this federation and CUS. Gerri Gaskin said that CUS was a federation of student unions and not of students. Liz Cusak, a Dalhousie delegate, says that

"the organization was not conceived of as a replacement or supplement to CUS. It was to be independent, doing a job which could not be done by people other than those of the Atlantic provinces, i.e. study of regional problems — internal university problems, curriculum reform — in obtaining a half-decent analysis of social problems."

She added, that she feels the federation will fail unless students on all campuses become involved before the end of this year. "The federation will be accused of being an elitist mini-CUS and students will not vote to form a full-fledged union."

However, as Gerri Gaskin, commented, "It's worth the try."

Senators Reply

Council's reactive resolution to the George Report has provoked two notable replies — both from prominent university senators.

In dated October 29, Professor K. A. Heard (Political Science) referred to the controversy regarding the adoption of the report (see Gazette, Oct. 31, "Council Defines its Position on George Report") as a problem of "misunderstanding". He went on to state:

"I think it would be tragic if all this blew up into some sort of crisis as an argument about words, and I'm not sure which would be better — simply to forget about the George Report and to talk instead about the things the students want, or to try to clear up what I regard as misunderstandings."

The other letter was from university President Hicks. In it, Dr. Hicks said he was "a little disappointed that your (the Council's) resolution merely deplores the situation without making alternative suggestions." Furthermore, he added, "I want there to be every opportunity at Dalhousie for students to participate in

all aspects of University Government and affair where they are properly concerned and where their advice can be useful."

Dr. Hicks also stated that he was disappointed in the implication made of "turmoil" if the resolution was not heeded; saying that he didn't see it as necessary to couple advice and suggestions with "implied threats of any kind", and that he hopes that this was not intended. He concluded by asking for specific opinions and possible constructive revisions to the brief.

Both Dr. Hicks and Professor Heard suggested that discussions with Student Union President Gillis would be most welcome. It will be interesting indeed to see if Mr. Gillis does in fact take part in such dialogue.

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