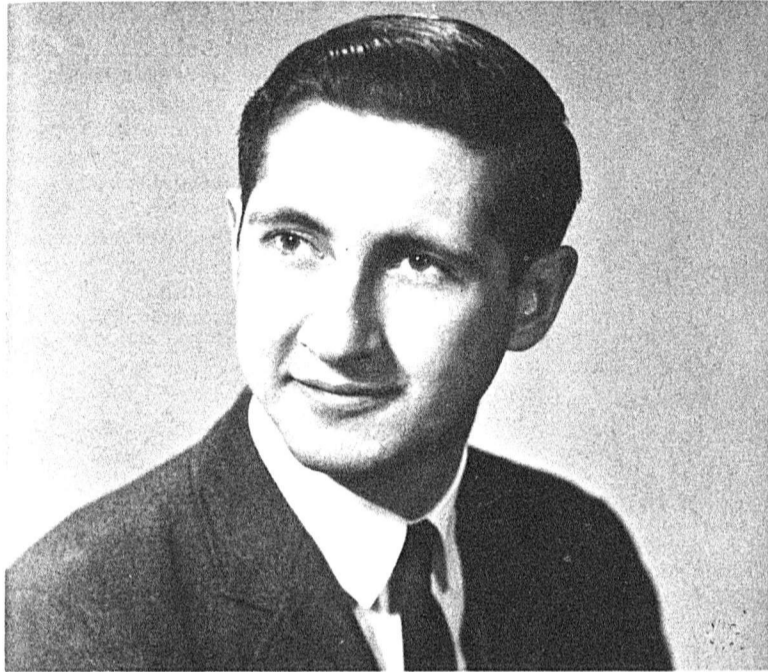


a new student movement



BRANNY SCHEPANOVICH

damn. In 1965-66, the then Students' Union President Richard Price was doing the activist thing. He fought for universal accessibility, pushed the Students' Union Building into construction and took a strong interest in educational programs. But no one cared. Then, on March 4, Branny Schepanovich was elected Students' Union President—the culmination of a political career dating back to the spring of 1962.

His platform then was a middle-of-the-road effort. His speech was written by Don Sellar, then editor of the *Gateway*, and myself. But even so, his views were later to contradict his expedient platform. Consider this campaign statement:

"On our campus, we must prepare for a new kind of student who will be attending U of A. in years to come. This new student is a social activist — a person both dedicated and committed to the advancement of society.

"When he comes, in large numbers, to our campus, we must have a place ready for him in student government and in our new union building. We must prepare for change."

Real Talent

An executive of Glenn Sinclair, co-ordinator; Marilyn Pilkington, vice-president, and Al Anderson, secretary-treasurer; was elected at the same time and council started quietly on the boring round of work which characterizes unions across the country. Schepanovich, with this executive, set about bringing in his program. To understand his program, we must understand him. He is a man of unbounded ego, a man of expediency, who, like Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, wants to be well-liked.

A politician of real talent, he needed an issue. Then he was mounted and ready to go.

A committee under Vice-President Pilkington did the ground work for the position Alberta was eventually to take at the Dalhousie CUS Congress. But it was Schepanovich who identified the position almost totally with himself. Pilkington faced away after she had done her work.

What she developed was a two-pronged stand. Ideologically, they wanted to draw a line between the student and society in terms of the jurisdiction of student unions. According to this reasoning, a students' union must show how a problem is a student problem before it has the right to deal with it. In other words, a direct connection between Vietnam, the Indian problem, or Cuba, and the particular situation on campus must be shown or the problem falls in the category conservatives call "the student as citizen." In this area the students' union has no authority to take a stand, but should encourage discussion in the formation of independent pressure groups. This is the Albertan position as it is expounded, not practised.

Two Big Tests

At the end of the summer, the last week in August and the first week in September, came the two big tests at the Alberta position. At the CUS Waterloo Seminar, Pilkington strengthened her position in cooperation with Colin Gravenor, a McGill law student whose efforts had kept that university out of UGEQ in 1966. In the old debating tradition, Gravenor gave strength to the Alberta theology:

"And on the left," he said, "are those students who have that special kindness of heart

to assume a more involved role on the reformation of the world while they are at university."

"Any number," he said, "of students have the right to form any kind of organization to get together to pass resolutions, picket, dance, sing, or what have you. However this right does not extend to imposing their program on the student body at large."

Gravenor and Pilkington of course, got on famously. Generally speaking, the delegates at the Seminar ignored the challenge. But they did not have a hate week over it. The Dalhousie Congress next month, however, was not able to deal with the challenge reasonably. Schepanovich generated tremendous hatred at Dalhousie — hatred that has contributed much to the current bitterness at Alberta towards national student organizations. His policy became one aimed at disaffiliating Alberta with the national student union.

Vicious retorts

When Doug Ward, then CUS President, debated him in October at the residences, he ran out the clock in an attempt to silence him. Opposition on council was silenced by Schepanovich's vicious retorts. He told the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Gateway* that CUS was communist tinged. "I hope the government is well aware of the circles in which CUS has moved," he said.

When the dissidence formed, the Campus Involvement Association, he turned his cam-

paign to de-activate the activists into a personal vendetta. He also poured vituperation on the *Gateway*, which by now had swung against him.

The *Gateway*, according to Schepanovich, smacked "heavily of yellow journalism," was "biased . . . against the best interests of the student body," and "slanted" and "uninformed." He threatened to replace several staff members on the *Gateway*, but forgot about this after he had seen his name in print.

Last of a "Holy Trinity"

When the smoke cleared after Christmas, the *Gateway* decided to concentrate on educational reform and forget about Schepanovich. The silence was overwhelming. Schepanovich was in the background. And then it was election time again.

Al Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Schepanovich regime, was elected president using almost the identical team and tactics as Schepanovich.

And the beat goes on, if you can call it a beat. Actually Anderson's year was less bitter and his administration made some strong advances, even though the hatred for the activist remained. Apart from Anderson's sharing the same apartment as Schepanovich, council got underway with a course guide of small dimensions. Students here do have some voice in university affairs—there are student representatives on General Faculty Council and surprisingly enough in the face of the impending fee increases and re-



AL ANDERSON

sidence rates, they are insisting education is a right and not a privilege. But council does not want academocracy. What they are after is what they would call "de facto" academocracy.

And it seems very unlikely that the small, hard core of activists here can run a candidate to replace Anderson. This year Marilyn Pilkington has been elected president. She served under Schepanovich on the Executive with Anderson.

Although the activists are a dedicated bunch, they are also highly visible. Most of them dress in the lower-class revolutionary army fatigues which separate them from the rest of the campus. Although they are vocal, they also disparaged. They are a fraternity for the disenfranchised. They have no power.

This year Marilyn Pilkington is trying to continue the unbroken line of executive control of student council. She is the last of a "holy trinity" who served with Schepanovich on the withdrawal executive, and next year the presidency will have to have new blood.

Despite some advances in representation on governing councils at the university it is likely that student government will remain irrelevant at University of Alberta both because it is easier to run a Schepanovich-type administration and because the task of awakening the student body is too great even if Pilkington did not want to stay in the hard-line conservative groove.

The truth is it is easy to be a conservative. The students are not interested in a better university and have little time to listen to their council, therefore the council does not bother to talk to the students. The result is a student council which is an executive-run puppet show that no one watches.

The real problem is not that democracy is denied the students in their union — the leaders know that wide-spread support means progress — but the students just don't care to do their job.



ONE SOLUTION . . .
... to the almighty parking problem