

Canadian Union of Students

Yes or No?

In 1966, U of A students' union withdrew from the Canadian Union of Students. A referendum was held and the results upheld the withdrawal. Now, students' council has decided to hold an-

other referendum to determine if students still feel the same about CUS.

This page is a CUS education program. The writers were asked to contribute.

Marilyn Pilkington — NO!

In the referendum on January 31, students will be asked whether they want to rejoin the Canadian Union of Students. The vast majority of members of Students' Council oppose membership in CUS as it now exists. Set out below are a few of the reasons why students should vote "no" on the referendum.

- CUS is violating the rights of the individual student by making political statements on national and international issues and purporting that these statements represent Canadian students. CUS has been turned into a political party which assumes that all Canadian students share the same political beliefs.

- CUS has adopted a left-wing Marxist interpretation of society and exhorts students to unite with workers to "liberate use from the forces of capitalism and imperialism which oppress us" (see the CUS Resolution Book and Reading List).

- CUS has adopted resolutions which

- state that our society is "both repressive and exploitative", and that the university is "an imperialist institution";

- demand student control over the learning process and university decision-making by means of a student veto over all university decisions;

- advocate working towards the abolition of exams and grades;

- support the National Liberation Front in Viet Nam;

- consider Quebec to be a "sovereign" state which should be able to negotiate with English Canada on an equal basis;

- sever CUS's association with the American-backed International Student Conference but maintain its association with the Communist-backed International Union of Students;

- call for the "liberation of women from the social, economic, cultural and sexual subordination and exploitation prevailing in Canada today";

- advocate the "immediate demobilization and dissolution of the armed forces";

- state that "while participating in the struggle against capitalistic imperialism, we must also commit ourselves to struggle against all forms of authoritarianism and repression in any system".

- Membership in this organization next year would cost us over \$15,000. CUS does provide some services and research of use to students' unions, but the value of these services does not balance the disservices CUS perpetrates in the name of Canadian students.

- It is our view that all students as individuals should become concerned about and aware of national and international issues, and that student government has the responsibility to present opportunities for students to explore both sides of these issues. However, student governments should not take stands on these issues which commit all students to one political, social, and economic ideology.

- Opposing the CUS position does not imply that we are devoted to the status quo, but it does assert that we are not prepared to accept Marxism as the only answer to the problems of social and economic injustice facing our society.

- The country has witnessed a demise of responsibility in the national student movement as represented by CUS. What was meant to be an organization representative of student interests across Canada has degenerated into a militant left-wing group.

- CUS president, Peter Warrian, has openly stated that the national organization need not and should not be representative of popular student feeling, and the current

leadership of the Union has displayed intolerance for the views and aspirations of the genuine majority of Canadian students.

- This arrogant attitude and the extremist political policies adopted on behalf of the organization are responsible for a growing exodus of members from the Canadian Union of Students. Eight members withdrew in 1966; a few more in 1967; and 14 have withdrawn to date this term. CUS now represents only 25 of the over 60 English-speaking universities and colleges of Canada.

- The outcome of this exodus is the financial and political crippling of CUS. Members of Parliament and the public no longer view CUS as the representative of Canadian students. CUS is no longer respected as a responsible organization, and is no longer an effective lobby on behalf of students.

- Moderate university students across Canada are beginning to discuss ways of changing CUS or establishing an alternative to it. A vote in favor of joining CUS is an endorsement of CUS policies and tactics. A vote against CUS is a rejection of present policies and a mandate to join with other moderate students to change CUS and develop a national union that represents US.

While considering this issue, please consult the CUS resolution books distributed on the campus, participate in the forum discussions, and watch for newsletters outlining: 1. policies of CUS; 2. why we withdrew from CUS in 1966; 3. whether we have suffered from being outside CUS; and 4. what a national union should be.

After arriving at your decision, be sure to cast your ballot on January 31st.

Marilyn Pilkington
President

David Leadbeater — YES!

The students' union has often maintained the position that one should "work from within" existing structures in order to bring about desired change. One participates in committees, joins organizations, supports political parties, follows proper legal and administrative procedures, in general, one operates within the bounds of currently operative institutions and organizations in order to change those organizations or institutions themselves.

The students' union has also maintained that there is a definite need for a national union. Lobbying with the federal government, communications among student's unions, travel and exchange programs, research projects, and support and advice in union programs and activities are all worthwhile and needed functions that demand some kind of national organization for Canadian university students' unions.

Why shouldn't U of A work "within" CUS to bring about the changes that the U of A feels necessary?

It would be easy to attack the weaknesses of CUS—they are many and they are obvious. But simply to allow

CUS to flounder, waiting as a vulture to pick up the prey, is the less courageous and less effective way out in this difficult situation.

CUS is nothing more than what its members desire it to be. If the members of CUS want it, in fact, to do particular things and take particular stands, then CUS will do those things and take those stands. It is not odd that CUS has "gone radical". If the so-called "moderate" students' unions had done their homework and participated in arriving at a consensus rather than opting out of this responsibility, there would not only be a better functioning CUS, but also more student bodies would be aware of the issues being faced by their representatives.

In order to make any significant contribution to an organization such as CUS, it is necessary that the individual member institutions form their own policies. If this demand is not met, the guilty unions are simply caught in the wash of the more forceful and prepared delegations who forge ahead, unbound by any significant criticism.

As an observer at the CUS congress in August, 1968, it

was clear to me that most "moderate" unions were in the "wash" of the "radical" unions. The "solution" for some moderate unions was not to play the game, in short, to withdraw.

This students' union and many like it in Canada, who are not members of CUS, are potentially capable of standing on their own and presenting clearly and articulately views which are genuinely representative of the students. To say that we are incapable of meeting this challenge is to make a demanding indictment of our students' union.

The U of A can provide leadership and represent their students when called to do so. There is a national union from within which the U of A can work to bring change. Our responsibility lies in rejoining CUS and doing our best to change the organization as we see fit. It is the more difficult course to take, but I for one would rather rejoin and fight than switch.

David Leadbetter
Vice-president
students' union

Andy von Busse — YES!

"If other universities are ready to work to make CUS more favorable to their students and they are ready to do this within the framework of the organization, what is the matter with Alberta? What makes this university so different?"

Here we are trying to reform The System by working from within—i.e. B. of G. representation, GFC representation etc., and yet we refuse to work within the framework of CUS to change it." (Gateway Editorial)

As the time is rapidly approaching where we will have to decide whether or not we will rejoin CUS, some misconceptions about CUS must be cleared up and some truths exposed.

CUS can not be condemned for "taking a political stand" since an examination of our Canadian situation will show that we are politically dominated and economically

controlled—this is termed imperialism by CUS, however, although students may be "turned off" by this word, it is just a semantic problem.

CUS has been condemned because it is said to want to destroy the university when in fact it is just 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 murky dinosaur.

Many CUS opponents have fallen to the despicable tactic of red-baiting and often these opponents have caused referendums to be defeated. Please let us not degenerate ourselves to this tactic for it is the tactic of the desperate—the non-compromising.

It should also now seem ridiculous that the argument should be presented that the U of A should work outside of CUS to form a second national union of students, pre-

ferably, it seems, a moderate "non-political" (an ambiguous term if one is thinking of a real union of students) union. This has been shown by the recent conference at Waterloo where it was illustrated that even the moderate (quasi-conservative) element in Canadian universities are seriously divided on the concept of what a national union should be. Even if the conference had come to an agreement, the union would have to be open to all universities, the "radicals" quite conceivably would be in the leadership again, and the whole purpose of the second union would be destroyed.

It should be obvious that the only way that the students in Canada will have an effective voice is through one union and if one does not agree with it we should change it from the inside. For these reasons I sincerely request all students (conservatives, moderate and radical) to vote "yes" for entrance to CUS.