

NUS and us - where do we stand?

By DERWIN GOWAN
Managing Editor

UNB students will decide on Wednesday, Oct. 20, whether or not they will remain members of the National Union of Students.

Although the student union executive is not officially committed to backing NUS in the referendum, union president Jim Smith said in an interview that he is in favour of continued membership. NUS fieldworker Miguel Figueroa is on campus organizing a pro-NUS campaign, and executive-secretary Dan O'Connor is expected to be on campus before the referendum date.

The referendum to join NUS passed by 33 votes and NUS central office is watching this referendum closely. They are particularly worried over the effect a "no" vote would have on referenda at other New Brunswick campuses. UNBF is the only New Brunswick member of NUS.

"We're hoping the students are going to support continued membership," said Figueroa. "It's in the interest of students of this campus to join with the students across the country."

Figueroa said UNB students have already benefited from NUS membership, and cited the unemployment situation in New Brunswick in particular.

He said 30,000 summer jobs were lost across Canada last summer, 2,000 of them in New Brunswick. "But", Figueroa said, "we have brought to the attention of the federal government and opposition parties the dire situation of the students across the country."

This, he said, led to an extended debate on unemployment in the federal House of Commons. Figueroa said, "As a result of our lobbying efforts, the federal government is rushing back into the job creation programs for students and other Canadians for this coming summer." It was confirmed the throne speech that opened Parliament on Oct. 12 that as much as \$200,000,000 may be put into employment programs, Figueroa said.

He said that NUS co-operated with other lobbying organizations in this effort.

"Our statistics were quoted on the floor of Parliament," said Figueroa, and this is the first time this has ever happened. He said they were used by the employment critic of the official opposition.

"It used to be that we had to go and beg them, now they're coming to us for statistics about the student situation," he said.

Educational finances are in "real trouble," said Figueroa, and he blamed the federal government.

Figueroa said federal authorities were threatening to change the regulations of the Fiscal Arrangements Act, which regulates federal-provincial cost sharing, and remove "essential federal funds" from post-secondary education.

"This is going to hurt the Atlantic and particularly New Brunswick region harder than any other region," said Figueroa, and intensify regional disparity.

Figueroa said if the federal government pulls out of equalization, "which they will unless a campaign is mounted," then the ability of the provincial governments to provide post-secondary education in this region will be cut. This will lead to higher tuition and student aid, he said.

At the last NUS conference, the delegates decided to join with the Association of Colleges and Universities of Canada (AUCC) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is calling for a national enquiry into the direction and financing of post-secondary education in Canada. "This will hopefully have the effect of delaying the further deterioration of federal financing until we have had the chance to take our own case to the public," said Figueroa.

Figueroa said the fact that NUS is now in the position to call a National Student Day shows that NUS's work has begun to show results. "It's the first time in over 10 years students across the country have co-ordinated an activity of such import." The last NSD was in 1965.

Figueroa said the UNB student union showed its commitment to National Student Day by establishing a committee and a budget. Efforts for NSD at UNB are still in the planning stages and local enthusiasm for the event will not be known until Nov. 9, he said.

Figueroa said NUS will have to broaden its program to look at such things as Canada Manpower training programs, for example. However, he said, "We can't spread ourselves too thin." There are "countless" issues, he said, and NUS should concentrate on one at a time.

Smith said it was important that

History club presentation

The UNB History Club presents professor Robert S. Bothwell of the University of Toronto Department of History on Tuesday, Oct. 19, at 1:00 p.m. in Tilley Hall, Room 303.

He is the official biographer of C.D. Howe, associate editor of the Canadian Historical Review.

His topic is, "C.D. Howe and the Salad Days of Canadian Business - 1939-1949."

Final Red and Black auditions

Final auditions for Red and Black skits will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 20, in Room 6 of the SUB.

If you don't make this one, you don't make it at all. So dig out your straw hat and cane and dancing shoes. Because this is the big one! Be there.

students realize that as members of a national body, students have greater "punch" when tackling problems connected with student aid, unemployment, etcetera.

Decisions are made on the federal level which affect post-secondary education, he said, and having each student union taking a different stand "just doesn't work."

"Before students condemn NUS, they have to realize that it's a relatively new organization," said Smith. NUS had to "pick up where CUS left off," he said.

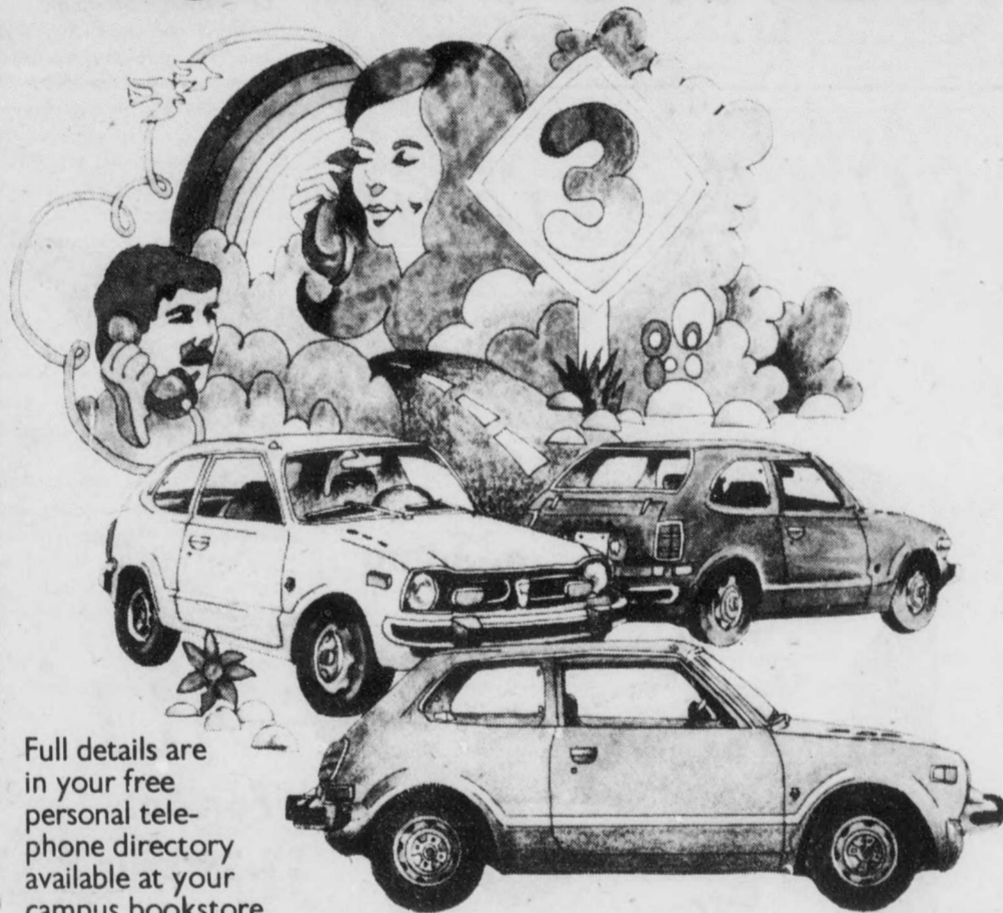
Figueroa said at most universities, the \$1.00 per student levy is paid in addition to the regular student fees, so that NUS membership does not cut into the student union budget. At UNB, the fee is paid directly out of student union fees.

NUS fees for UNB were \$.15 per student when this campus first joined the organization as first year members get a reduced rate. This presented a relatively minor expenditure to the student union last year. However, this year, UNB pays the full \$1.00 per capita fee.

This represents a major expenditure at a time when the union is faced with financial difficulties. If NUS fees were paid in addition to student union fees, this would be solved.

Smith said he would favour this proposal. "If students are willing to be members of NUS, I don't see any problem is raising student fees." Student union comptroller Peter Davidson earlier (Brunswickan, Oct. 9, 1976, page 3), rejected any increase in student fees.

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