

# The Alberta Association of Students

## *U of A is a member of the AAS, but what does it do?*

In September, 1966, student leaders from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and the Foothills Hospital School of Nursing met to discuss the formation of a provincial students' union.

A month later, when they met in Banff, the group had grown to include 13 post-secondary institutions.

The Western Regional Association of Students had been dissolved with the recommendation that provincial unions be organized in its place, and Alberta students' union leaders began outlining areas in which a provincial union could be beneficial.

The organizers saw the proposed union as an organ which would:

- act as a provincial lobby to set up a liaison to provide an open door for collective interaction between government and students, and to provide a voice in requests for student aid,
- provide student services, such as research and information, students' benefits, insurance, student exchanges, student discounts, recreational retreats and athletic activities,

- make the Canadian Union of Students meaningful to the student body of Alberta by establishing priority listings on CUS programs and inter-regional communications on different theories of student activity, and
- discuss areas of general student concern such as administration-student and faculty-student relations, social action programs and students' union problems.

The leaders at the Nov. 11 conference said the biggest function of the organization would be to improve communication.

"Junior colleges have little cultural or intellectual exposure; they are isolated," said Al Anderson, then secretary-treasurer of U of A's students' union. "There is little interaction between them and other educational institutions, governments and immediate environment. Therefore, students do not get the benefit of the full university experience."

In their lighter moments, delegates to the conference suggested names for the new union: ASS (Alberta Student Society), PELT (Provincial Educational Leaders Troop), SFA (Student Federation of Alberta) and other equally-flattering contractions.

U of A, the largest school in the province, of course stood out as the Big Daddy of the organizational conference. Small school resentment and dissension became obvious when the Mt. Royal College Reflector printed a column and cartoon stating in no uncertain terms what they thought of the U of A delegation.

"The U of A delegates spoke very eloquently in favor of the association but somehow we got the feeling that it was more to their benefit than to ours. Why the push so soon after quitting CUS? . . . We are worried that it will become university-dominated with administration closely controlled and picked mainly from U of A and U of C."

Their fears were not totally unfounded; the first president of the group was U of A's Owen Anderson.

The current executive, elected in October, 1967, is headed by president John Zaozirny, external students' union vice-president at U of C and vice-president Phil Ponting, students' union treasurer at U of A.

At the October conference, membership fees were set at 12 cents per student. With a total membership of about 20,000 students, the Alberta Association of Students (as it was

formally named at the January, 1967 founding congress) this year has \$2,400 to work with.

The budget includes a \$900 travel grant which will be used by the smaller institutions to ensure members will be able to attend meetings.

The president will use another \$1,000 for travel to the CUS conference and travel around the province.

Delegates to last fall's conference were primarily concerned with policy.

They defeated a resolution calling for student representation and participation in the governing of Alberta's post-secondary institutions.

### PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

And they unanimously passed a resolution providing AAS support to nursing students in their attempts to achieve a more responsible education.

"Nursing students in their own education are subjected to a system which often substitutes coercive authority for personal responsibility," the resolution read.

Last month Zaozirny and Ponting met with representatives of the Students' Assistance Board and presented a brief outlining the following recommendations:

- the inauguration of a system of grants and loans distributed solely on the basis of financial need,
- the increasing availability of grants in each succeeding academic year to students successfully completing their year's studies,
- a drastic reduction in the size of interest payments applied to student loans,
- a program of student grants providing equitable financial assistance to all students of post-secondary education,
- a public disclosure of the parental contribution table and the estimated student budget in order to assist the student in determining his financial requirements and the availability of financial assistance,
- public notice that extenuating circumstances will be given full consideration by the board when determining the parental contribution requirement,
- the allocation of sufficient funds to the board to meet the basic requirements of all students in need of financial assistance,
- notification to the AAS of any present or pending government studies in the area of education.

AAS officials say they received a "favorable" response from government officials and are now waiting for the Department of Education to compile a point-by-point analysis of the brief.

## casserole

a supplement section  
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### editor

jim rennie

### associate editor

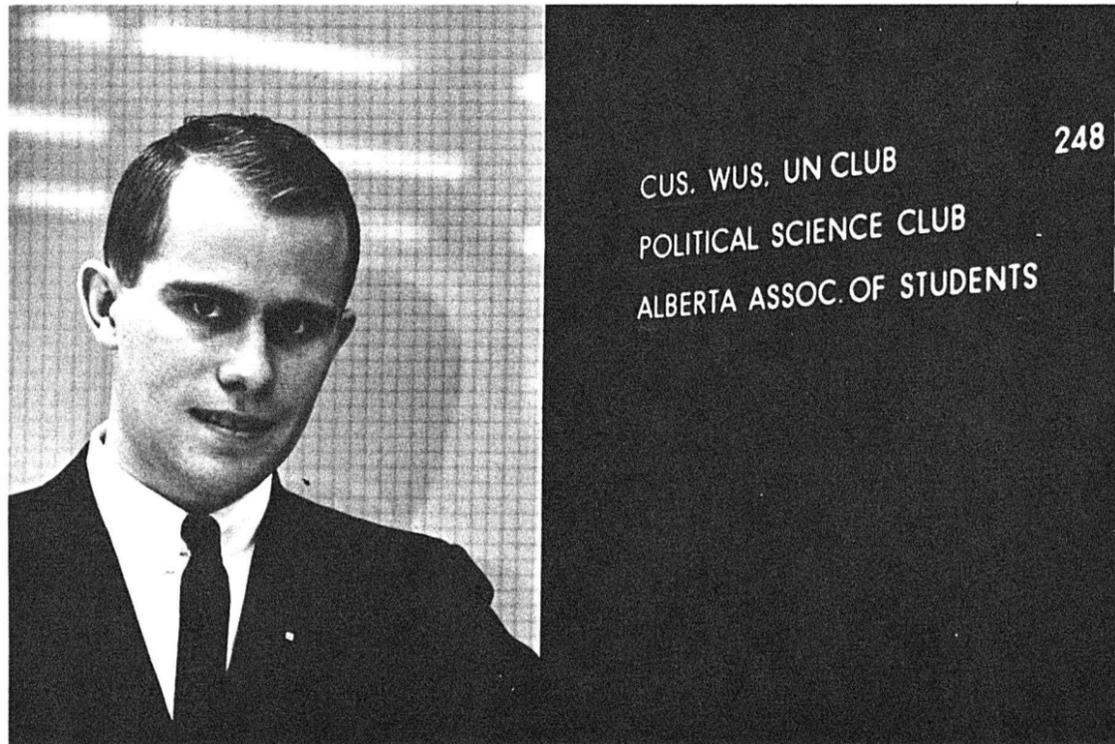
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AAS VICE-PRESIDENT PHIL PONTING

... "we are trying to get a concrete policy statement from members"

—B. S. P. Bayer photo

The theme of Casserole this week is housing. It's always been a problem at U of A, and things will likely get worse next year. What with demolition in Garneau, increased res rates and probable increases in other off-campus housing, the situation can't help but deteriorate.

The concept of co-op housing is discussed on C-4 and C-5, with a review of the general housing picture on C-3.

There is a feature on the Alberta Association of Students on C-2, researched by Lydia Dotto.

Thanks to staffers Shirley Kirby and Alex Ingram for doing the legwork on the Lister Hall survey.

And a special thanks to Elaine Verbicky who originated, planned and wrote the entire housing feature.

## The aims of AAS have changed in recent years

The objectives of AAS seem to have changed somewhat from those originally outlined; vice-president Phil Ponting Monday described what he thinks the purposes of the organization are.

"The first objective is cultural," he said. The organization arranges for inter-province exchanges of musicians, drama groups, debating clubs and other special entertainment events. This helps to promote better understanding and interaction as an additional feature besides the entertainment value, said Ponting.

He outlined the second major objective as providing student services on a provincial basis. Suggested proposals include a provincial student life insurance plan, province-wide student cards and transportation schemes for students.

"We hope to have a better inter-province

tie-in," he said, "and especially better communication between, for example, the junior colleges and the universities."

AAS seeks to set up a resource centre as another of its objectives. This would operate as a source of information for various institutions in setting up their programs.

"This will be helpful for new schools such as junior colleges who are just starting to set up their programs," said Ponting.

"We have a lot to learn from them, too. Being smaller, they may have certain adaptations we can use in the larger sphere of the university."

A fourth major objective of the association is to provide the student population with a provincial lobby.

We feel representation has to be made on

behalf of the student bodies of the province to the various governments and organizations with which they are concerned, said Ponting. He cited the provincial and federal governments, the Students' Assistance Board, and the Universities Commission as examples.

"All these measures are in a more-or-less tentative form now," he said. "We have our objectives, but now we are trying to get a concrete policy statement from the members of AAS. This is what we will attempt to do at our Red Deer conference in March."

"Our scope has been a bit limited, but we're trying to get everyone involved and get dialogue flowing between members of these different institutions."

"The final resolutions must come from delegates of all the schools," he said.