

Former CUS worker and Carleton V.P.

Barry McPeake

The charges most commonly levelled at the Canadian Union of Students concern a lack of representivity and pronouncements on affairs outside the proper purview of a student union.

In most cases they are intended to serve as a smoke-screen for the politics of accusing individuals or groups, and rarely, if ever, deal substantively with the policy of the union.

There have been numerous attempts at restructuring CUS per se, but most fail to recognize that the problem of democracy and the real participation of students lies in the relationship between the local students' council and its own constituents.

It is the students' council not CUS which is undemocratic, especially at Dalhousie, where the council has a history of isolation from the real problems that students face; the structure and the content of education, housing and unemployment. It is the student's council, not CUS, which has refused to engage students in a dialogue about social problems which affect our educational system in very real ways.

Members of CUS Decide Policy

The CUS congress is the supreme decision-making body of the union and it is only student councils which have voting rights; that is, it is the student councils who decide on the policy and elect the officers of the union.

There is no doubt that the secretariat does effect the kind of policy that CUS produces, in much the same way as the civil service, but the members of the secretariat have to be approved by the National Council — and the policy by the congress. Between congresses the National Council, composed of representatives from the various regions, oversee the actions of the National office and fieldwork staff.

The student councils on the other hand are elected on vacuous platforms, and consist largely of elitist person-

alities seeking upward social mobility. They nitpick over what are at best peripheral concerns, without affective recourse to an historically depoliticized student body. At Dalhousie they have consistently refused to come to grips with the real problems students face, and have contented themselves with mingling with the upper echelons of the university administration and badly maintaining the bureaucracy of the student union building. And it is Dalhousie and other like it who cry the loudest about democracy and representivity when they are forced to deal with problems which are real, but which question the relevance of their own positions.

The central thrust of CUS policies has, in recent history, always dealt with education and the social forces which act upon the educational process. It has also dealt with problems of the student union, with unemployment and housing, and last and not least, in terms of the use of the fiscal and intellectual resources of CUS, social questions.

Right Red-baits Union

Yet when the right wing has seen fit to attack CUS, it has never discussed the education or student union policies upon which CUS spends most of its time. Rather it drags out the policy statements on self-determination for Quebec and Vietnam, satisfying itself with red-baiting the union without dealing with the substance of the policies i.e. whether or not there is any truth in the statements. They also seem to forget those politically acceptable statements on the status of women, Biafra, and the persecution of intellectuals in the Soviet Ukraine. In other words, it is only when the policies are controversial or politically unacceptable to themselves do the right-wing come out of the woodwork and attack CUS under the guise of political neutrality.

Politically objectivity does not exist. To examine our educational system, its content and structure, is to examine the values of the political and social system in which the educational process exists. The educational system re-

flects almost directly the values of our society, in what and the way we are taught, and any attempt must critically deal with those values. In other words, our discussions must become political in the broadest sense. To accept the present educational system, its values and its structure is to accept a politic, which to date has had the effect of alienating the majority of our population. To criticize our educational system effectively is to posit and act upon and an alternative politic.

Involvement is the Thing

CUS in the past three years has attempted, however imperfectly, to engage large numbers of students in such debate and action, and not without controversy. But the very nature of the real problems of students dictates that it be so.

Yet political conservatives frustrate these attempts, not by debating the content of policies and thereby making clear their own politics, but rather by emotional personalistic arguments and structural attacks which, if accepted, would ensure the security of their own political positions at home.

CUS is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but it has attempted, often with success, to involve large numbers of students in a process of coming to grips with their problems.

Its present problems in large part stem from the inability of many students' councils to come to grips with their own static structures and therefore with the problems that students face. Continual structural attacks on CUS without a concomitant examination of the structure of the local student council, upon which CUS is based, will only exacerbate the problems.

It is only by engaging in a real debate about real problems with the broad population of students and with the community at large, that CUS can become an effective organization.

The watchdogs

Graduate Students' Association

In the next two months the Dalhousie Student Union will sponsor an orientation program about the Canadian Union of Students (CUS). In order to help you understand the issues to be discussed, the council of the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students feels that you should become acquainted with the history of CUS and the policies of the Dalhousie Student Union toward CUS.

N.F.C.U.S.

The first confederation of Canadian university students was formed in 1926 and called the National Federation of Canadian University Students (NFCUS). This organization was primarily non-political. Its function was to benefit students through the organization of social activities, charter flights, etc. It was the limited range of benefits available to students that finally led to the dissolution of NFCUS in 1963, a move inspired by the activities of the university students in the province of Quebec.

In 1963 the Quebec students were (and probably still are) the most politically sophisticated in Canada. They felt that the benefits available through NFCUS were superficial. If a confederation was to improve the life of Canadian students it had to become politically involved. Issues such as student loans, housing and jobs necessitated a change in existing governmental policies.

A confederation such as NFCUS which refused to take political initiative could not act as a catalyst for meaningful change in the interest of students. In an effort to establish a more relevant federation, Quebec students pulled out of NFCUS and formed their own organization, the Union Generale des Etudiants du Quebec. Even today, with CUS's involvement in those issues which the Quebec students first brought to light, they still maintain themselves within their own union.

The exit of the Quebec students was a death blow to NFCUS. Soon after they pulled out, other politically concerned students called for a referendum on the future of the Federation. The result of this referendum was the decision to dissolve NFCUS and form a new organization with political and social conscience.

Early the following year the Canadian Union of Students (CUS) became a reality. What were the intentions of those who were responsible for founding CUS? The answer is evident in the name of

CUS Formed

the organization. Rather than the social Federation that NFCUS had been, the new group was a Union formed to

promote student rights and ensure student interests. CUS still provides the services that had been part of NFCUS, i.e. charter flights, insurance policies, etc. but has also promoted "unionism" to push for reforms advantageous to Canadian students.

An example of the benefits which have resulted from CUS's unionism of students affects many of us. Utilizing the large staff and funds provided by member universities, CUS was able to effectively lobby in Ottawa on the issue of student loans. The result of this pressure was the passage of the National Student Loan Act which provides the funds that allow many of us to attend Dalhousie.

At present there are twelve universities with definite commitments to CUS. A university becomes a member of CUS by taking a referendum of its student body. If the majority favor a commitment to CUS then the university can become a member on the payment of a fee which is levied according to the number of students at the university. Eight universities are now in the process of holding such referenda. However, if some of the larger member universities such as Toronto, Dalhousie, and Carleton maintain their commitments in the coming referenda, the national executive board feels that this will provide the impetus for other universities to join. The executive board expects to have thirty universities with a commitment to CUS by the end of the year.

CUS Office?

CUS operates on the university campus by maintaining an office which is responsible to the national executive board. These local offices not only disseminate information about CUS and its activities, they also arrange educational programs on the campus, and provide feedback to the national office. For reasons to be described below, this type of CUS office no longer exists on the Dal campus. Until two years ago there was a CUS office here. Some of you may remember the programs that it sponsored. In 1967, there was a fall festival, a forum of speeches for which prizes were awarded. Later that year, CUS sponsored the seminar on education, a teach-in on university educational policy that included films, speeches, and discussion groups.

However, for the past two years, although we have maintained a commitment to CUS, the structure of our CUS representation has prevented it from presenting these types of programs.

In 1968, the Dalhousie Student Union President, A. Randall Smith, dissolved the CUS office on campus. His declared intention was to replace the CUS office with a Political Affairs Secretary, appointed by the Student Union. A motion in support of this plan was passed by the Student Council and the duties of the CUS representative were given to the Student Union President in the interim.

However, nothing more was done by the Student Council to bring the post of Political Affairs Secretary to fruition. In fact, the Council has dropped the idea completely. Since the middle of 1968 the Student Union President has been our representative to CUS.

Port Arthur

During the past summer the question of our commitment to CUS was brought to the present Student Council executive. It was known that Bruce Gillis, the Student Union president, wanted to remove Dalhousie from CUS by not honoring our commitment to the Port Arthur Congress. The Graduate Students Association, feeling that the students' interests were best served by maintaining our membership in CUS, asked the executive of the Student Union to bring the question of our commitment to CUS to a vote. The Student Union executive voted four to one to honor our commitment to CUS and to send delegates to the Port Arthur Congress.

Bruce Gillis, who voted against our remaining in CUS, was given a mandate by his executive board to honor our commitment. Gillis then went to the Port Arthur Congress and against this mandate and the vote of his own delegation he attempted to dissolve CUS, implying by his actions that he represented the sentiment of his own delegation and the students of Dalhousie.

Referendum

The Council of the Graduate Students Association feels that Dalhousie students can be effectively served in their own interest by maintaining our membership in CUS. A referendum on this question will be held soon. We hope that the information presented here has helped you gain a clear understanding of the history and policies of CUS and the nature of Dalhousie's relationship to these.

Through a better understanding of what CUS is, and what it does, we feel that you can vote more knowledgeably in the upcoming referendum. CUS has served the best interests of Canadian students and we urge you to support it.

Former student

Peter Quackenbush

As a student at Dalhousie University for four years, I have seen many changes take place on our campus. The one change I have not seen, but would like to see, is the dissolution of CUS as it stands today and the formation of a more useful instrument of student communication and power.

I have observed CUS going through its different stages of growth and then stages of communication and objective breakdowns. I am not pleased with what I have seen. However, before I go any further in any discussion I would like to develop the history of CUS to some degree.

CUS was founded in 1925 as the National Federation of the Canadian Union of Students. Until 1964 it was more a cozy debating society for student bureaucrats than a real student union.

Then in 1964, CUS was shocked into a readjustment of its purpose by the withdrawal of the Quebec Universities and the foundation of the UGEQ (Union General des Etudiants du Quebec). The two reasons that the Quebec Universities gave for leaving were quite valid: 1) the Quebec students felt that NFCUS programs were irrelevant to the pressing socio-economic problems of student and society; 2) the Quebecois wanted to be "maitre chez vous" and consequently wanted an organization representative of their own interests.

New Outlook for CUS

Immediately following this, CUS changed its entire outlook. Within two years it started to accomplish major programs through a strong lobby in Ottawa. Among its best accomplishments were: 1) tuition fees were made income tax deductible. 2) Canada Student Loan Act was passed. 3) Student Cooperatives were qualified for government mortgages. 4) Air Canada's start of the youth fares program.

By way of reply...

Bruce Gillis

Recent stories in the Halifax and Dalhousie news media seem to call for some explanation of my position at the recent CUS Congress at the Lakehead.

The delegation sent to the Lakehead had instructions for the Executive of the Dal Student Union through a motion which reads as follows: "... that the duly constituted representatives of the Dalhousie Student Union sign the commitment form for CUS 1969." This commitment form involved an undertaking to pay the fees due from Dalhousie for membership in CUS for the following year, and normally carries with it voting privileges at the Congress. The feeling of the executive was that CUS was unsatisfactory as it stood, and without voting powers at the Congress we would have no hope of changing it to suit our needs. Therefore the commitment form.

At that executive meeting, the Student Union's lawyers advised me that I should have them determine whether I indeed had power to sign such a form. After reviewing our act of incorporation, constitution and by-laws, they informed me that I could not legally do so without a directive from council. I therefore informed the executive and delegates that I did not intend to sign the commitment.

As it turned out, the Congress allowed voting privileges to all schools represented there (except McGill) and therefore the major purpose in signing the form was achieved anyway.

"I promised"

At the Congress, several things took place. I had promised the students of Dalhousie when I ran for office last year that I would take a delegation there, try to make CUS an organization more representative and acceptable to them. If I could not accomplish major changes of this sort, I was to hold a referendum on campus and advise that we withdraw.

Since I had experience in three similar conferences over the past year, mostly involving the same people, it did not take me long to conclude that change of the kind required was not likely. Although motions introducing such changes were drafted and argued for by myself and other delegates, there was little success.

On the third day of the Congress, I met with the President of the University of Toronto students, the External Vice President from McGill, delegates from U. B. C. and several others to discuss possible action. The other Dalhousie delegates were in various committees at the time and I saw no need to contact them, as there was no indication what conclusions might be reached.

All four of these points are strong defences in CUS's favor. From there, CUS has made the democratization of the university community and the relationship of this activity to Canadian Society its major targets. That is what CUS says; that is not what I say. Since late 1967 CUS has been the haven of all the radicals, draft-dodgers, and minor campus politicians who have wanted to attract attention by attacking what the felt were society's weaknesses.

One delegate coming back from an earlier CUS conference expressed that he was tired and disgusted at constantly hearing anti-everything slogans and that nothing was being accomplished.

U of T Decides Future of CUS

In fact, something was being accomplished. CUS lost referendums on so many campuses that the only possible way that CUS will continue to exist past Christmas is if the students of the University of Toronto vote in favor of CUS in their pre-Christmas referendum. There is no indication of which way Toronto will go but certainly if the students ask, "What has CUS done for the student body?" chances are CUS is out!

You see, the sad truth of the entire situation is that, for all the good CUS has done, a few misdirected policies and people have given CUS a bad name and there is no point riding a dead horse.

This brings us closer to home. In early September the annual CUS Conference was held at Port Arthur, Ontario. During this conference the President of the Dalhousie Student Council, Bruce Gillis, and delegates from the University of McGill, the University of Toronto, and the University of British Columbia tried to have a

No change likely for CUS

At this meeting, it was concluded that, as I had already decided for myself, there was no real possibility of making adequate changes in CUS. It was not representative of Canadian students and did not pretend to be. It refused to recognize that Quebec was a part of Canada, and seemed to base its existence on a strangely ethereal concept of solidarity among all students on all issues, which appeared ludicrously naive. In short, to borrow from Metternich, the Canadian Union of Students was not Canadian, was not a union, and did not represent the students.

Despairing of improving the present organization by bits and pieces, we decided to draft a completely new constitution for a new organization which would guarantee the right of membership to Quebec schools, the necessity of speaking out only with the backing of student thought, and the direct election of all delegates by the students. It would also shorten the term of the officers to allow for flexibility in student opinion.

Since there was a deadline for constitutional amendments and since we wished to make this alternative known to the public, there was a necessity for haste. The only papers we could hope to make were the Saturday afternoon dailies, and since Monday was labour day and the Congress was to end Tuesday, we decided to try for the former. I informed two members of my delegation whom I managed to contact as to the nature of what I was doing, and went back to work on the constitution most of the night. About 3 a.m. Saturday a press release was prepared which I showed to the Dal delegates, along with the incomplete constitution. At their request, some changes were made to clarify that we had not all worked on or sponsored it. At 9 a.m., it was released to the papers, and the constitution was tabled in the plenary session that day.

Press Releases

The local newspaper ran a large black headline over the story, reading "Major Universities Move to Crush CUS". The delegations from the University of Toronto and Dalhousie, concerned about this publicity, met separately to consider whether they had been wrongly implicated. The President of U. of T., faced by a very hostile delegation, was censured on the ground that he could not make statements as an individual, but was bound to repeat only what the delegation agreed to.

The Dalhousie delegation made a simple one-line statement indicating that I had acted on my own and not with any formal backing from them. Mr. Larry Katz, one of the delegates, attempted to present some personal con-

resolution put through which would have disbanded CUS and formed a new organization. The only major change was that the new organization was greatly limited in the political stands it could take. I must agree with that resolution entirely. Because of the political stands CUS had taken, it has lost the support of many Canadian campuses. Although Mr. Gillis has been attacked rather severely by Mr. Larry Katz, a member of his own delegation, the attack is not to be taken too seriously. Mr. Katz is known to suffer from a recurring illness called verbal diarrhea.

Dalhousie Delegation Split

To cover the incident again, Mr. Gillis and some members of the McGill, Toronto and British Columbia delegations proposed a plan for a new union. Contrary to Mr. Katz's charges, Mr. Gillis did inform the rest of the delegation of his plans. He did inform them before the resolution was presented and he did indicate to them that he was presenting the plan as an individual and not as a member of a supporting delegation. Mr. Katz accused Mr. Gillis of double crossing the delegation by not informing them and then himself released a statement scathingly attacking Mr. Gillis without consulting the rest of the delegation. Mr. Katz also stated in his release that the delegation had rejected Mr. Gillis' plans. This is not true. The rest of the delegation simply disassociated themselves from Mr. Gillis' plan. This does not say they rejected the motion. It simply means that, at the time, they had no opinion concerning the resolution. Personally, Mr. Katz's actions follow a popular opinion of human nature, "An angry man shuts his eyes and opens his mouth".

Although one can certainly question Mr. Gillis' actions of acting as an individual in the situation, I cannot disagree with the purpose for which he brought forward the resolution. I feel it is time to take student politics and objection back to the campus.

denation of my action along with the statement but was requested by the rest of the delegates to restrict himself to the statement, which was backed by all the delegates, including myself.

From this point the Congress degenerated into one confusion after another. Committees, meetings, press interviews and other duties kept me extremely busy, and I was either absent from the plenary or in other parts of the room a good deal of the time. I am sorry to say that some members of the delegation took this to indicate that I was angered because they had not all immediately supported my new constitution, and did not wish to spend more time with them. This was hardly the case. I did not expect anyone to support the new constitution without a full understanding of it, and in the limited and hectic time remaining, I doubt whether any of them had an opportunity to discuss it fully with the drafters as I had hoped they would.

On Monday night, Mr. Katz informed me that he had contacted Mr. Pittas of the Dal Graduate Students' Association regarding my "undemocratic action". When asked the substance of his communication he replied that a press release would be issued in Halifax stating his "objective opinion" as to my "authoritarian and dictatorial conduct". After satisfying myself that the communication had not been drawn up or agreed upon by the other delegates I pointed out that he was guilty of the same actions for which he was charging me. This had no effect and the story appeared in the local papers to the effect that Mr. Katz intended.

Gillis Censured

On his return, Mr. Katz moved a motion of censure against me at a meeting of the Graduate Students' Association. I was at the time involved in an executive meeting, as Mr. Katz and Mr. Pittas knew, and was given no opportunity to defend myself. Again political expediency seemed more important than the principles Mr. Katz claims to staunchly adhere to.

When presented with the motion, I stated that I was elected to the presidency of the Student Union, not the Graduate Students' Association and that only the Student Council of Dalhousie University could censure me. There are many more details which can become important, but that is basically the story of my action which have come under criticism. My only explanation is that time was limited, and I felt my first obligation was to the students of Dalhousie to fulfil my election promises. That was my object in all the actions I took.