

Token reforms no good says CUS field secretary

by Roger Bakes
brunswickan staff

He doesn't gesticulate when he talks, even when he's excited about some philosophic idea, and he speaks in a quiet monotone. The mood he conveys is resignation: he knows what he is doing, knows what he wants to change, and isn't blinded by optimism; he is trying to transform a society to which he has already oriented himself.

His name is Barry McPeake, he is the Maritime field worker for the Canadian Union of Students (CUS). He says things like: "The educational system gears students not to be critical of itself or society." Most students are probably dimly aware of this but McPeake is concerned about it.

After you ask him a question he usually thinks about it for a couple of minutes before replying. His answers were invariably sincere and you can't help liking him for his honesty and social awareness. Eventually you respect him for his philosophy and goals.

What is your view of CUS?
"It's supposed to be a union of students. It's supposed to be but it isn't really because of 1) lack of perception of the national student movement because of lack of active participation; 2) general lack of interest in the issues, i.e. what is education about; lack of criticism of the university structure itself on the part of students. CUS is trying to add a new dimension to the university, a constructive, critical attitude not inhibited by the structured thought of the university, the authoritarian mode of thought."

In what way do you think, has CUS's image been misunderstood? How has the commercial

and student press treated the CUS?

"The commercial press has sensationalized the student activists within the CUS without attempting to understand or interpret our aims. The student press has been most fair - with some notable exceptions. Concerning Warrion's statement that this is the year to burn buildings, the comment was not serious in that it was the kind of action we would necessarily take but rather a dramatic statement emphasizing the need for action."

Where do you think the CUS has been most successful in having its policies implemented?

"I don't think it has been successful anywhere in terms of policies because fulfilment of its policies would necessitate a dramatic social change. We don't want token reform because historically they have been meaningless. CUS initiated the present discussion of university reform, student loans, and university government representation, but these have in no way altered the meaninglessness of educational system. They were token reforms."

Do you think there will be any change in University structure eventually?

"I think that if there is a continual organizing by students keeping in mind long range goals and not being satisfied with piecemeal reform that there will eventually be a radical change in University structure and, hopefully, in society."

So far this year, a number of universities have held referendums to decide whether or not to remain in CUS. The result was their withdrawal. What is

your reaction to this?

"Universities have dropped out of CUS before and rejoined; it's a very cyclic thing. What bothers me is the students we don't get to talk to, but we know that the action we have taken has had some affect by virtue of the reaction. The large turnout for these referendums reveals, at least, that a lot of students know that CUS exists. What we have to do now is to provide a form to rationally debate the issues which is an opportunity which has never been available before."

As CUS's Maritime Field Worker, what is your job? Would you classify yourself as an agitator?



Barry McPeake

"Perhaps I am an agitator. Initially I attempt to work through existing groups on campus on already existing issues. I try to clarify these issues in terms of long-range goals, particularly in reference to those goals of the CUS. I attempt

to suggest how to organize around these issues and involve large numbers of students."

What are your comments on UNB's conservatism in terms of student involvement in political actions and movements?

"Student Council members continually tell me how conser-

vative their campuses are but I think this is just a smoke screen for a lack of commitment to and a lack of understanding of the issues they talk about. Students are liberal but they are inhibited by material self-interest that would be satisfied by the status quo."

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