

# CHALLENGING NFCUS SEMINAR

The following is a news release reporting in precise form the main issues discussed in Hamilton at this year's NFCUS seminar.

## Words of Warning

Hamilton (CUP)—The fourth annual seminar of the National Federation of Canadian University Students concluded here September 7 with most of the 150 delegates agreeing that it was a successful venture.

For seven days, the delegates from almost every University in the country were talked at by 21 speakers, and many of the students did their share of talking back.

The theme of the seminar was "The Individual and Society". Delegates first attempted to see this in very general terms, then attempted to apply their findings to a comparison between the Western world and the Soviet Union.

Keynote speaker, Professor John R. Seeley of York University, told the students to listen with scepticism to what they would hear in the following days.

He asserted that the seminar was actually a political convention and a legislative assembly. "The social philosophers who address you are, wittingly or unwittingly, making pleas, and hence, in effect recruiting party members," he said. "You are bidden to cross-examine honest offerings (and) not obstruct discourse by blind contra-position." He told the delegates that they were not simply finding out about phenomena, "but finding —for or against this or that."

## Modern Ideologies

On Saturday morning, Sept. 2nd, with reference to "Modern

Social and Political Ideologies", Dr. D. V. Verney, Department of Political Theories and Institution, University of Liverpool, asserted that we live in a Hobbesian era which stresses the individual moral dignity. He divided his lecture into a discussion of individualism, organization for class loyalty, and the organic theory of the origin of the state.

He asserted that the fate of a nation rests on its youth holding political beliefs. "The young need to believe in something... scepticism is not enough to expose the weakness of ideology," he said. "The young, and the politically minded must have a political belief. If they don't the nation is doomed."

Class loyalty is not the crux of political ideology, he said, because in North America there is much shifting from one class to another.

## Freedom and Authority

On Saturday afternoon Professor Sidney Hook, of the Department of Philosophy, New York University, spoke on "Freedom and Authority." He defined freedom as the use of intelligence (reason) to determine and establish shared goals, interests, and feelings.

"Freedom", he said, "is almost an invitation to combat... it is a fighting word." He pointed out that there can be no rights without corresponding obligations. "Anytime you have a right, you are making a claim. This sets up in some way for some person at some time an obligation to recognize that right."

"There are no absolute 'rights' or 'goods' except that of good

intelligence, which is aware of its own limitations," he asserted. "Moral rights develop from a marriage of shared interests and intelligence."

## Man and the Economy

The following two days both Professors P. E. Harvey, Department of Commercial Studies, University of Montreal, and W. T. Easterbrook, Department of Political Economy, University of Toronto, dealt with "Man and the Economy."

Professor Harvey discussed the "Economics of Affluence and Poverty", and the second, "The Effects of Technology." Both realized that little attention is paid to the individual, who in the world of economic models, seemed to be lost "in a crowd of analytical systems."

In speaking of the effects of technological advances on the individual, Dr. Easterbrook said: "I am not worried about pressure for conformity because changes are taking place in the administration of large organizations." He said they were moving away from monolithic, centralized structures.

He asserted that while technology has brought a new range of problems, "it has also opened new horizons of individual action that we are just beginning to recognize and exploit."

"There is nothing inherent in bigness to submerge the individual," he said.

## Culture and Conformity

Tuesday, Sept. 5th, the topic "Culture and Conformity" was taken in hand by a panel of three. They distinguished between conformity, a necessary element in a highly integrated society, and conformism, the tendency to submerge one's viewpoint in that of the group.

Panelists were M. Jean Boucher, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, R. H. O'Brien, editor of the editorial page, Kingston Whig-Standard, and Professor G. Woodcock, Department of English, University of British Columbia. Moderator was Dr. F. G. Vallee, Department of Sociology, McMaster University.

Mr. O'Brien claimed, "We are ruled by a nameless bureaucracy, which has an extreme hostility to people and ideas which do not conform. Human beings have been reduced to apparatus. We are not often prepared to advance any but doctrinaire solutions."

Because of the danger of conformism in politics and education, he recommended that future generations be brought up to think for themselves.

He charged that Ontario's "cynical divorce and stupid liquor laws... are only a few results of the conformity of the masses working against the individual."

M. Boucher pointed out that, "It is conformist to be non-conformist." Underneath these he felt there was "a refusal of the social manifestations, which are considered a definite progress of the human species, a nostalgia for a world which probably never existed, a sort of medieval pastoral society."

Professor Woodcock attacked the influence of conformism in the creative arts. He spoke of the "frail and irrational hope that we can stem the mass philistinism of the modern world, and

create a new community consciousness." He said that this feeling was dominated by people low in aesthetic judgment and high in social conscience. "Their quantitative, rather than qualitative sense was in direct contrast to the aims of the true artists," he asserted, in reference to the Arts Resources Council in British Columbia.

## Religion and Materialism

Tuesday afternoon, professor of religion, a humanist, and a Catholic psychiatrist, next discussed aspects of "Religion: The Churches and Morality." Dr. Karl Stern, professor of medicine, University of Montreal, attacked the fallacy that we live in a Christian civilization, and that materialism begins at the Iron Curtain. He asserted that the materialism of the Western world is far more dangerous than that which exists behind the Iron Curtain. "The West's materialism," he said, "is penetrating and subtle."

"Marxism", he said, "is a Christian heresy, while our form of civilization is essentially pagan." Dr. Stern contrasted Marxist asceticism with North American hedonism, Soviet power based on tyranny and Western power based on seduction, and the well-structured opposition to Christianity of the Soviet Union with the amorphous form in North America.

"Secularism in North American universities," he said, "is a tyrannical form of influence on the souls of students. He warned of the increasingly negative concept of Christian morality moving away from the Christian ideal of taking hostility and giving love freely."

The Executive Director of the American Humanist Association, Edwin H. Wilson, pointed out that religion, to include all its principle examples should be defined as "the quest for the ideal, the pursuit of the good life. Gods are the projection of the ideals and desire of different peoples."

Disagreeing with him, Dr. George Grant, Department of Religion, McMaster University, held that "the supreme question about any religion is whether it is true or not. What matters is

truth, not usefulness or pleasantness."

He claimed that Canadian universities of the English speaking variety have been organized for some years in something deeply prejudiced to the finding of truth, because they "have been organized by believers in secular humanism."

## Education

On Wednesday, Sept. 6th, the third panel, composed of educationalists, discussed "Education: The Responsibilities of Society and the Individual." In agreement that there are serious problems to be solved were: Dr. H. S. Armstrong, Dean of Arts and Science, McMaster University; Professor Marcus Long, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto; Mr. W. J. McCallion, Director of Extension Studies, McMaster University, and Dr. Murray Ross, president of York University (and honorary president of NFCUS).

"We have the second highest standard of living in the world," said Professor Long, "and about the lousiest education standard."

"Our universities have become vocational schools for the training of technologists. Education has one aim," he emphasized, "to enrich the life of the student by developing a critical intelligence, a wide range of interests, and critical tastes. Society imposes certain demands on education, but we should not allow society to dictate what should be taught in the universities."

Dr. Armstrong agreed, saying "Society should wake up to the fact that university is not for everybody and should accept the responsibility that the absolute minimum be deferred for financial reasons only." He also blamed attitudes of students for much of the failure of Canadian university education. "The student should develop a sense of integrity, doing the best job he possibly can. The individual should recognize his inescapable responsibility for doing his best as a student and after he leaves his studies."

Mr. McCallion emphasized the role of adult education in Canadian society. "We should improve (Continued on page 5)

## SDC Notice

The following charge was laid March 1961 and subsequent action taken.

Michael J. Rouse has been found Guilty of a charge of drunkenness at a student function and conduct unbecoming of a student.

- Penalty: 1) \$100.00 fine and cost  
2) Suspension of Students Pass for one year  
3) Name and disciplinary action taken published in the **Brunswickan**

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