

Grad Students Frustrated At Conference

by Mike Bridger

The UNB delegation (Salah Hassanien, Chris Johnson and Mike Bridger) came away from the CUGS Conference at Win-

nipeg, 24th November, with rather mixed feelings. On the one hand we were pleased that a nation-wide union of graduate students had been firmly established, after the incomplete negotiations at Western in May, but on the other we felt anxiety at the ultraconservative tone of many of the delegations, and our faith in the new Executive Committee,

which reflected this tone, is, naturally, very limited.

The specific aims of the Conference were:

To establish an acceptable constitution for the union, and to consider the best way of financing it.

To consider the needs of the individual graduate student and how these could best be achieved.

To examine the problem of Canadianization, with special attention being paid to the problem of "over-production" in Canadian Graduate Schools.

While many intelligent attempts were made to provide solutions to the above problems, the conservative tone of the conference prevented their being pushed as strongly as they might have been. The UNB delegation felt a sense of frustration at the watering down of all strong motions by the alteration or deletion of key phrases and strongly supported the plea from Toronto for an organization with "guts and teeth". This had unfortun-

ate repercussions as UNB was immediately black-listed as "communists", and unlikely to play the game of "flatter your dean", which so many of the other delegations so clearly enjoyed.

The constitution produced was in consequence, one geared to the efficient exchanging of information, rather than being the basis for a militant pressure group. The funding of the organization is to be on the basis of a per capita contribution from each of the member GSA's - a fine idea in theory, but in practice unsound, since Toronto and UBC, who would between them contribute about \$3000, have indicated that there is little likelihood of their coming in, since their idea of a permanent secretariat was rejected.

The other issues under discussion, which promised much, were disappointing, in view of the weak basis from which they are to be promulgated. Thus, while several matters, such as the encouragement of interdisciplinary studies, the abolition of language requirement, other than where they are the necessary tools for a given program, and the raising of the minimum level of graduate support to \$3000 p.a. plus compulsory fees (bearing in mind incipient taxation), were passed unanimously, UNB feel that CUGS as it stands, is in no position to push these measures to governmental and provincial levels. On the positive side we are pleased to see that even a conservative conference accepted such measures as the above. Memories might be jogged at the reading of the minutes of the next conference.

The problem of "Canadianization" was the hottest issue to be handled. It was recognized at once that Canadian academics are not masters in their own house, and that the Canadian Graduate Student is the one who suffers when it comes to finding a job., and it was agreed that the Department of Immigration and Manpower was in a sense the villain of the piece, since immigration policies have not been closely tied to supply and demand. Accordingly, a number of motions regarding tenured faculty (a problem which does not affect UNB) were discussed in detail.

Since the UNB delegation were particularly interested in the problem of over-production, one of the most crucial sessions was the joint meeting with the Canadian Association of Graduate Schools. It was obvious from the beginning of the meeting that Deans of Graduate Schools across the country were not only unconcerned with the problem of over-production but in several cases there was a refusal to admit that there was a problem. Only when Salah Hassanien quoted at length from the still-confidential Bonneau Report (published in part in The Brunswickan recently) did the attitude of the Deans change.

When confronted with government estimates, based on graduates at present in the pipeline, of 1700 unemployed Ph.D's by 1971, a few of the more progressive deans started to tell us what we wanted to hear - firstly, that awareness of this problem must be created both in industry and government immediately, and secondly that Deans should look at their own graduate schools with a view to examining both the type of graduate student that they are producing and curtailing unnecessary growth.

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