

SUNS organization still suffering from birth pains

by Janet Mrenica and Francis Moran of the Picaro

Like a phoenix from the ashes of the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS), a new sun rose in Nova Scotia just over a year ago. Named the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS), the organization was formed as a province-wide students voice to fill the void left by the demise of AFS.

Now, at the end of its first year of operations, it is time to assess SUNS' performance and potential as the organization prepares for ratification by the various campuses around the province.

SUNS was born in November, 1978, when a committee of five, a 'steering committee', was chosen to draft a constitution and maintain active province-wide communication. The steering committee was to blaze the path of SUNS' future.

Right from the beginning, however, the fledgling organization was plagued by internal strife as committee members, haunted by the phantom of AFS, refused to undertake any action that was reminiscent of the now defunct Atlantic organization.

Despite these problems, comparable to a baby's teething pains—painful and uncomfortable but nowhere near fatal—SUNS managed to put on quite a show for the province's powers-that-be.

On December 16, three SUNS representatives met with the new provincial education minister Terence Donahoe, who, at that time, was looking for some direction for post-secondary education in the province.

In January, institutions from across the province met with the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) to develop ideas for the 1980-81 academic year's funding recommenda-

tions. By this time it was too late to influence or change the '79-'80 recommendations.

On February 23 the province announced its levels of funding for Nova Scotian institutions for the '79-'80 year. Levels of funding which were substantially lower than the MPHEC recommendations and levels announced by the other two Maritime provinces. At the same time the Buchanan government announced its intention to institute discriminatory differential fees for foreign students attending Nova Scotian colleges and universities.

The March plenary of SUNS, hosted by St. Francis Xavier University, proved to be the turning point with regards to large-scale student action. It was at this plenary where plans were finalized for a student march to the provincial legislature.

The march itself could be termed a success in so far as an estimated 3,000 students attended the day of protest, cheering and booing as a SUNS paper on differential fees, funding levels and student aid, was presented, and as Premier John Buchanan gave a short reply.

The increased pressure on the provincial government by students and institutions contributed to the government's increase in the funding levels over the summer. The levels were still low, however, and differential fees were still instituted.

May, 1979, saw a new chairperson elected by the organization as Mike McNeil of St. Mary's took over from B.J. Arsenault of Acadia. It was also at this time the problems concerning the effectiveness of the steering committee became more obvious.

In September, two of the founding members of the steering committee resigned.

Both Arsenault and Mount Saint Vincent's Janet Mrenica resigned citing personal and academic pressures, but a dissatisfaction with the direction the organization was taking and an inability to work within that framework were underlying concerns.

And, as SUNS nears the date for ratification by institutions, the method by which that ratification will take place is also becoming a further source of conflict. The steering committee's desire to have student councils ratify SUNS with no direct voice from union members at large appears contrary to SUNS' desire to have the complete, united support of all post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia.

SUNS' present and future activities—and existence—are directly connected to future funding policies of the provincial government. Dedicated to opposing any moves to increase either tuition or the debt load of students, SUNS will have its hands full as the eighties break upon us.

Each year will bring forth a new assortment of student leaders and the future will be a learning experience for these people. Cutbacks to our education system have only just begun. Faced with declining enrollments, eroding government funding, and an inbred inability to respond to change, universities will feel the financial axe quickly, frequently, and with increasing severity.

The Students' Union of Nova Scotia, as a solid provincial organization with the full support of the students at large, can have an active future. As founding chairperson B.J. Arsenault said while reminiscing about the "very successful" first year: "The basic purpose of SUNS is to represent students' interests in Nova Scotia. There will always be that role to fulfill."

Where art Atlantis?

by Phillip McLean

Atlas was its ruler and Neptune its God. One day Plato's ideal commonwealth was mysteriously consumed by the sea. What happened and why, was the subject of an intensely interesting lecture given by Dr. Shan Winn, associate professor of archaeology at the University of Southern Mississippi, at St. Mary's University, Friday evening to an overflow crowd.

According to Dr. Winn, the legendary lost continent of Atlantis was not in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Gibraltar as most people believe, but more likely in the Mediterranean Sea off the island of Crete, near Greece. Some scientists, trying to prove that Atlantis was under the Atlantic, point to the ridge on the ocean floor but this is only a ridge, claims Dr. Winn and not the boundaries of a continent. The popular name Atlantis does not refer to the

ocean but to the Greek God Atlas, ruler of the world. The story of Atlantis is an Egyptian one and the Egyptians did not know of the Atlantic Ocean or anything west of Italy at the time. It's commonly thought that Plato, when translating the story 9000 years later, said Atlantis was bigger than all of Libya and Asia Minor, but what Dr. Winn really believes he meant was that Atlantis was between those countries, which would put it in the vicinity of Crete. The Greek word for 'bigger' is identical to the word for 'between' except for one letter and Plato could have made a mistake.

It is known that the island of Crete experienced a catastrophic, volcanic explosion and much of the island was sunk underwater, forming a huge crater. Recent excavations that Dr. Winn worked on show that the Minoan civilization of Crete was much

like the mythical civilization of Atlantis.

On the island there are the remains of many majestic temples. In the homes, there is a multitude of beautiful frescoes or wall murals, depicting scenes of nature and the sea. The sea was vital to their economy, as they hunted and fished for a living. They were civilized people and did not engage in warfare. There were supposed to be many exotic animals such as monkeys and elephants in Atlantis and there are paintings of monkeys on the wall murals discovered on Crete. The monkeys were not native, however, but were probably imported from nearby Libya.

Religion was important in Atlantis and the bull was sacred to them. It was called the 'cult of the bull' and the bulls were captured by using ropes only. Women had an influential part to play in religion and they generally had a high place in society.

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