

SMU pulls out of SUNS

By LOIS CORBETT

HALIFAX (CUP) — The Saint Mary's University student council has become the second student union in less than a month to pull out of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

SMU students voted by a two to one margin last week not to renew their membership with the province-wide student lobbying association.

The student council of Acadia University in Wolfville decided on Sept. 17 to pull out of SUNS. Unlike SMU, the Acadia council did not take the question to a student referendum, but decided with an in-council vote to leave SUNS.

Mark Bower, president of the SMU student council, says although only 13 per cent of full time students at St. Mary's participated in the referendum, the vote gives the council a "good idea of how the students feel about SUNS."

"What the result means is that we'll probably stay out of SUNS this year and take the time to re-evaluate our role in the organization," says Bower.

Bower, who spearheaded the anti-SUNS campaign within the council chambers but says he stayed out of the campus-wide debate before the referendum, says SUNS is an ineffective lobbying group and an organization "with no clear goals."

"It's like they have an organization and they don't quite know what to do with it, rather than having a specific reason for organizing," he says.

Bower also criticizes SUNS' financial accountability and the organization's profile on campus.

James LeBlanc, chair of SUNS, says he has some "real problems" with Bower's claims.

"The financial accountability charge really burns my ass," says LeBlanc. "They (SMU and Acadia) wanted an external audit of the books and that's an outrageous expense. So we compromised. We said their treasurers could come and go over the books with ours. But they didn't come. They didn't even pass the offer along to their treasurers."

LeBlanc says Keith Publicover, president of the Acadia students' council, and Bower do not communicate with their students about SUNS.

"That's one of their biggest problems. They come to all the conferences, but they don't pass any information along, not even the financial statements," he says.

LeBlanc also says Publicover is "very conservative" and prefers his personal lobbying to the "confrontational approach that SUNS takes." LeBlanc says the St. Mary's council is "isolationist to a certain extent, and has always been that way."

Bower wouldn't comment on LeBlanc's isolationist charge beyond saying SUNS was "sore, and no doubt a little upset over us pulling out."

Bower says SMU will "work harder now to the students' benefit" by meeting with government officials about student concerns.

"We can do all that very effectively," says Bower, "and we haven't cut all ties with other student unions just because we're out of SUNS. It's not fair to say we'll be riding along with their gains and just opting out of paying the fee."

LeBlanc says SMU's decision will put a financial strain on SUNS, but said the organization's six other members, Dalhousie, the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students, Mount St. Vincent University, King's Col-

lege, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and St. Francis Xavier University, are "firm in their resolve to support us."

"They have even wanted to raise the membership fees for years, but Acadia and St. Mary's always voted against it," says LeBlanc.

Acadia and SMU will save about \$5000 each by pulling out of SUNS. The organization had a \$30,000 budget last year, with each student member paying \$1.50.

Lois Corbett is Atlantic Bureau Chief for Canadian University Press.


Peace march

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organizers have solicited the support and participation of church groups, disarmament coalitions, activist groups and politicians, including Peter Elzinga, Marion Dewar, Iona Campagnolo and Pierre Trudeau from Canada.

MacKinlay says he is unsure as to whether or not the marchers will encounter trouble from governments of countries antagonistic toward the goals of the march.

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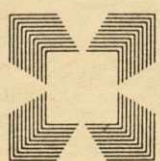
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