

Sampson reflects on AFS

by Robert Sampson

Now, since much of the controversy over the AFS issue has died down, let me, for a moment, reflect back over the past several months on the events which had taken place.

I first must admit that, although my remarks at Council when we finally decided to release our fees were in favour of AFS, these were said on behalf of the members of the Student Union and not on behalf of my personal views. As noted in a letter to the Editor last week, my personal views were reflected in my negative vote towards this issue. Why, several reasons have lead me to take this stand and I must say the most important was that of being responsible to you the students. The argument that the students through referendum had voted to give these monies to AFS is a valid one, however, no one could deny that what AFS was last February and

what it was in September were two very different things.

During my election campaign, we supported this organization because it was a true organization. Since then and until late fall, AFS turned into an almost nonfunctional (with the exception of one or two individuals) organization. Is that what you voted for last February?

Now let us back up this aforementioned statement with fact, not insinuations or untrue accusations as our beloved Gazette so often does.

1) There had never been an audit on the AFS books since 1975. When Dalhousie passed a motion to instruct AFS to do an audit, it took 4 months to locate the treasurer and books. Upon receiving the AFS books and performing an audit, the statements and accounting comments were full of disclaimers, one being an amount of receipts missing by both our past Secretary Co-ordinator and our past staff

person.

2) AFS went into debt and had to lay-off its staff workers.

3) The treasurer resigned in September.

4) Only one original Executive member was functional over the summer.

5) At the fall annual Conference, no one would run for the Executive position of Secretary Co-ordinator.

I could go on and on and in every instance, back it up with fact. However, this is all past tense. Now, let us look at why your Council, upon an Executive recommendation, decided to withhold your funds to AFS. Do you think your Student Council would be acting responsible to release approximately \$7,000 to an organization which:

- 1) had no treasurer?
 - 2) had no financial controls?
 - 3) had no constitution?
 - 4) had no Secretary Co-ordinator?
- Although the funds were with-

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the university community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

held, the Dalhousie Council, along with St. F.X., Acadia and Mt. A., fought very hard to implement a set of financial controls which were badly needed. Also, a lengthy meeting was held amongst all the Student Union Presidents to take positive, and I repeat, positive action to get AFS back on its feet.

I do feel AFS has come a long way since last September and feel Dalhousie played a very important role in spite of all the controversy. The Atlantic Federation of Students has still a long way to go, however, we will try in every way to help AFS to best represent the students of Dalhousie University as well as every other University in the Atlantic Provinces.

I might add, of all the disagreement and backlash, the only ones who complained about our move was the Gazette staff and a few AFS Executive members. Whether that tells a story in itself I leave you to decide.

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Coalition unites

The following letter was adopted at the January 30 meeting of the Metro Coalition for the Support of the Unemployed.

To the Gazette:

Over the past several weeks a controversy has arisen over the activities of the Metro-Coalition of Support for the Unemployed. Many of the statements issued in this regard are misleading and the Coalition would like to clarify its position.

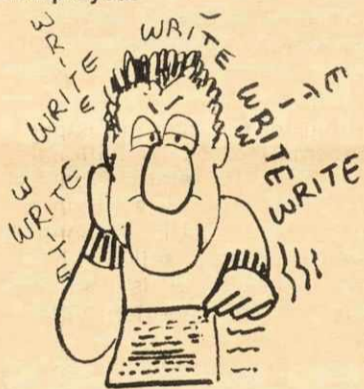
It was agreed by Coalition members that the focus of the 16 January meeting was to encourage unemployed workers to come forward and explain the problems they faced. It also was intended that the unemployed use the meeting as an opportunity to form a Union of the Unemployed. Unfortunately, this decision was not fully explained at the beginning of the evening and resulted in obvious confusion. The Coalition believed that adequate opportunities for discussion of its policies and programme would be available in future forums designed specifically for this purpose. The Coalition also intended to distribute a policy pamphlet, which was prepared before the meeting but could not be printed for the 16 January. The pamphlet outlines clearly the Coalition's position that unemployed and employed workers must work together to fight increasing unemployment, wage controls, plant layoffs, and cutbacks in educational and social services.

Anyone attending Coalition meetings realizes that all its members agree that fundamental changes in the political and economic system are needed before Canadians can hope for meaningful employment. There is disagreement within the Coalition on how this change will come but all Coalition members are free to bring forward their political positions and argue for its acceptance within the Coalition. But because the members of the Coalition do not share a tightly defined political position, it is felt that criticism must come forward in a positive manner and not be reduced to simplistic denunciations. Many critics of the Coalition forget that by its very nature the Coalition must include varying political analyses and strategies for struggling with the question of unemployment.

In all the criticism of the Coalition it is forgotten that this

Coalition is the first of its kind in Halifax to unite students, trade unionists, women's groups, and community organizations. The Coalition admits openly that it has made mistakes but to suggest that its members do not intend to work for progressive political and economic change is unjustified.

Fraternally,
Metro Coalition
of Support for the
Unemployed.



CPC not guilty

To the Gazette:

The unjustified and false slanders made by the group In Struggle (IS) in its letter of 26th January to the Gazette ("Get Serious Jim McLean") demands an answer.

IS states that in the activities of the Metro Coalition of Support for the Unemployed (MCSU) "... the Communist Party of Canada (C.P.C.) and others worked actively to oppose and sabotage certain demands put forward by In Struggle." They claim that these demands (which were proposed in connection with the September 28th demonstration of the MCSU) were 'For an end to wage controls', 'Fight to withdraw Bill C-27', and 'Fight layoffs and shutdowns'. What IS maintains were its demands, are not in fact what these demands actually were. The 3rd demand they in reality put forward was 'An end to cutbacks in education and social services' rather than 'Fight layoffs and shutdowns'.

The expressed purpose of the September 28th demonstration was to mobilize the unemployed and a fundamental part of the MCSU's Program For Action involved the demand for 'our basic human right to meaningful employment'. Therefore a representative of the C.P.C., understanding the importance and validity of the demands proposed

by IS as well as the importance of the above-mentioned demand of the MCSU, put forward the following motion: "The basic demand of the demonstration is for 'the basic human right to meaningful employment that gives working people dignity and self-respect'; that part of the means to that objective are 'an end to wage controls', 'repeal of Bill C-27' and 'an end to education and social service cutbacks' ". This motion was accepted by the Coalition and all four demands were carried on placards and posters in the demonstration.

Did the C.P.C. thereby "oppose and sabotage" the demands put forward by IS?

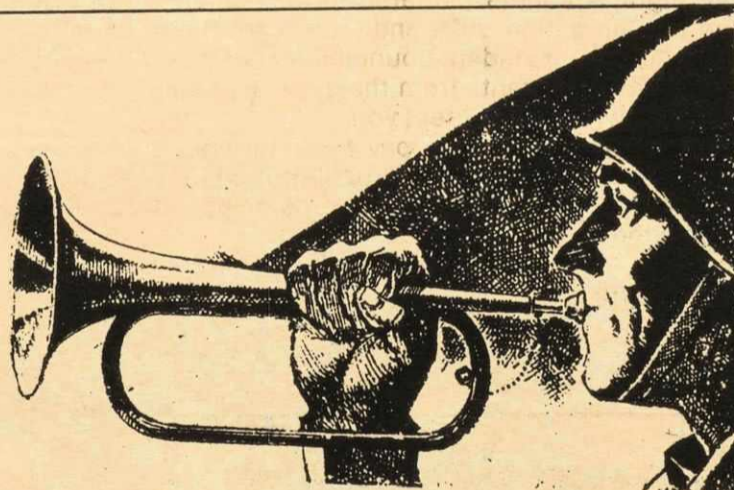
It is true that the C.P.C. and others prevented it from turning the

MCSU into a vehicle exclusively at the service of IS.

IS should understand that when it enters into a coalition with other parties that all the principles of a coalition will not be entirely the principles of any given member group. If it feels that by not agreeing to have IS's demands be the demands of the Coalition, that "the C.P.C. and others worked actively to oppose and sabotage" their demands, it becomes obvious that they were willing to be a part of any coalition only if they could completely dominate that coalition.

Also slandered in IS's letter were the leaders of the trade union movement. It is not the task of the C.P.C. to defend them in this forum

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