

High School system turns teachers into cops

by CUS President-Elect Warrian

Peter Warrian was elected the next president of the Canadian Union of Students at the Sept. 2 - 9 congress at the University of Western Ontario. Frank Goldspink, editor of the University of Waterloo Chevron, interviews Warrian about his plans for CUS when he takes office a year from now.

GOLDSPIK: Three words were kicked around a lot at the CUS congress; syndicalism, consciousness and expertise. Could you define these terms and explain how they apply to CUS's program this year?

WARRIAN: Student syndicalism is students acting collectively in terms of their rights and interests, first in education and then in society. This is implied in the revised declaration of the Canadian student.

Syndicalism is actively applied in Quebec now but will not be in the open for a few more years in English Canada. This is because culturally the English are significantly different from the French and don't have a base of support for syndicalism.

Consciousness is awareness of the self and its social situation. The student must become conscious and act so in terms of his position in education and society.

Expertise is competence in a particular area. We would use expertise in the area of learning to get at the guts of the education system and try to change it.

GOLDSPIK: What is your plan of operation when you become president of CUS?

WARRIAN: As president I can only facilitate getting the field work done. There has to be someone strong in the presidency to get it done and I feel I have the experience in field work and projects to help the Secretariat.

The secretariat will be chosen from people who are presently active with campus projects. These are the only people capable of doing the field work.

I won't be making the Grand Tour of CUS campuses. I've never found the Grand Tour helped to build a strong base for CUS.

GOLDSPIK: What are your priorities for action by the Canadian Union of Students?

WARRIAN: My first priority is quality of education, my second is social action and the third is international affairs. Social action includes the human rights motions passed at this year's congress.

GOLDSPIK: Are CUS and these priorities representative of the students?

WARRIAN: We are involved in value judgements here. At the congress we tried to state the legitimate concerns of the students. Now we try to establish a broad base of support by getting students involved in the suggested programs.

Our experience with these programs will be a test of our judgment. In this way we'll be democratizing CUS.

GOLDSPIK: How do you intend to implement education policies passed at the congress?

WARRIAN: There must be a complete change in the institution. Students aren't strong enough to turn over this system in a frontal assault. Change has to be approached selectively, in particular crucial places. It's a type of guerilla warfare. The student-centered teaching resolution is a good example of this.

Curriculum committees are also an area of crucial juncture. We must get the student involved and things may change. We must get rid of this passive pro-student relationship in the classroom.

GOLDSPIK: How important is an international affairs program?

WARRIAN: This program is necessary because society is involved in international affairs. We can't cut it off but the program must make sense. Last year there was a high quality international affairs program but it did not make sense at the local campus level.

I'm happy we're retaining our relations in the international student movement.

GOLDSPIK: Do you anticipate any trouble in implementing the human rights and education resolutions?

WARRIAN: The human rights question must be addressed squarely. Society may come crashing down on our heads but I don't think the reaction will be so severe that CUS will lose members.

Education will be an area of considerable controversy. High schools are becoming more authoritarian all the time. The system turns teachers into cops.

The program must develop consciousness in people by linking their personal experience to public life. The high school

resolutions must not be an abstraction but a concrete goal.

GOLDSPIK: What will happen if the direction of CUS reverses next year?

WARRIAN: I have no idea what will happen if it does but there isn't much chance of this. The direction has been definite for three years and I think it will be sustained.

GOLDSPIK: What was the basic problem at this year's congress?

WARRIAN: People were not clarifying their positions well enough at the congress so there was no basis for mature political compromise.

If strong views consolidate later it might affect local campus implementation but not the secretariat of the national office.

Cont. on pg. 11



Peter Warrian, CUS president-elect. "My first priority is quality of education..."
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