

The issues were there

but the students weren't

# The hot seat was cool, man, cool

By RON YAKIMCHUK

Last week students' council put itself on the hot seat and very few came along to make things even warm for them. The small audience of no more than 50 sat silently as SUB hang-abouts raised some smoke from the hot seat panel of 11.

Although the turnout was somewhat disappointing, it did point out certain very interesting things—ideas which must have been raised before but which do bear repeating.

The session started with a statement by moderator Marilyn Pilkington, declaring the presence of a communication problem between students' council and the student body, and blaming it on the structure. This hot seat, she said, was intended to help eliminate the communication problem. So they started communicating.

## FAVORITE TOPIC

Whether council does represent student opinion despite the lack of communication was the favourite topic of the discussion. At the beginning, in an atmosphere of self-criticism, students' union treasurer Phil Ponting said, "The organization as it now stands does not reflect the thinking of the students." And all the panel patted their collective backs for being so big about accepting a fair share of the blame.

But the bubble burst as soon as the criticism came from the floor. Drama professor Barry Reckord asked council why they were not working for full student control of the university. President Al Anderson gave three of his seven reasons:

- students don't have time to run the university,
- students don't know how to run the university (he used the term 'lack of expertise')
- partial representation on the relevant bodies is just as good.

Then Marilyn Pilkington completed the reversal of Ponting's self-criticism. "I suggest students' council in fact does represent student opinion in view of last year's CUS referendum and the defeat of the Student Power candidate in



—Hutchinson photo

## THE CROWD WAS SMALL BUT THE ISSUES WERE RELEVANT

... at the students' union's first hot seat panel discussion

the vice-presidential by-election," she said.

So there you have it: the two major arguments of the afternoon ruled out because they contradict each other.

## TWO THINGS EVIDENT

The rest of the discussion, though less dramatic, had to be more meaningful. It showed two things. First, nobody is sure if council is occupying a valuable position in the structure of the university; and second, a student can not be a participant in the student government if he wants to influence society in general.

Provost A. A. Ryan stated the administration needs an elected body representing the students to assist the administration in dealing with the students. But he could not envision students controlling the university.

"To say there is no democratic process in this university is to say there is no democracy in our government which set up the Universities Act. It is an institution set up by the people of the province. Student Power would make

the university an enclave, like Monaco.

"This university was not set up to do what those people would like to see done, perhaps wrongly," he said.

## LITTLE CONTROL

But he does believe there is little external control of the university otherwise. "The power of the university, aside from the power of getting money, is entirely in the hands of the students and faculty," he said.

On the other hand, the control of money by outside sources is very important to a university which is expanding as rapidly as we are and could be just as effective as policy control.

The element of reform in society, however, has no place whatsoever in the thinking prevalent in today's students' union. Students on this campus are consistent in electing executives unwilling to involve the union in anything not directly concerning the student, or anything which would create friction with persons holding permanent positions in the administration.

This means socially-conscious students must seek other outlets for action, which will usually be on a very informal basis. Students may vent their academic grievances through the Academic Grievances Committee, but one graduate engineer claims his class had three incompetent professors removed just by going to the dean.

Reform in secondary education will not be aided by students' council. Instead Faculty of Education students will have to instigate their own actions and work on an informal basis with any authorities who may be of help. There is talk now of this happening. It seems some students, who may eventually find it advantageous to work outside the students' union, are attempting to set up a school for local high school dropouts.

## NO ACTION

This sort of action rejects the theoretical discussions of student government which Friday's "hot seat" called for. Both the new Student Power group and the old Establishment find that they can

substitute talk for action, whereas the majority of people on campus want action or nothing.

That could explain why people stay away from shows like the "hot seat". They just do not see any action in it.

But the attempts by students to be heard in the university power structure must continue. Not by regarding the administration as adversaries for power, as the Student Power voice would have us believe, nor by avoiding any delicate issues, as the current students' union power group acts, but by joining forces with all the scholars we have.

A report to the Committee of Presidents of Universities of Ontario states, "The important thing is to reach an honest understanding of the differing attitudes, and try, together, with mutual respect, to improve the university and its contribution to the society of which it is part. Working alone the students might produce a revolution. Working together the university could effect a renaissance."

Very lofty; but quite sound.

# In the land where students receive salaries

## Joey Smallwood knows how to run an island — he pays students to go to school

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP)—You pays your money and Joey calls the shot; that's the way things are in Newfoundland.

There are two things to remember about Premier Smallwood; he delivered Newfoundland into Confederation in 1949 over the still bleeding bodies of the colonial gentry and he bought the people by bringing money to Newfoundland where once existed a near-feudal barter economy.

The outporters, the fisherfolk who live in some thousands of tiny villages awash along the coast, remember well. And Joey runs with an iron hand.

In April, 1965, Joey gave Memorial University freshmen their tuition fees. Students' Union president Rex Murphy noted only 400 people benefitted—you didn't get fees if you won a scholarship or took education, because education students already got government money for part of their university.

Students didn't shout and cheer for Joey, who insists people shout and cheer.

The next October, Joey didn't ask the administration if he could address a student meeting, he just called one. He announced free tuition for all, but Murphy had done his work. No ecstatic cheering.

So Joey looked around, those who at-

tended recall. A grinning cabinet sat behind him on the platform, watching the amassed students who watched Joey. Joey shot his wad.

"And furthermore," the legend recalls, "I'm giving you all student salaries, starting with fifth year students next fall."

The cabinet's collective jaw dropped, the students cheered, and today third, fourth and fifth year MUN students get paid to go to school—\$50 a month for St. John's residents, and \$100 for everyone else.

Otherwise the past still grips Newfoundland education. There are five separate denominational school systems, operated by the United, Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian churches and the Salvation Army.

Thus, an outport of 400 souls often has four one-room, all grade schools. Education quality is so uneven that next year MUN begins a foundation program for all but first-class high school students. Foundation year is to give all entering freshmen a common ground to prepare them for university proper, and some students use it as a junior college year to complete their high school without attending university.

At the same time, MUN will split—

the present campus will contain foundation and first year, and a new campus across the parkway will house upper years and graduate work.

Foundation year is certain to be crowded—freshmen enrolment dropped this year and the administration blames salaries. Nobody saves for university, and everyone's waiting until salaries include all students. That's in two years, if the pattern of dropping salaries down a year every fall continues.

And the enrolment drop, not so oddly, must please both Joey and university president Lord Taylor—the university couldn't hold them all anyway. All 5,000 students habitually slosh through the muck surrounding new construction and park next to dump trucks.

Everybody's waiting for the opening of the new dining hall to ease the lunch crunch, and for Taylor's by-now-mythical master plan to materialize.

The plan is expected—Taylor drops hints—to outline the new campus and concretely detail the stages of the foundation program and Memorial's planned growth to 10,000 students in ten years.

According to the Canadian Union of Students, salaries and free fees help make

students politically conscious. It ain't necessarily so; MUN is politically barren.

Not to say politics doesn't exist—last year's model parliament elected a Pitcher Plant Party government, led by the same Rex Murphy, on a quasi-nationalist platform.

This year, a very young New Democratic Party has emerged in and around the university. Part of it is the political ambition of Fraser March, Memorial's students' union president, and member of the NDP provincial council.

Like most islanders, March is a Newfie first and a Canadian second. So is Joey, who accepted the maple leaf flag, but decreed it cannot be officially flown without an accompanying union jack.

March claims Joey will try to bury the island's three Tories next provincial election, and then retire—leaving his Liberals in decapitated disarray. Thus will grow the NDP.

On the other hand, the NDP is supposed to be a socialist party and March, a fourth year political science honors student, is quite ignorant of any socialist class analysis. "The bourgeoisie? They're the workers, aren't they?" he said.

"But I do have political ambitions on the island," he said.