

YS reasons why local vote failed

With a low 10% turnout of students, NUS membership has been rejected by a 2:1 majority in the U of A referendum. This signifies that students here, for a time, will not be an integral part of the motion towards a cross-country students' union. The National Union of Students, won over to a program of fighting for students' rights, could have been a powerful uniting force and valuable instrument for students here in their attempts to obtain adequate housing, financing of their education, employment and an end to sexist discrimination against women.

What does the defeat of this referendum indicate? Why was the U of A the only campus to this point, to reject NUS membership in a referendum? The Young Socialists do not think that student apathy or contentment is the answer.

To analyze the results of the referendum one must look beyond the wording of the ballot. Graeme Leadbeater, in a recent issue of the *Gateway*, has admitted mismanagement of the NUS campaign by the pro-NUS supporters of the students' union. Only one very small, poorly publicized information meeting was held; little advertising was done; information tables were set up only for a few hours and not campus-wide; speakers were not sent into the classrooms to explain the referendum; no local brochures showing how NUS is relevant to U of A students were produced. Most students were not even aware of the referendum, let alone the relevancy of it to their problems.

Many students saw this only as another bureaucratic organization trying to rip off a dollar.

The whole axis of the NUS debate was false. Pro-NUS supporters from the students' union and groups such as Angela Davis club, NDP club and others called for a YES vote

on the grounds that NUS were the best lobbyists for students in Ottawa. The two anti-NUS organizers seized on this and stated that \$20,000 could be spent better on provincial lobbying than in Ottawa - students would receive more for their money. Given this axis of debate, it is little wonder that the few students who voted, decisively rejected NUS membership.

It is possibly true that this

lobbying money could do more for U of A students provincially than in Ottawa - but this isn't what the referendum was about.

Pro-NUS supporters should have carried a campaign similar to that waged by the Young Socialists, describing the key problems students face and explaining the power if united in a common organization across the country. They could have pointed to the victories Quebec students in ANEQ (l'Association

Nationale des Etudiants du Quebec) have won through their 100,000 strong walkouts and demonstrations last fall.

NUS must be posed as an organization that has the potential to unite and lead students in struggle against the federal government in defense of students' interests. No one, as a rule, gets too excited about financially supporting student bureaucrats who sit in back rooms chatting with government officials.

Students across the country have shown their willingness to struggle around issues such as student loans, housing, unemployment, and women's rights. Even the anti-NUS forces

were forced to recognize this fact and called for provincial activity in these issues.

The elected student union with all its financial and administrative resources must organize and lead students in all the various campaigns in defense of a right to a decent education. If the pro-NUS supporters in the student union support the positions of NUS, they will have to play a key role in locally building the same struggles that NUS is involved in across Canada.

The recent endorsement and financial assistance to the Oct. 25 Women's Action Day is a step in this direction.

Young Socialist Club

U of New Brunswick sees the light, joins NUS

FREDRICKTON (CUP) - The 6000 students at the University of New Brunswick are now members of the national union of students.

A referendum held October 22, asking students to pay one dollar per year to join the national union, drew a 33 percent turnout with those in favour outnumbering those opposed by a scant 935 to 902.

According to NUS fieldworker Bob Buckingham who worked on the UNB referendum the anti-NUS vote was concentrated in the Faculty of Engineering with NUS winning the other polls.

The referendum was supported and organized by Jim MacLean, a UNB student and chairperson of the Atlantic Federation of Students.

Prior to the referendum he said that regional student organizations could not operate effectively in the absence of a strong national student union.

According to NUS executive secretary Dan O'Connor, who also worked on the referendum, the 33 percent turnout was "considerably higher" than the usual turnout for UNB student council elections.

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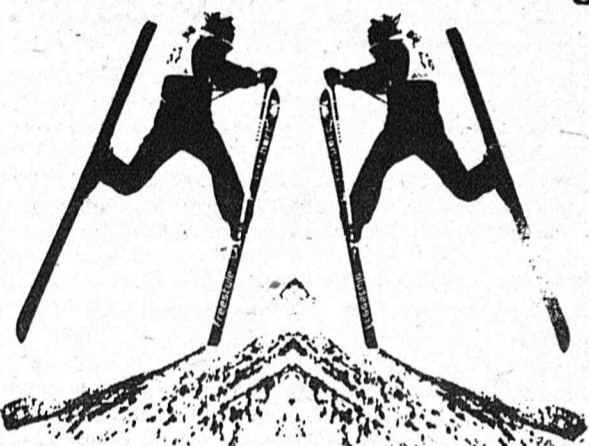
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