

Feds cop out on student demands

OTTAWA (CUP) - The federal government will agree to student demands for a full public inquiry into the financing and planning of post secondary education if provincial governments agree to it first, federal cabinet ministers told student representatives on Parliament Hill, Nov. 9.

Finance Minister Donald MacDonald and Secretary of State John Roberts told representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS) that the government welcomed a public inquiry on higher education on the provincial government's initiative but rejected a NUS request that federal financing continue, for a two to three year period during the inquiry, without spending restriction.

The NUS requests were contained

in a 16 page document summarizing the themes of tuition increases, regressive student aid programs and higher unemployment presented to the ministers on National Student Day, the nationwide action reaching about 300,000 students on campuses across the country.

National Student Day activity on this campus was conspicuously lowkey, if in fact not nonexistent. Bill Sanderson, chairperson organizing activities at UNB said that "NSD is officially declared a flop". No organized boycotts, educational or information seminars or workshops were held.

NUS executive secretary Dan O'Connor said later he found the ministers' response disappointing in light of their refusal to consider postponing current negotiations

between the federal government and the provinces on federal financing of higher education and social services.

He explained NUS' objections to the federal government's stated aim of reducing further its financial commitment to post-secondary education when the current cost sharing agreement the fiscal arrangements act, expires next April.

In nothing the federal government plans to lower its current annual ceiling of 15 percent on expenditures to 12 percent, and that there is "a vacuum of public discussion on post secondary education", O'Connor concluded that National Student Day should be seen as just the beginning of student pressure on the government to stop education cutbacks.

The need for student pressure is especially great since MacDonald has said he will likely be meeting with provincial finance ministers

at the end of November and hopes to reach a final arrangement with the provincial representatives at that time, O'Connor said.

O'Connor said the federal government remains suspicious of public inquiries, quoting Roberts as saying that inquiries, "might bring pressure" on the government.

The NUS document, called the summary of concerns, notes that public debate in the 1950's and early 1960's "produced the drive for open access to, and accelerated growth of, the post secondary system".

Today, when new policies are needed, governments have not

encouraged a renewal of public participation in the selection of policies for postsecondary education," says the summary.

The demand for the public inquiry came out of discussion on the fiscal arrangements act at the NUS fall conference last October.

Delegates agreed an inquiry conducted by a board comprising representatives of government, students, faculty, with labor and business was the best way to deal with the secretive and littleknown negotiations on fiscal transfers.

In interviews following the meeting with the NUS representatives Roberts and a spokesperson for MacDonald repeated their agreement for a provincially-approved public inquiry, but declined further comment.

Cammett

"Italian communism is democratic"

By GERRY LASKEY

Professor John Cammett, an expert on the Italian Communist Party, of John Jay College in New York City, arrived at Carleton Hall clad in a denim cap, a striped T-shirt and suit coat.

Cammett, a guest of the UNB History Club, spoke without notes in an informal manner and using many anecdotes - for about 40 minutes before opening the floor to questions.

Cammett's topic was "Continuity and Change Within the Italian Communist Party." His speech dwelt on the continuity of the PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) as a new variant of communism and its growth as a powerful political force in Italy, paralleling the growth of democracy.

Cammett has close contact with Italy on the social and the political scene there and just returned from a month long visit.

Cammett began his talk on the changes he has seen in Italian society in the past 25 years.

He said the position of women

and the prominence of the feminist movement increased enormously in just the past several years. He recounted seeing hundreds of feminist books in a Rome bookstore which was a contrast to his last trip there.

He said the new abortion law which was worked out in closed sessions by PCI, Socialists and Christian Democrats, was the most advanced in the western world. He also mentioned the progressive nature of the new divorce laws.

Cammett read a letter from a police officer's committee to the PCI paper, *Unita* which apologized to the family of a worker who was shot by a thin branch during a demonstration. The letter went on to talk of "de-militarising ourselves and changing to fighting crime and not using our riot clubs on students and workers," and forming a police union. "Remember, this is a cop writing this!" Cammett commented while reading.

Cammett gave an example of an electoral district completely composed of police barracks. In 1972 there was a 40 per cent vote for

the fascist party and 30 percent for the Christian Democrats. In 1974's local elections there was a 30 per cent PCI vote and 20 per cent PSI (socialist) vote and 13 per cent fascist vote.

He said the PCI today is a party of over two million which receives about 13 million votes. In Italy's parliament the PCI is the second largest party, only marginally behind the governing Christian Democrats. The president (speaker) of the parliament is a Communist. The government depends on PCI confidence to continue in office. In the last election the PCI received 35 per cent of the vote, the PSI 10 per cent other leftist groups about three per cent for a radical vote of nearly 50 per cent.

Cammett then described the communists' long struggle for power which has brought the PCI to its present position. He stressed the organisational strength of the party.

He related being on one of the many trains that brought Italians who work abroad home to vote in the 1974 elections. As soon as the train crossed the boarder a campaign team of communists went through the trains with buttons, literature and speeches. "When I asked a friend of mine in the socialist party," he said, "why his people weren't on the train, he said 'How can we compete with organisation like that?'"

Cammett said the organisation of the PCI is so strong because of its practice of "democratic centralism," or allowing unlimited, open and public debate on all matters within the party but demanding strict adherence to the party line once agreement has been reached.

The PCI has been dedicated to working towards socialism through democracy and pluralism since its break away from the PSI in 1928 according to Cammett.

He described the thinking of the early party through its Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. "Gramsci," he said, "recognised early that for socialism to come in an advanced industrial society the

masses must be involved in the process; that there are no shortcuts to gaining a popular majority. This meant mass mobilisation of the entire working class including the workers, middle class and petty bourgeoisie."

Gramsci, he stated, stood in conflict with the Soviet controlled Communist International often. The PCI espoused a brand anti-fascist political effort during the early thirties period when the Comintern denounced any non-communist socialists as "social-fascists". Gramsci called for "avoiding unnecessary dogmas."

In 1930 when all other leftists were calling for a socialist revolution in Italy the PCI under Gramsci called for the establishment of a constituent assembly and a democratic republic, Cammett said. He added, "This was the first time any leader of a Communist party advocated democracy as a theory for revolution."

any advancement."

Cammett said, "The idea of the 'popular front' is the most important idea of so-called 'world communism' in establishing a new social order."

The PCI also quietly objected to Soviet intervention in 1956 in Hungary and loudly and publicly on the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

He said, "The Italian left after the war realised they must create a revolution, not seizing the 'Winter Palace', but by long, hard work at every level of society."

The PCI leader until the sixties, "Tagliatti", he said, "recognised that socialism under conditions of advanced capitalism can only be achieved under majority action in which the party of the working class becomes the indisputable leader of social progress."

He said, "Italy 25 years ago was very traditional but is today very

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The Brunswickan to host ARCUP

Delegates from most university papers published in the Maritime region begin three days of business discussion, workshop sessions, and trade talk here at UNB today.

"The Brunswickan" is host for the Atlantic Region Canadian University Press annual conference.

Member papers of CUP from all four Maritime provinces including new prospective members are expected to attend.

Seminars on a broad range of subjects, photography, techniques

in printing, incorporation and freedom from student unions, gay rights, sports writing, advertising and sexism, news writing and other topics are slated for the workshop sessions.

Ms. Jackie Webster, a freelance writer and leading New Brunswick journalist will discuss objectivity and the newspaper responsibilities to editorialize.

UNB students interested in attending the sessions or working with this paper are invited to attend the sessions for today and the weekend.

Da Bruns — Alright!



Professor John Cammett gave a lecture on Tuesday night on the Italian Communist Party.

Photo by Tom Best