

# EDITORIAL

# CUS OR CUSS?

Since the CUS congress was held in Alberta, we have noticed certain things. The first was the desire to look at CUS with a critical eye, the second was to do something about it. It would seem, according to the article on our first page that NFCUS was not living up to the aims for which it was founded. This observation can hardly be denied. The solution to this problem was a new structure, CUS.

What does CUS propose to do? It will act as a "critic" of a particular student council if it deems necessary. What this means is that if a local student body feels its' student council is not doing its best, it may appeal to CUS. CUS will then inform other universities, and this particular, guilty council will receive a barrage of telegrams and letters telling it to "smarten up" — politely, of course.

The second proposal we are all aware of, that is, to discuss issues that are called "priorities". In the this case Confederation is a priority subject, and all student councils are encouraged to initiate seminars on this topic.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this new structure and programme? Does CUS really believe that the actions of any student council will be so obnoxious as to warrant a national union of students coming to the rescue? We feel that any local student body can manage to solve its own internal problems without the aid of CUS. As a side thought, how does CUS propose to distinguish a genuine appeal from an organized case of sour grapes?

As to the second proposal, could not a local university organize its own seminar on a "priority topic". Is the aid of CUS really necessary?

We admit that the Canadian union of students can give a university a certain national identity. In other words, our existence can become known to others. This is achieved by our representatives who attend national seminars and congresses. We sometimes wonder, however, what benefit accrues to the university by such pilgrimages.

In looking to our own university, we see a drama society that needs to be built up; a glee club that needs a regular department, a good musical library, and a collection of sheet music; we are aware that the band could use more money for instruments, uniforms and music. Our Sports programme could certainly make use of any extra money it could lay its hands on. This list could continue, but why belabour the point. We are not a rich student body, and the money with which our student council must operate is indeed small. As students we are asked to aid in the intellectual, cultural and social life of this university. Can we do it if our student union money is sent out as payment for a "nebulous identification"?

We should think twice before we send our money out to various organizations who have nothing of offer us except "prestige". We should instead develop our own student facilities and societies. This is not to advocate isolationism, for it presupposes that excellence will always have an appreciative audience. We lack vision if we grab a speedy "identification", and a promise that in reality is seldom fulfilled.

We are convinced that CUS has little to offer our university as a whole and that it be looked at with a more critical eye. This also holds true for WUSC. Charity begins at home, and if deemed necessary, steps should be taken to correct this situation. We have an obligation to our own campus, and an obligation to those that will come after us.

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

## A MODERN WEAPON

By J. HENRY GAUDET

### Preamble

The fact remains incontestable that we in the West are caught up in a struggle with the Soviet Union. The outcome of this struggle will determine the success or failure of democracy. The contentions which exist between our two nations were not desired by us. Yet, by a series of historical events, and even it seems partly by fate, modern democracy is being challenged to prove its worth.

The ultimate objectives of the Soviet Union are those of world domination wherein all nations will live under the grasp of Communism. How, we might ask, do they intend to achieve such a goal? It is important for us to study seriously the modern psychological mind of the Soviet leaders. They have experienced the destructive power and futility of war and have tested its bitterness.

Because of this, a new kind of war is being waged, the spoils of which are the uncommitted nations of the world. What are we doing to win the friendship of these peoples? To gain their sympathy for our cause, we must seek to know and understand them. This cannot be adequately accomplished without due regards to language media through which ideas and expressions are permitted to flow readily and freely from man to man.

Moreover, according to recent experience, the Soviets are far ahead in this sort of race. Their foreign ambassadors speak the language of the natives and consequently wield influence not to be underestimated by the American people and more so by American educators. It is the purpose of this paper to point out as much and as clearly as possible the necessity of reconsidering our stand on the importance to be attached to foreign language studies in our schools.

### II. A Brief Comparison Between the Soviet and American System.

Firstly, it will serve our purpose for us to know that in Russia, the secondary school system makes it a matter of obligation for the student to study at least one foreign language for a period of five or more years. In America, the same type of school offers on an optional basis only, a language of which the course extension does not exceed more than two or three years of study.

It must be admitted, that this difference in the stress placed upon foreign language studies between both countries explains by and large the reasons why we in the West have failed to fully ascertain the hopes and aspirations of millions of our fellowmen.

The fact that we in America do not obligate students to pursue the study of a foreign language on the secondary school level does not help matters to say the least. Moreover, teachers, from their own experiences in the classroom, are more than well aware that many students find difficulty in an adequate mastery of their own native tongue. It therefore seems inconceivable that pupils having an option choice would on the whole select to study a foreign language.

In my estimation, more solid groundwork should be covered in one's native tongue before commencement studies of a foreign language. We should also, and especially during these crucial times, place the subject of foreign languages in the obligation column of our school curricula. If we are truly fighting a war under the guise of the international conference table as well as the fashionable tours of goodwill, the importance of foreign language on our curricula, whereby our future leaders are to be trained, cannot but remain fairly obvious to all.

On the other hand, when we discuss the Soviet outlook on the same particular topic, we find that according to Henry Chauncey's

report, the Soviets have recognized early in the race the far reaching rewards to be reaped.

What has weakened our stand even more, has been due to perhaps well-intentioned people who, in the midst of confusion have criticized the necessity for foreign languages. These have lacked the proper vision of the evolving process of our civilization and have condemned the inclusion of foreign languages in our curricula. Their argument is that foreign languages have become obsolete.

This does not remain the opinion of all and most especially that of John P. LeCoq when he writes that:

"Language is the medium, the vehicle by which our civilization is developed, maintained and handed over to future generations. Without some knowledge of foreign languages we are caught in our verbal subjectivism like a squirrel in its cage."

### III. The Need For Foreign Language Study.

Many are the educators, lacking linguistic background or who possess only superficial training in languages, who condemn foreign language studies as meaningless. Yet, after due reflection and study, void of prejudice, the facts would seem clearly to favour its inclusion rather than its rejection. We live in two universes, a universe of communication. This latter is even more apparent and pressing in our modern society. The demands brought upon us by such rapid transitions have grown and continue to grow to an appalling degree. After having read comments on the subject by Frederick S. Spurr, one cannot help but quote him.

"In the present world-wide conditions of unrest and even of cold and hot wars, a revival of knowledge of the means of communications between peoples is more imperative than at any time in history. For students who will

shortly become connected with our military forces, an introduction to foreign speech would greatly facilitate their acquisition of fluency in expression; and it would broaden the mental horizon of everyone by increasing comprehension and tolerance toward those of different ideas and ideals."

In addition, one cannot fully appreciate and evaluate his own native tongue without a certain degree of comparison. To do this profitably, an awareness of the grammatical structure of another language than his own in imperative.

Formerly, the acquisition of fluency in a foreign language denoted cultural achievement. Today, however, the study of foreign languages has a utilitarian purpose. It has become the modern weapon which has a tremendous share in the fight for the cause of democracy. One cannot overlook the demands occasioned by noteworthy undertakings such as Radio Free Europe, the United Nations, and the like.

Finally, digressing slightly from the discussion at hand, foreign languages are found to be an aid to vocationalism. Their importance lies precisely in the fact that they fit so well into many fields where they are a valuable asset.

### IV. The Battle to Gain the Uncommitted Nations

As has already been enunciated briefly in the preface to this work, modern and effective diplomacy is making great demands upon language media.

It seems only natural and principally to peoples of uncommitted nations, that greater bonds of mutual trust and friendship can more readily be attained between countries if both speak (to use the oft used phrase) the same language. For each nation is proud of its own language and admires others who are able to speak it. Language is then the initial step on the way to a greater degree of

unity between democracy and the uncommitted nations. Many of these need assistance in the way of technical, social and economic development. If we are to bring them into the democratic camp, we must be prepared to communicate the ideals of democracy clearly and convincingly, and in a language to be understood fully by them.

These nations are growing through times of crisis and desire social betterment. They have heard about the reported success of education in the Soviet bloc. They have also heard a great deal about the alleged failures of education here at home. There is much soul-searching about education in the non-Soviet and non-industrial world — the newly developing areas which the United States is trying to assist.

Moreover, it was for the promotion of these ends that the United Nations came into existence. There was a growing need felt among member nations to share with all nations, scientific and educational advancement in all its fields. By so doing, all nations would be brought together in a family of international brotherhood and understanding.

The importance of such sentiments have been further corroborated substantially by Kandel when he states that:

"There must then be taken into consideration another force which has been growing since World War I — the realization of a certain interdependence of the nations of the world and the need for international understanding and cooperation. This force may have its effects upon education in different ways — revision of the content of history and geography courses increased attention to the study of foreign languages, and the development of interest in the culture of nations ignored."

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