

CANADIAN UNION OF STUDENTS — TO BE OR NOT TO BE

by Robert J. Chornenki '68

That is the question! — On October 27, 1965, the students of Canada indicated their respect and support for the Canadian Union of Students, by making an ignominious failure of National Students Day sponsored by C.U.S., once again emphasizing that as an effective co-ordinator of student thought and representation, the Canadian Union of Students never was, isn't, and never will be the answer.

ITS HISTORY-PRE-WAR

A union of all the university students of Canada, under varying names, can be dated back to 1926, and since then has been a forum of co-operation and conflict, principally between French and English speaking students.

Such a union seemed from the beginning to be doomed to failure.

Under the original nomenclature of the National Federation of Canadian University Students, (N.F.C.U.S.), the federation suffered the ups and downs characteristic of all such attempts since.

Since education is orientated on cultural lines, so too developed the national students' federation, the major problem being the inability to co-ordinate French - English feelings.

Being a purely voluntary organization, its effectiveness depends on a fragile relationship of the various local students' councils. This proved to be a rather shaky foundation.

ITS HISTORY-POST-WAR

Influenced by the awakening of the students with respect to their rights and responsibilities, not only with respect to the university community, but to society as a whole and influenced in particular by the "CHARTER de GRENOBLE" adopted by the national congress of the Union Nationale de Etudiants de France in 1946, the French Canadian members of the federation introduced a positive preference to a strong student syndicalism. Unfortunately, their thinking was several years in advance of the thinking of the majority of the members of the N.F.C.U.S. the English speaking members

Perhaps its most dynamic leader in the post-war years was one Maurice Sauve, whose personal campaigning and understanding of the need for a strong central union to be effective, seemed destined to lead the union out of its functional limbo. Indecision on the part of the members ruined most of his efforts.

In 1951, the members finally agreed to establish a permanent secretariat at Carleton College in Ottawa.

In all the discussion and policies adopted up to 1952, negotiations never progressed beyond the stage of establishing an orientation and structure for N.F.C.U.S. Many of the proposed programmes and activities which would have led to true Canadian student unity were not aired.

At the end of the first post-war decade, more and more change the emphasis from a question of structure.

In February 1956, Laval University introduced a plan to change the emphasis from a strong national student movement by the creating of specific regions within the framework of the national union to have their own union which would then introduce and implement well thought out policies of their own.

It suffices to say it was another plan.

As the second decade progressed, the original structural debates became complicated by internal division within both language groups. An air of mistrust and dissatisfaction, an era of circular debate and uneasy compromise haunted the union.

In 1957 the Association Canadienne des Universités de Langue Française, (ACULF) was an attempt by the French to solve their needs. Due to various complications, the ACULF failed.

By 1960, French-English aims and ambitions were so divergent that the only means of accommodating them was to let each express himself as a separate identity.

As an example of the conflicts; except for a brief time between 1957-58, the students of Quebec preferred to look on education as a matter of purely provincial jurisdiction, while the N.F.C.U.S. was repeatedly presenting briefs to the Federal government for federal aid.

In 1963 the N.F.C.U.S. studied and ratified a Charter, embodying the principles of student syndicalism as outlined in the "Charte de Grenoble". This Charter attacked the core of the differences between the French and the English, and sought to establish in writing a statement of common goals. It was rejected and discarded by all regions except the Quebec region.

In 1964 Quebec students sought to solve their need with the forming of UGEQ. A spirit of urgency prevailed in student politics at this time.

In the 1965 conference, the delegates departed from their usual reservation and fear of a separate student union in Quebec and resolved that — "This congress recognizing UGEQ as a legitimate national union of students within the latter's own definition, mandates the President of CUS to explore all areas of mutual concern with the aim of effecting co-operative action with that union."

This resolution was adopted by a wide margin, and served as an indication of a new and open spirit in the union.

WHY A UNION?

The question in many people's mind at this stage is probably "Why do we need a union, beyond the local one, anyway? Beyond the scope of a national organizer of debates and athletics, with what must it deal?"

The Duff-Berdahl report warning of student rebellion illustrates one of the most pressing areas of conflict — the role of the students in the administration of their university. The urgency of this problem is evident in every issue of every college newspaper across Canada. Or ask any Acadia student.

The 1963 Canadian University Press survey of the R.C.M.P. investigations on campuses across Canada indicates another less known area of danger. Did you know that the RCMP professed that campuses are areas of "subversion" and so that is where they, (the RCMP) must seek it? Students from the University of Saskatchewan and Quebec will enlighten you on this.

Another more recent issue is "Free" education.

In all these issues, firm, intelligent cooperation on a reasonable level is the only effective way to make our views known and to protect our rights.

MAY I SUGGEST—

In light of the urgency of

the problems, and the history of failures, what is the solution to our dilemma?

Although I have not been able to obtain a copy of the Laval plan to de-centralize the Canadian Union of Students, I favour a plan along those lines.

LEADERSHIP—

The question of leadership has not really a problem. The mobility and time required to fulfill the offices is a matter for the executive to handle. Moreover, the strongest leaders, with the best intentions have had their hands tied by the indecision of the members.

The only conceivable problem is that of a strong minded executive which could slant the proceedings to their point of view and not that of the members.

DECENTRALIZE—

I am in favour of breaking CUS into four major regions, the Maritime region, Quebec, Ontario, and the Western region.

The Maritimes, with their many small universities, will have special ideas and problems of their own.

Quebec will of course have the problem of McGill. However I feel that she can be incorporated into UGEQ, and I feel that the main reason McGill students rejected entry into UGEQ was a misunderstanding of the implications, and thus they voted in a bigoted way.

Sir George Williams, an English speaking member of UGEQ may clear up some doubts as to the feasibility of such a plan.

McGill will also have to accept the classical colleges as part of that union.

Ontario is an obvious division but no subdivision of this is necessary.

Although the Western region will be geographically larger than the others, the limited number of universities there, (one or two in each province), will necessitate this.

Each of the four areas would then apply, as a separate identity, to either or both of the international bodies. (This is more important than most may think. — It led to the failure of ACULF in 1957.)

A meeting of the four groups, having eliminated the stifling structural debates, could decide on definite schedules for athletics, debates etc. After they are set up, they need only be co-ordinated each year by a small group, perhaps the permanent secretariat, each year.

General meetings on the national level could be held once every two years, at the discretion of the four unions, and exchange views on matters of mutual concern, with no obligation but to listen receptively.

This is of course only a vague plan and one that needs some expanding. The main principles, aiming to correct the major problems, are basically sound and useful.

The problem of initiating such a plan would consist of two faces: 1. Accommodating the general thinking to four separate unions and accepting CUS for what it is.

2. Under the leadership of CUS, implementing the plan with a view to retiring the present setup at a definite date.

As Maurice Sauve so sagely noted, there are essentially two choices open. Either a strong CUS must exist, or there is absolutely no reason to maintain a Canadian Union of Students as we have thus far.

The strength and vitality so badly needed may come with the four groups suggested. It is that or nothing.

A STUDENT FOR CHANCELLOR?

VANCOUVER--A 21-year-old Japanese-Canadian student here has made an unprecedented bid for the position of chancellor of UBC.

Randy Enomoto, grad studies 1, is the first student to run for the position, which is usually awarded by acclamation.

The other candidate for chancellor, John B. Buchanan, 69, is a former member of the senate and board of governors and a past president of the alumni association.

"This is an unorthodox thing to do," Enomoto said March 2, "but it's not a stunt."

"I want to attempt to make that area of the university democratic, and reveal the status quo that exists."

"There is no reason why students should not participate in decisions affecting the students of this university. The chancellor has this decision-making potential."

The nominees have five days to decide whether they will stand for election. Enomoto says he intends to campaign fully, focussing on the undergraduate population on the campus itself, even though they are not allowed to vote on the chancellorship.

Through his campaign, Enomoto says he wants to make students aware of the undemocratic nature of an institution like UBC.

BRITISH STUDENTS FIGHT LOAN PLAN

LONDON, England (CUP) -- British students are fighting the introduction of a loans system similar to the Canada Students Loans plan, which would replace the present British system of grants.

In the current year, 98 per cent of British students received a living allowance of about \$300. It is estimated that this grant would have to be raised to \$450 by 1970 because of rising costs.

The British Education Minister, Crosland, is known to consider this scheme an unjustified privilege for students, and has proposed that it be replaced by a loan system with a means test.

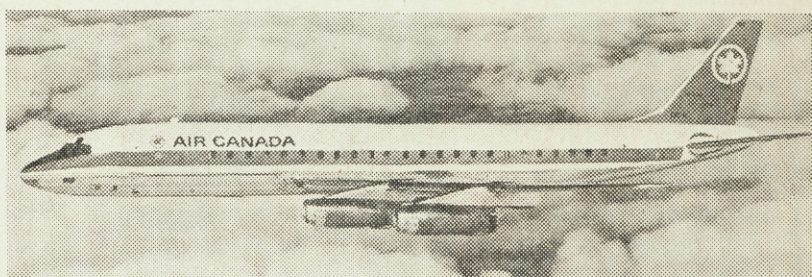
The President of the National Union of Students, Bill Savage, has called the loans system incompatible with the government's goals in higher education.

Support for the students' stand has been received from the National Union of Teachers, the Association of Scientific Workers and the Association of University Teachers.

The ASwW brief knocks the means test, and says that students' grants should be "broadly comparable with the income of similar young people within the same age group". Graduate students, it says, "must receive a salary which will bring them within the normal income structure and so make them feel part of the community".

In opposing loans, the association says students are making a financial sacrifice to take up higher education rather than pursue full-time employment, and the cost of higher education should be charged to the community, not the students.

The teachers' union says the loans system "would only make matters worse when they most needed to be better" for the student, and says means tests cause "all too many cases of anomaly and hardship, which the most humane and liberal interpretation of the rules will never eradicate".



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