

The N.F.C.U.S. I.S.S. Story, Amalgamation!

The following is a copy of portions of a letter written to the Mr. Arthur Mauro, President of NFCUS, to try to further disseminate the information held in Toronto at present on the subject of NFCUS and ISS co-operation.

Copies have been sent to student council presidents, chairmen of the ISS committees, and student newspaper editors. We feel before any further discussion can be held toward amalgamation that there must be a great deal more discussion and information in all universities across the country.

By BILL TURNER

This is a somewhat lengthy brief to try and synthesize my thoughts (1) on the whole subject of the International Student Service and the National Federation of Canadian University Students and (2) on the international situation in general. I feel that it is particularly important that we stop and take stock of ourselves now that the NFCUS and ISS conferences are over. It has been suggested, and I think quite accurately, that too few of us have the over-all picture of just what is going on, of what we are trying to accomplish and where we are trying to go. I think therefore, Art, I will try to give you as complete a picture as I can from my standpoint of what is happening.

NFCUS-ISS Amalgamation

Let me first summarize the background to the present moves. As you know, Denis Lazure and I along with the representatives of other western students unions, came out of Prague with a strong feeling that something had to be done in the international field if our ideas of life and government and peace were to be successfully and fairly presented to the Asiatic section of the world which is at present deciding just how it will fit into the world picture. We did

not at that time think that the type of propaganda used by the communist countries would meet with any approval in our own countries or in sections of Asia. Rather we felt that were this type of propaganda used it would be considered by the Asian as the first step toward the return of the colonial system of government. He does not want this. Rather, he wants us to demonstrate to him that we are willing to help him to work out his own destiny.

Towards this end the western students unions have called a conference to be held in Stockholm from December 17th to 21st. It was decided that those who attended this conference would come with concrete ideas on how their national unions could provide the required kind of aid to Southeast Asia. These unions would have already ascertained what resources they would be able to devote to the aid program, and the manner in which they would devote that aid.

Amalgamation

With this in mind, the NFCUS Conference held in Quebec City thought that the most feasible plan for Canadian students was to work in the international field through the agency of the International Student Service. In order to make this co-operation as effective as possible, we decided to investigate the possibility of "closer co-operation or amalgamation" with the ISS. I think that the underlying reason for this amalgamation scheme at the NFCUS Conference was the salient fact that as a national student union we could not allow any of our relief activities being channelled through a body in which we had no control over the method or degree of allotment of our contributions. Some of the other reasons, but by no means all, are as follows: (1) We could save money by avoiding a duplication of services, and by avoiding duplication in our national offices and conferences. (2) Friction between the two organizations would be eliminated at the local level. We also believe that the strengthened organization which would emerge from a merger of the two present

groups would be stronger than the sum total of the two groups.

A good example of the duplication of services can be seen in the presentation of similar briefs to the Royal Commission of the Arts, Letters and Sciences headed by the Hon. Vincent Massey.

Keeping these factors in mind, the first meeting of the NFCUS Investigative Committee was called on Friday, October 6th, in Toronto. Representatives from McGill, McMaster, Quebec, Carleton, Western, Montreal and Toronto met with unofficial representatives from the Administrative Committee of ISS to discuss a proposal for amalgamation presented for discussion by the NFCUS Committee.

Conclusions

Out of this meeting two important conclusions were evident: first—there was strong agreement that amalgamation could achieve a solution of the problems faced, and secondly, that the definite proposal presented by the Toronto NFCUS Committee appeared to be inadequate. We had tried at Toronto to effect a merger of the two organizations. This was criticized as being too much of a patch-work job, and there was demand for more far-sighted thinking that would achieve a total union of NFCUS and ISS in an entirely new organization.

Second Meeting

A second meeting was called on Monday, October 16th, to further discuss the proposals. NFCUS was represented by Joe Fricker, Vice-president of NFCUS for Ontario (Western); Len Harbour, Vice-president of NFCUS for Quebec (McGill); Tom Symons, Toronto NFCUS Chairman, and myself. ISS was represented by Dr. L. E. M. Lynch, Chairman of the ISS Administrative Committee, Mr. Nicholas Ignatieff and Mr. Ted Nichols, both members of the ISS Administrative Committee and Pat Daniel, National ISS Secretary. Out of this meeting came the conclusion that there was a definite need for a strong central executive able to carry on the functions of the proposed organization on a twelve month basis. This organization would also have strong regional committees, and of course strong local committees. In order to make a central national executive possible it was suggested that the members be given an honorarium (in the case of the president and one other student who would become an associate secretary in the national office) or financially assisted so that they could relocate in that city in which the national office was established. Those who received assistance would continue their studies at the university in the city in which the national office was set up. An "honorarium" in this context means an amount sufficient to cover expenses (for example \$1200).

On the subject of finance it became quite apparent that in order to finance the administration of a national office and executive a levy such as that in use in NFCUS at present would have to be used across the country. In short, it seemed that a union was actually within our grasp, that its feasibility would require far-sighted thinking by all of us and that if such a union were successful it would be beyond a doubt the most effective move in the last 25 years of Canadian student government history. We were also convinced that the possibilities for action were much greater than had at first been envisaged. Then came the ISS Conference at Queen's University on the weekend of October 21st.

Lack Information

At this conference I was struck with the almost complete lack of information the ISS delegates had regarding the proposed merger. This state of affairs resulted in a very drab Saturday afternoon session in which the delegates had repeated to them arguments that had already been discussed by NFCUS representatives and the ISS Administrative Committee and upon which we were sure there would be general agreement. When I reached the Conference on Sunday it would be fair to say that a state of utter confusion existed with regard to the proposal. We worked quite hard on Sunday morning in the commission investigating the merger proposal and its report to the Conference presented resolutions that embodied all

we wished to have passed by the ISS Conference. The report was adopted unanimously. It set up an ISS Committee that will investigate amalgamation (or any other suitable alternative should amalgamation prove impossible), that has the power to draft a definite proposal and can ask the Administrative Committee of ISS to call an extraordinary conference should conditions warrant such a step.

There was one further point which was made very clear at the ISS Conference. Student bodies across the country must be kept informed, and must in every possible way contribute to the thinking on the merger proposal in order that it will not seem that this is solely a Toronto or Ontario or Central Canadian idea. We in Toronto, because of our peculiar position in which we have the National ISS office, the National NFCUS Office, and the Chairman of the NFCUS Committee in charge of investigating amalgamation in this city, are very worried about this possibility and have done everything in our power to maintain adequate representation from outside this city and province. Amalgamation, or indeed any scheme of co-operation or merger, cannot possibly work unless all parts of the Canadian student scene are behind it. We know this and have neither the wish nor the intention of making this a "Toronto show".

One other point raised in connection with the merger of ISS and NFCUS should, I feel, be stated. If the ISS should turn down amalgamation then I feel that it still lies within the power of NFCUS to reorganize itself in such a way that stronger support from many of those people now working in ISS could be enlisted. It is obvious that should ISS turn amalgamation, or a very close co-operative merger, down, then the twin relief campaigns conducted by the two organizations would have not only a disastrous effect on the NFCUS plan for international co-operation, but would also, in fact, rule out any chance of ISS achieving its financial budget this year. We all hope that this state of affairs will not result. I think that is enough on the subject.

ISS World Assembly

The international ISS is holding its World Assembly in Geneva in the month of November. Two things of particular interest will be discussed there. The first is the structure of the international ISS office in Geneva. There is strong indication that some of the American components of ISS would like to remove from office the international Secretary Sigvard Wolontes and his two immediate subordinates, Robert Smith and Ted Harris. This move seems particularly inadvisable at this time for several reasons: (1) There is no one who could immediately step into that office and take over the work. (2) All three men represent national student associations, groups that ISS is going to have to work more closely with if it is to survive. These men, by virtue of their background, are far better able to understand the problems of the national student association. (3) It has not been adequately shown that the organization of the international office has been so inefficient as it is made out to be. A partial failure of the ISS was seen in its organization of the summer seminar, conference and assembly held in India this summer. But the fault lies not so much with the international executive (who apparently did everything in their power to make the summer program a success) as with more prosaic factors such as a shortage of money, and a lack of personnel. Wolontes spent more than six months away from Geneva last year touring Southeast Asia and later preparing for the conference in India and had to leave all the work of the international office to Harris, who had just assumed his position there. Only now are these people able to work out the organizational problems at Geneva. This should be accomplished by the time the Assembly meets in November, according to my information.

The second big question facing the ISS Assembly will be its relationship to national student unions. ISS must have the support of these groups to survive. It has not at the moment. This is particularly true of the national student unions of western Europe. These groups are not entirely convinced that they are getting good value for their money from the ISS, which is demonstratively weak at the moment, and they are asking a larger share in the control of the organization. Should ISS fail to get the support of these unions, it may find their resources being channelled through the International Union of Students and their new relief organization set up at Prague this summer.

One of the charges that has been levelled against Wolontes, with (Continued on Page Seven)

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ISS Story

(Continued from Page 5)

particular regard to the situation in India, was that representation from Southeast Asia was not representative. The traces directly to the fact there was not enough money forced Wolontes to drag people in India who brought as cheaply as possible. The sum of \$15,000 had been raised by the World Student Fund in the United States, defraying the costs of the Conference, but apparently of this money went to American delegates, leaving money, drawn from among Asian students in India. That the was not representative reflect the failure of much but points up the failure of the ISS to be representative, undergirding the situation is certainly in Indonesia and not India and Pakistan. "deterioration" are being a situation that fact, ever been better at the moment. There spot in this picture: who are working the moment do not form an instrument of Westernism. This concept, and encouraged, will national unions of students will meet in Stockholm, an attractive medium through which their relief activities.

Therefore, it is impossible for the ISS to do three things in assembly. (1) Makes national students union adequate representation sure that the international office is intelligently reorganized; sure that a strong action to strengthen and ISS committees in Southeast countries. These committees are presently being active by the new relief organization by the IUS at Prague.

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