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NFCUS HERE

NFCUS is a controversial topic that has been discussed in Students' Representative Council Meetings at UNB since its inception. The SRC meeting of last Wednesday, October 5th, was no exception. The topic, as usual, was whether or not to join again, and what is to be gained by membership in NFCUS. The council voted, as always, to stay in the NFCUS but the question of why is still unanswered.

One argument for NFCUS membership was its program of international representation of the Canadian student. From the published reports it would appear that this avenue of effort is receiving adequate attention. We are members of COSEC through NFCUS and have been represented abroad at every important student conference for several years. This is all very well but, the actual benefits to the Canadian student from this great expenditure of time, money and effort has been notably absent in concrete terms. If we admit it, concrete results are the criteria by which the Canadian student measures success or worth. Accordingly the NFCUS international program is a waste in the eyes of the majority of its members.

The NFCUS national policy is the one in which the most interest is placed, at least here at UNB, but the one into which the least thought and effort appear to be directed. UNB joined NFCUS and gave it life on the campus for 1954-1955 if the local committee would concentrate on the local scene. This was done, and sales tax relief on text books is light proof of it. The sentiments of the previous year were expressed last Wednesday. Canada, in many respects, is still international within its borders and it would pay the NFCUS to concentrate on the National in its name before the international.

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NFCUS THERE

This year will be a critical year in the history of the National Federation of Canadian University Students. McGill and Montreal, two of Canada's largest universities, have already withdrawn from the organization and show no great desire to return. Other universities are also considering pulling out of NFCUS, and on this campus a motion to put NFCUS in the deep freeze for five years lost out by a narrow 10-7 margin in the SAC.

Why is the existence of NFCUS being so roundly criticized in so many quarters? The reasons are not hard to find.

• NFCUS is expensive. This year it will cost Toronto students \$5,000 to belong — 50c a person. This sum has to be taken from the already hard-pressed budgets of other campus activities.

• The NFCUS national office is ridiculously inefficient. For instance: this last spring the NFCUS Travel Service, run from the Ottawa headquarters, allowed non-students to purchase travel tickets. The agencies involved had sold the tickets to the NFCUS Travel Service at a special discount on the strict understanding that the tickets would only be resold to students. As a result of this improper handling, the travel agencies cancelled the NFCUS tours at the last moment, and many students who had booked through NFCUS were left stranded, with no possibilities of making other arrangements at such a late date.

The NFCUS national office has also mishandled the all-Canadian student Art competition. As well as not putting the paintings on tour as they were supposed to be, they do not even know at last report what city the paintings are now lost in.

And last March the National Office sent The Varsity not one but several "urgent" bulletins, in which we were informed who the National President of NFCUS for 1954-1955 was — a fact we and every other interested student had known since last October.

And yet 90% of NFCUS's total budget is spent on administration. • Any worth-while recent achievements that NFCUS has accomplished were working through local NFCUS committees on individual campus. Last year the Toronto Scholarships NFCUS Committee did an excellent job — without much aid from the NFCUS national office. None of these student committees need such an expensive and unwieldy NFCUS structure in order to carry on their activities.

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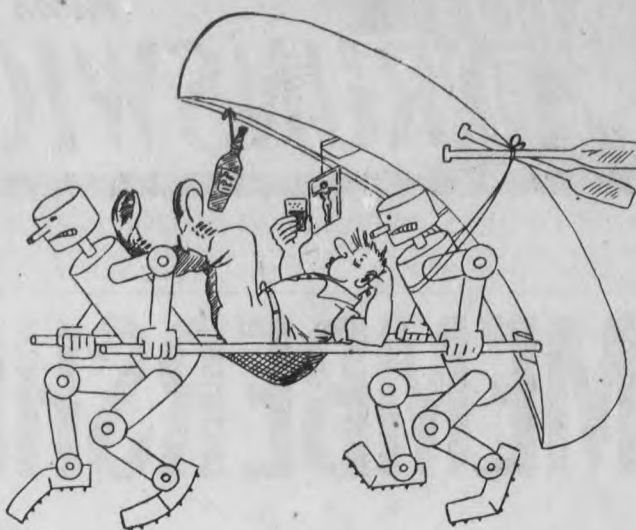
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• Most of the significant achievements that NFCUS boasts about were done years ago — and an organization cannot live today on yesterday's work.

• National Conventions — like the one coming up at Edmonton next week — are to a large extent a waste of time and money. Because of insufficient preparation and a surplus of speeches, little is accomplished at such gatherings — although they are the only time when decisive action can be planned. The lack of planning can be illustrated by the fact that the agenda of the conference — to be held next week — was not available at last week's SAC meeting when Toronto's NFCUS stand was discussed.

The above is a damning indictment of NFCUS. Yet the fact remains that NFCUS does still possess vast potentialities for service to Canadian university students — possibilities which have never been explored. The fault of NFCUS up to now has lain in the surfeit of pompous speeches and irresponsible plans which have afflicted past NFCUS conferences. There has been too little attention paid to the efficiency of the National Headquarters. And many possibilities of initiating activities which can be of real service to Canadian students have been overlooked.

What is the use of a national federation? What can it accomplish? On the international scene NFCUS could — and should — take upon itself the task of representing the Canadian student abroad. And it should do more than send an endless series of delegates to an endless series of international conferences. Much more could be done by way of direct contact with national students' unions in France, Great Britain, and the United States.

On the national field, NFCUS should make itself heard as the voice of Canadian university students. Efforts to achieve a National Scholarship plan should be continued, with more versatility being shown. Many provincial governments have never even been seriously approached, and the possibilities of aid from private individuals have never been explored.

Other projects might be:

- a national student newspaper.
- national student discount service.
- national cultural contests — such as art, music and short-story.
- a program to gain relief for students from UIC and income tax.

On some of these, NFCUS has already begun to work. Yet much of the value of what has been attempted has been lost in poor organization.

As well as realizing its own potentialities, NFCUS — and the Canadian students who are its members — must also realize its limitations and weaknesses. Many of its projects — such as a music competition — interest only a small proportion of its students. And many more of its projects — such as the National Scholarship plan — depend for their success on the action of outside bodies over which NFCUS can have little influence.

NFCUS is now in an unfortunate position. Having in the past promised so much, and having accomplished so little, NFCUS must this year succeed in implementing an effective and realistic program or it is doomed, as the defection of any more universities will make The "National" Federation a farce.

NFCUS must succeed in implementing a scholarship plan or a national student discount plan, which will provide real benefits this year to Canadian students. Or it must succeed in obtaining relief for students from income tax or UIC. And NFCUS must re-organize its head office if whatever achievements that it does succeed in making are not to be lost in faulty organization.

The Toronto delegation to this year's conference should make every effort to see that a realistic program to serve the interests of Canadian students is adopted at the convention. And unless they see that such a program is adopted, they have no excuse for allowing Toronto to continue in NFCUS.

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