

Canadian unity not so unified at conference

EDITORS NOTE: This article was written with the help of Jenny Munday, one of the delegates attending the conferences. The Bruns sincerely appreciates her aid.

Issues of Canadian Unity were the topic of two conferences held at the University of Toronto the weekend of October 13-16.

One, Options Canada was comprised of academics, politicians and businessperson from across the country. The second, Alternatives Canada was attended by students, primarily those in the faculties of political science, history and economics.

Approximately 140 delegates attended.

Two UNB delegates attended the conference, Jenny Munday, chairperson of the Political Science Association and honors student and Heather MacKnight, honors student. They were chosen

by the UNB Political Science Department.

Delegates were asked to submit papers on various topics to be distributed to other delegates prior to the conference. Of those less than half submitted papers, many because they were not informed until a few weeks prior to the conference.

Workshops at the conference were on Regionalism, Arts, Culture and Language: Canada's Future and the World; and the Economics of Separation and Unity.

Speakers on various topics included David Lewis, former NDP leader, Claude Ryan, Editor of Le Devoir, Northrup Frye, literary critic and Claude Castonguay, former minister of the Bourassa Government.

Also present were a panel of Provincial cabinet ministers including Premier Alex Campbell of

PEI and representatives from B.C., Saskatchewan and Ontario.

According to Munday the workshops were large, at times up to fifty people. Discussion was hampered by the number of people and by awkward and over sensitive translation facilities.

She said discussions for the most part centered on various members "long windily espousing their views on various subjects."

"There was very little spontaneous discussion and very little continuity in the discussions" said Munday. She said everytime a new point was made, someone else would take the floor and redirect the discussion. Thus everytime an original speaker had a chance to respond to remarks of others the discussion had turned and points were lost.

"Sadly, most of the discussions focused on issues between anglophones and francophone delegates," said Munday. She added that these have been battled over at these type of conferences for the past 10 or 15 years. Apparently, nearly ten years after Trudeau's election, and the initiation of his bilingualism policies, Canadians still do not understand or accept the basic French-English situation.

Munday said in one session a delegate from Ontario objected to the intellectual/academic approach the discussions were taking and said she wanted to see some good fist fights.

Munday cited another session where a bilingual anglophone from Quebec stated the case of the English minority there by saying that what they want is a stronger federalism that will guarantee minority rights everywhere in the country and thus safeguard the English rights in Quebec.

Another member responded by asking why the English in Quebec just don't accept their role as a minority and give up the elitist position they have enjoyed for so long. A delegate from BC said "I'm sorry but it looks like we have to abandon you".

Delegates from the Atlantic cornered the floor in at least three

workshops, specifically those focusing on regionalism. They pointed out the paradox of the economic and political plight of the Atlantic Region in Canada.

For some of the Maritime delegates, this was the first time they had seen the Atlantic region receive so much attention and understanding in terms of their position in Confederation.

Some members of the workshop expressed the belief that the Atlantic Provinces are in much the same position as Quebec, with problems with Confederation stemming from historical and economic injustices.

Munday said the discussion at times turned to denunciation of Atlantic for not helping themselves. She said one person wanted to know why their parties have been elected in the Atlantic "assuming this was the root of economic problems of the region."

An Ontario delegate asked one UNB rep "Do you really think I'm exploiting you?" Munday said. The frustration this particular remark elicited was perhaps typical of the conference.

She said a lot was said, with students expressing their views and the views of their provinces. She believes that some delegates may have gained "some insight" into the attitudes of people from other regions across the Country.

She felt however, that very little consensus of opinion was reached on any issue. Emotions ranged from those who feel we need a stronger more centralized federalism to those who feel we need the opposite.

Munday said the lack of consensus or mutual understanding is a typical result of a nation wide conference.

She said the reps from UNB as well as other students left the conference with a "strange sad, mixture of feelings".

Many felt the time and money had been wasted, money to the tune of \$200,000.00. There was also a feeling that they had been used for publicity purposes, either by a Prop Can, or by those of a privately ambitious individual.

UNB delegates Munday and MacKnight seriously wondered whether Canadian Unity was really worth worrying about.

John Evans, president of the University of Toronto, was credited with the conception and organization of the Options Canada Conference. Evans is purported to be the Liberal parties choice to run in the next federal election. His supporters expect him to succeed Trudeau in the leadership of the Liberal party.

The alternative Canda Conference was apparently the brain child of a group of students from the University of Toronto. The students received organizational help from John Evans and his co-organizers. Also from the President of Innis College in U of T.

Funding from the conference appears to have been supplied by the Federal Secretary of State, and from the Ontario Government.

The Options Canada Conference was financed by the Donner Canadian Foundation with aid from five national corporations.

Other provincial governments including Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan contributed to the conference by paying transportation costs for their delegates.

For further information on the conference contact Jenny Munday or Heather MacKnight, through the Political Science Dept. Copies of papers presented at the conference will be made available on request, or interested persons may write:

Options Canada Conference or Alternatives Canada Conference c/o The University of Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A1

Boxwell: new app't

Robert J. Boxwell, Moncton city manager, has been appointed to the New Brunswick industrial relations committee.

Mr. Boxwell, an engineer with degrees in arts and civil engineering from Dublin University, will represent management on the committee. He was the director of community development in Gloucester (Ottawa-Carleton) before taking up his post in Moncton in 1975.

The industrial relations committee was established in 1968 under the aegis of UNB to review labor-management interactions in the broad context, with particular attention to the Labor Relations Act.

With a membership of 12 to 18 people drawn equally from the senior levels of labor and management, the committee functions primarily to form policy guidelines.

The committee has functioned "successfully and quietly", said UNB President John M. Anderson, who announced Mr. Boxwell's appointment. The committee is currently headed by J. Fernand Landry, a Bathurst lawyer and former member of the UNB law faculty. Brian Bruce, associate professor of law, is executive secretary of the committee.

The members serve without pay, and meet on an average of eight times per year.

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