

EDITORIAL

Political recognition being challenged

by Allan Carter

Last term the Student Union decided to officially recognize political youth parties on campus as Student Union clubs and societies. Now this term that official recognition is being seriously challenged as people begin to react to a document which was supposedly written by members of the Progressive Conservative youth wing. (see story page 1).

The document outlines a post-secondary strategy for the new year which includes: attacking political correctness on campus, attacking the Canadian Federation of students and taking over student governments. On one level, the document is extremely hilarious and as Jim McGee states in an article in this week's paper, the document is "tough to take credibly".

Nevertheless, on another level, it is a very disturbing document because it exposes some of the sentiments which appear to be held by many conservative members and members of other right wing parties across Canada. There is a perception shared by PC supporters that CFS is a left wing organization that, as the document states, is hostile to the PC party. It is true that CFS is a very liberal minded organization which does not hesitate to speak out on many issues that some students perceive as not being particularly important to an organization which lobbies on behalf of Canadian students.

CFS has taken stands on many issues including date rape, the Gulf War and, of course, educational concerns. The fundamental problem with the document and the PC party's perception of CFS is that they are mixing apples with oranges. In other words, while CFS has what may be termed as a political agenda, they are essentially a lobbying group. Thus, the main reason CFS is being hostile to the PC party is simply because they are presently the political party in power.

The same holds true for most Student Unions. While campaigns, elections and unfilled promises are all part of the Student Union scene, Student Unions should have a different mandate and goal than provincial and national political parties. Thus, no matter what political party acts against the interests of the student body, the Student Union will have no hesitation in voicing their disapproval and acting on it. In order for Student Unions to effectively lobby against national policies that they view as detrimental to student life and post-secondary education, they need a national collective voice. CFS's mandate is to be that voice. For a political youth party to try to take over CFS and the Student Unions would be like the Mulroney government trying to take over Greenpeace or the National Council on the Status of Women. Greenpeace's mandate is environmental protection. In the same way, CFS and the Student Unions' mandate is to protect the students.

Unfortunately, that is not always a political party's mandate.

Thus, it is obvious that political parties and lobbying groups do not go hand in hand. Of course, in some situations a lobbying group may receive support from a political party for their cause. So if such a stark contrast can be drawn between Student Unions and political parties, should the Student Union recognize political groups on campus?

Definitely not. As Student Union president Eric Burchill states in a news article this week, it does not really matter where the leaked document came from, but it is certainly one example of "the type of games that are played." There must be a healthy distance between political parties and Student Unions, for while they may work together on many issues, there are numerous occasions when such recognition can become very questionable. For example, how credible is a Student Union which vocally attacks a political party on an educational issue, but in the same breath has to admit that their Union formally recognizes that party? Lobbying groups are constantly questioning government policy and CFS and the Student Unions are not an exception to that rule. Thus, the recognition of political parties by the Union is unnecessary and extremely awkward.

A right wing waffling phenomenon

by Allan Carter

A right wing phenomenon is occurring across Canada. Here in New Brunswick, the CoR party gained official opposition in the last provincial election. This gain was achieved partly because more and more Progressive Conservative party members were becoming disillusioned with their party and unimpressed with the leadership. Of course, many other factors contributed to the PC demise and the CoR party's gain. But there is no doubt that a great number of CoR supporters were once Tory members.

Similarly, in the four western provinces and in rural Ontario, the Reform party, on a national level, is experiencing, to some degree, the same success as the CoR party is in New Brunswick. Many of the Reform party supporters are old Tories who have decided, for whatever reasons, to become Reform party members. Conservatives waffling between two right wing political parties and the fact that a national election will soon be called, appears to be causing great tensions between the two right wing political parties.

Take, for instance, the leaked document

which was supposedly written by members of the Progressive Conservative youth wing. It is still unclear to exactly where the document originated. However, the Progressive Conservative Youth Federation contends that the document may have been leaked for media attention by ex-PC members who have joined the Reform Party.

Who knows what other interesting documents and allegations will arise as the right wing political parties continue to clash during the national election.



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